

ECO-AGROTOURISM

EXPERIENCES FROM SLOVAKIA,
HUNGARY, POLAND
AND CZECH REPUBLIC

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

MARIA STANISZEWSKA

The world has gone wild for travelling. It's no longer a hobby for the elites; thanks to the emergence of cheap airlines, trips to the other side of the planet have become relatively affordable. Furthermore, more and more inexpensive hotels have cropped up, often boasting an all-inclusive offer to boot; a pool, a reserved little spot on the beach, meals – the same meals everywhere. Sometimes, it's hard to tell the difference between a hotel in Morocco, Spain or Cyprus. What is even the point of going on a trip so far away when every place on the continent seems so similar, with the same attractions, the same souvenirs, and the same cuisine, vaguely referred to as 'European'?

In our brochure, we would like to present to you an alternative form of tourism; one that can give you the chance to find the unique beauty of a region and the opportunity to learn about its traditional art, craft, and food first-hand from the locals themselves. Nowadays, finding places that can offer such experiences can take some effort; however, we believe that this is an effort worth exerting, and we sincerely wish all our readers much success in making many unique memories during their travels.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

ŠTEFAN SZABÓ / SLOVAKIA



Sustainable tourism is the concept of visiting somewhere as a tourist and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

The special attraction of sustainable tourism is the unique combination of nature and culture, managed through sustainable producing agriculture. This economy has produced an amazing diversity of relatively undisturbed natural environments, such as national parks, nature parks and protected areas. This natural and cultural diversity within a destination can be seen as the most important attraction of many tourism destinations in Armenia as well.

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Being different

The key to successful and sustainable tourism is achieving a clear sense of difference from other competing destinations, based on the attributes and strengths of the destination.

Achieving authenticity

The attractions most likely to be successful, and those with the greatest enduring appeal, are those which are genuinely relevant to the history, culture, lifestyle and nature of the area.

Reflecting community values

This means representing the past, present and future aspirations of the local community in a living and dynamic way rather than embalming the past or imposing development. This involves listening to and responding to the community.

Understanding and targeting the market

Understanding the broad market trends and the needs of specific segments is critical. This involves the development of specialised products based on the inherent attributes of an area.

Enhancing the experience

People's motivation for travel is to seek something they cannot experience at home. The 'bundling' of attributes enhances the appeal of a place and the likelihood of visitation.

Adding value

Adding value to existing attributes achieves a richer tourism experience and helps to diversify the local economy. This can include accommodation, sales outlets or dining, in association with established industries.

Respecting natural and cultural values

Sustainable tourism development derives its form and appeal from these qualities, and adds to the special nature of the destination.



To eat and speak with locals is the best way for mutual understanding (Armenia, Kazakhstan)

Achieving conservation outcomes

A mutually beneficial alliance can be achieved between tourism and conservation. That is, through understanding and enjoyment comes greater appreciation and empathy, advocacy and protection for the resource.

Having good content ('telling the story')

Tourism development can interpret (present and explain) natural, social, historic and ecological features. Telling the story provides a more rewarding experience and ultimately helps conserve the destination.

Enhancing sense of place through design

Good design respects the resource, achieves conservation outcomes, reflects community values, and is instrumental in telling the story. It is not just about form and function but also about invoking an emotional response from the visitor.

Providing mutual benefits to visitors and hosts

Tourism is not encouraged for its own sake. It is an economic and community development tool and must take into account the benefits that both the host community and the visitor seek.

Building local capacity

Good tourism businesses do not stand isolated from the communities in which they operate. They get involved with the community and collaborate with other businesses and stakeholders and help to build local capacity.

12 principles described above contribute to the success of a sustainable tourism development.

These can be summed up in the statement: '**Providing a target market with a desired experience in a unique place.**' Target market; desired experience; and place: these are the three key elements to get right at the very beginning of a project. Each of these three elements is related to the others, and they all need to be aligned to create a successful sustainable tourist development.

Creating a tourism development can start with any of these. One might have a special site in mind, or want to offer a unique experience, or see an opportunity to satisfy a particular market. The beginning point is not important. What is important is to make sure all three aspects are aligned to provide a target market with a desired experience in a unique place.



'Hobbit house' in garden of SOSNA Ecological centre, SE Slovakia.

PRACTICAL ADVICES FOR LOCAL PROVIDERS OF SERVICES

Implementing of sustainable tourism is primarily based on **networking among the different stakeholders** and players such as local farmers, craftsmen, artists, local, regional and national authorities, self-governments, NGOs, tourism and transportation industry and its customers, as well as visitors and tourists of a given region. Co-operation and mutual support of local people and bodies are essential for successful running of sustainable and responsible tourism.

Practical advices for local providers of services:

- Create your hostel in balance with local architecture, traditions, materials and art.
- Use local, natural materials instead of artificial ones.
- Prepare food from local fresh sources, use local, traditional recipes
- Prepare programmes based on local traditions, folklore, heritage „Ecotourists' in general appreciate authenticity.
- The same is valid in case of souvenirs and handicrafts for visitors
- For development of programmes for visitors, marked trails, information tables and region promotion materials you have to co-operate with other involved people and organisations.
- Keep in mind crucial ecological topics: climate protection (plant trees around your accommodation, create small ponds, make your place natural and pleasant), waste minimising (instead of plastic, disposable cups and tableware, you can use pottery, much more appreciated by tourists), nature protection (programs for visitors must not harm nature, for example, instead of 4x4 cars you can use horses for tours).

What is important: this branch of tourism do not require any huge investments, instead of it, creativity, sensibility to nature and traditions, and honest simplicity can very effectively replace missing finances.

Example: Accommodation can be very simple. For instance, here is one very successful example from Sveden: Kolarbyn Ecolodge is luxury in its most primitive form. Its twelve cabins are covered in mud and grass, with blueberries and mushrooms growing from the roofs. People are coming here to escape electricity and showers – and experience fresh air, peacefulness and wildlife. Kolarbyn is just two hours’ drive from Stockholm.

WHY CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO TOURISM

The cultural and natural heritage tourism are the fastest growing segment of the sector. Some of the driving forces of the EU such as liberalisation, the internal market and the euro also gain more importance for the further evolution of tourism.

Nevertheless, decisions taken by individual tourists are mainly subjective and thus external influences. Recent history in this regard shows us that tourists are highly sensitive to conflict scenarios and violence, health risks and increasing environmental accidents. The whole decision-making process is made even more complex through changes in habits. The possibility of Internet booking and consequent individual travelling, the trend towards late and flexible travel decisions, and the availability of low-cost carriers and intensified search for price advantages makes tourism one of the most volatile and dynamic economic sectors.



Authentic life of local people and their services are one of the basic parts of sustainable tourism (Georgia, Kirgistan)

In discussing trends or general societal changes, new forms or themes of tourism are also of great influence for the further development of this sector:

Tourism and sustainability

- a significant shift in people's awareness of the environmental impact of mass tourism
- a new social awareness-interest in authentic, small and local holiday experiences
- the new tourist (would eat in a local restaurant, would use local guides, would look for the true story behind the destination)
- more do-it-yourself travellers (more demanding and at the same time taking responsibility)

Tourism and accessibility

- almost 40 million people in Europe are handicapped and they are tourists too
- from a commercial point of view alone these consumers are not to be neglected

Tourism and rural and cultural heritage

- there is a clear and growing market for non-traditional tourist destinations

Tourism and sports

- it is a rapidly growing segment for individual and group tourism

Tourism and peace

- tourism is associated with tolerance, cultural exchange, learning to know each other, creation of welfare and friendship



In case of insurance of basic safety, ecotourism can bring life back to post-war regions. Here you can see trail in Bosnian mountains with marked locations where mines can appear.

Tourism and health

- a healthy lifestyle and promoting a healthy diet among customers will become a priority for travel companies
- holiday companies will work more closely with the medical professionals
- travellers will be better educated about holiday health risks in general

Tourism and technology

- broadband will revolutionise communication culture and boost e-commerce; it will directly affect how we take holidays
- mobile phones are our personal holiday organisers
- artificial intelligent agents in our computers act as personal holiday tour operators
- virtual holidays will become a reality.



Discovering and enjoying local culture (Kazakhstan)

BENEFITS OF ST

Considering the potential of Armenian landscape, countryside and nature, the following activities are most appropriate: glamping and hiking, discovering Armenian history, meeting of local people, visiting of rivers and lakes, experiencing wild camping, watching wildlife and tasting local wine and food.



Historical monuments belongs to the most essential attractions for visitors



Benefits for entrepreneurs: most of income stay in the region, with the local farmers, guides, providers of accommodation (at their own home or small cottages, etc.) and other service providers. Income is better distributed among the people with low income.

Benefits for customers: personal experience of something authentic, local, unique is one of the most valuable added values of this kind of tourism.

Benefit for nature and culture: basic principle of this branch is responsible and conservation approach to natural and cultural/historical values of selected region. Sustainable tourism take into account urgent and serious problems of nature and landscape which need help: climate, extinction of species, water and air pollution, waste production, destruction of natural areas.

ECO TOURISM

Ecotourism is a concept incorporating the goal that tourism should contribute to the conservation of natural landscapes. Ecotourism is an environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present). It promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.

THE MEANING OF ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a form of tourism directed to undisturbed natural areas. It's a popular alternative to commercial mass tourism. This form of tourism contains a variety of ethical travel practices, so it can get broadly described as a choice of travel to demonstrate respect to nature and local communities.

You probably heard it before: If we want to survive in the future, we need clean air and a green environment. Tourism takes an important role here.

Ecotourism is practised all over the world today. When you travel in natural areas where the environment is protected and the wellbeing of local people is

ensured through providing education and raising awareness, that is Ecotourism, of which environmental education and forming of attitudes are valuable by-products.

As a tour operator, it's imperative to have a clear understanding of the needs of the travellers. People want to explore a stunning, beautifully preserved destination with fresh, natural life.

Even in the most remote places on the planet, there are ecotourism destinations. In these places, locals survive on their own and have little to no industrial income for further development as individuals or as a society.

As foreigners, people need to understand and respect local laws and avoid pollution by any means. The result will be a greater enjoyment of the natural environment they travel to. At the same time, everyone can contribute to the protection and preservation of the region.

For this reason, there's an active necessity to promote and implement awareness campaigns in all regions of the world. Tourists and tour operators must be aware of the consequences of tourism activities as it can contribute to the destruction of some of these places in the world.

Example: One of the best examples of an ecotourism initiative in Armenia is **Hike Armenia** – www.hikearmenia.org

This is an initiative of young passionate hikers from across the globe who want to show the world what Armenia has to offer. Their web page provides information on various trails in natural and historical places, as well as on related services: transport, accommodation, guides, local food and drinks, etc. For providers of services (accommodation, food, programs) we highly recommend to establish contact with these enthusiastic folks!

Here are some of examples of their marked hiking trails:

www.hikearmenia.org/all-trails/trail/hikers-haven

www.hikearmenia.org/all-trails/trail/little-switzerland

WILDERNESS TOURISM

Wilderness represents a vital element of natural and cultural heritage. In addition to its intrinsic value, it offers the opportunity for people to experience the spiritual quality of nature in the widest experiential sense – beyond mere physical and visual attributes, and in particular its psychological impact. It also provides important economic, social and environmental benefits, including ecosystem services, for local communities, landholders and society at large. Wilderness performs several functions better than modified landscapes. Among these are for example:

- Conserving Biodiversity
- Protecting Ecosystem Services
- Connecting Landscapes
- Building Knowledge and Understanding of Natural Processes
- Inspiring People.

Originating in the United States, the concept of wilderness tourism has spread and gained popularity worldwide.

Wilderness areas include conservation preserves, estates, national forests, and parks. These are important for the survival of certain species, conservation, and recreation. Nowadays, wildlands are increasingly being promoted as products for consumption, as illustrated by modern tourism practices and associated place marketing.



Many visitors are willing to pay for unspoiled nature, presence of wild animals and rare plants, pure water and air, silence and peace in mind (Prenj mountains, Bosnia)

Despite its popularity, wilderness tourism has no universally accepted definition. Most commonly, it involves visits to pristine areas with no infrastructure.

The wilderness is a haven for explores, campers and hikers of wild land. These vast wild lands have great importance in human life as they are separate ecosystems on this planet which provide a rich biodiversity. Wilderness tourists are usually fit and self-sufficient, enabling them to navigate harsh terrains. Related terms such as nature-based, adventure, backcountry recreation, and associated activities, including nature walks, abseiling, and white water rafting, are often associated with wilderness tourism.



The Caucasus can be considered as one of the world's lesser-known biodiversity hotspots. Therefore, it is an ideal place for development of responsible and well managed wilderness tourism. As an area of great ecological importance, the Caucasus is included in the list of biodiversity hotspots; one of the 25 regions which together cover only 1.4 per cent of the Earth's land surface but contain nearly half of all plant species and a third of all terrestrial vertebrate species. The Caucasus is home to more than 152 species of mammal, including: Caucasian Leopard, Bezoar Ibex, Brown Bear, Grey Wolf, and Caspian Red Deer.

Over 380 species of bird can also be found there, including the endemic ones. Armenia's plant diversity include about 7,500 species, of which 35 per cent are endemics.



Pristine areas are in focus of wilderness tourism (Caucasus mountains)

THREATS

While hunting in Armenia is mostly a traditional activity and usually involves small mammals, international trophy hunters do visit Armenia for organized 'hunting tours'. Animals such as bears, wolves, foxes, badgers, minks, bezoar goats and mouflons are also sought after for their skins or body parts. These can be found at markets in Yerevan as well as online on websites such as List.am.



Such 'decorations' of restaurants or hostels will never attract any nature lovers

Bear cubs and some raptors are captured in the wild to be kept in captivity. Butterflies and other insects are also captured and used to make souvenirs which are then sold in the markets in Yerevan.

Some animals are also targeted in rural areas in Armenia in response to human-wildlife conflicts. Villagers have reported experiencing conflicts with and killing snakes, martens, wolves, bears, foxes, jackals, snakes, weasels, raptors and boars. Sometimes these animals are killed using poison or indiscriminate and inhumane traps.

Example: As in many other cases – this situation can be changed, if we change the perspective on „source of income’. One of best known examples is whale hunting in Norway. While in the past, meat and other parts of whale has been considered as a source of income, nowadays, watching living whales in the ocean can bring a much better profit.

Nature-based tourism (NBT), also known as ecotourism or nature tourism, is defined as travel to enable the enjoyment of undeveloped natural areas. It is a rapidly-expanding area in the tourism travel sector which attracts large numbers of visitors: globally, terrestrial protected areas receive approximately eight billion visits per year. NBT can be a particularly effective tool in the conservation and management of protected areas. It can also bring potential social and economic benefits, such as funds for conservation and alternative livelihoods for local people.

[Photos: Štefan Szabó, Silvia Szabóová]



ECOTOURISM PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA

SILVIA SZABÓOVÁ / SLOVAKIA

Natural tourism (or ecotourism) is an ideal tool for creating and preserving vast areas of wilderness in human populated areas. Thanks to ecotourism, the region can prosper economically while preserving its natural values. In addition, it naturally creates conditions for the development of local communities and the preservation of their traditions and culture.



Photo: Kamil Soóš, AEVIS

AEVIS FOUNDATION

The word Aevis comes from Latin and means something that has existed for a very long time. Wild nature is a part of this ancient history. Thousands of generations of organisms have lived on Earth before us; they have left us a beautiful and diverse world full of treasure accumulated since the beginning of the ages.

AEVIS is a non-profit organization dedicated to nature tourism which offers outdoor programs for people of all ages. Here are some examples of the nature excursions that are offered by AEVIS:

Program: Landscape of Wolf Mountains

Sightseeing excursions through the picturesque and still wild landscape of Poloniny and Vihorlat with a professional guide.

Do you want to get lost in time and space without a mobile signal or navigation? Would you like to learn something interesting about nature and forests but you don't know where to go? Are you young, a parent, or an active senior that likes adventure? Come along with us to the uncharted northeast of Slovakia and discover unique beech forests and mountain ranges. Experience something new, something authentic and real.

The forest sings

Peek into the wilderness with a professional instructor, discover the mysteries and attractions of the bird world and support the conservation of wildlife.

A day-long excursion to learn the secrets of the unique bird species of the Carpathian forests in Poloniny is available for you every day during the summer. The best performance of a bird choir can be only experienced in a real forest; with us, you can visit a unique, authentic forest, of which there is only half a percent left in Slovakia. Discover the mysteries and attractions of the bird world; find out why a woodpecker does not get a concussion even if it pecks trees all day, or how an owl can rotate its head by 270 degrees. You can choose a morning excursion that starts very early in the day or an afternoon excursion that ends late in the evening.

In the wolf's footsteps

Cognitive excursion on horseback to learn the secrets of the Carpathian wolves with a professional guide.

Try a relaxing horseback ride and track wolves in their natural habitat with us. Learn more about their life, behavior and the importance of the relationships they form with other species in the wild.

More info:

www.aevis.org/nase-aktivity/rozvoj-prirodneho-turizmu/exkurzie/
www.aevis.org

THE PROJECT WHERE TO GO IN HOREHRONIE

The project Where to go in Horehronie (Central Slovakia) offers comprehensive information on the possibilities of rural tourism, activities and ecotourism offers

in Horehronie, the picturesque region of Slovakia. You can go on horse trekking trips, join tours with a guide for one or more days, find programs for different target groups (including parents with children) and so on. Here is a sample of one of the offered programs:

Wandering through the Hucul Highway

You can admire the beauty of the National Park's natural scenery during several hours or even days of horse-riding.

If you have never sat atop a horse, a trained guide will teach you both how to ride a horse and the appropriate behavior around horses. The difficulty and length of the trip can be discussed and agreed on in advance. During the longer excursions there is the possibility of providing overnight accommodation and boarding at transfer stations.

The literal translation of the word Hucul from the Romanian language is „bandit’. The history of the Hucul and riding on the Hucul horses is also related to the project of Hucul Magistrala, which aims to give visitors an authentic ‘in the Hucul saddle’ experience about the present and past of the Hucul as well as the history of outlaws in the Muran Plateau micro-region.



Photo:
www.huculskamagistrala.sk/externe/klaster/home.nsf/pagehm/Putovanie_po_Huculskej_magistrale

More info:

www.kamnahorehroni.sk/miesta/putovanie-huculskou-magistradou/

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AGROTOURISM

BOTOS ISTVAN CSABA / HUNGARY



In its broadest extent, **agritourism**, or agrotourism, involves any agriculture based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm. Although it has different definitions in different parts of the world and sometimes refers specifically to farm stays, agritourism includes a wide variety of activities.

Agritourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch, or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates increased income for the owner. It offers farmers the possibility of diversifying and generating additional income through on-farm touristic activities in order to supplement their low agricultural income. This helps to maintain the viability of active farms and rural communities and the related activities support and promote agricultural resources, tradition and culture and it is a successful and growing example of sustainable tourism.

People have become more interested in how their food is produced. They want to meet farmers and processors and talk with them about what goes into food production. For many people who visit farms, especially children, the visit marks the first time they see the source of their food, be it a dairy cow, an ear of corn growing in a field, or an apple they can pick right off a tree.

Farmers use this interest to develop traffic at their farm or ranch and interest in the quality of their products, as well as awareness of their products. They turn their land into a destination and open their doors to the public in order to teach more about what they do.

Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry called **rural tourism** that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside. Agritourism is a special form of rural tourism that is considered a growth industry in many parts of the world. Other terms associated with agritourism are 'agritainment', 'value added products', 'farm direct marketing' and 'sustainable agriculture'.

Agritourism might include:

- Hospitality services (farm stays, various accommodation, guided tours or outfitter services)
- On-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands)
- Entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances)
- Outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife tours, horseback riding)
- Educational experiences (school visits, cannery tours, cooking classes, or wine tasting).

Agricultural tourism has become a necessary means for many small farms' survival. By diversifying business operations, farm operators are able to ensure a more stable income. This is because agritourism activities can occur during times of the year that crops may not be in season, and by providing a completely separate stream of income. Some studies have found that agritourism operations often benefit their surrounding communities by drawing tourists to the area. The economic boost by the increase in traffic can be beneficial to rural areas in need of diversified streams of income.

The Sustainable Development Program of Armenia identified agritourism development among the bases of rural development to increase welfare of people and poverty alleviation. Based on the natural, historic and cultural values of the country rural and ecotourism are priorities in Tourism Development Concept Paper.

The most potential opportunities of agritourism are the following:

- increasing family income,
- generating tourism income
- increasing value of the village,
- generating related tourism businesses.

Agritourism contributes to improving the economy of the local communities by agricultural product improvements and stimulations of related tourism enterprises. It also helps improve the social situations, particularly poverty alleviation, decreasing unemployment, and declining urbanization. From the point of view of rural tourism, nature conservation is the greatest contribution toward sustainable tourism development in Armenia.

Different types and categories of accommodation exist in the regions of Armenia, from a few high-class hotels to rustic guesthouses with very simple facilities. Most of them could be considered rural and agritourism establishments, defined as a combination of a natural setting and products of agricultural operations combined within a tourism experience. It is very advisable that hotels and rural guesthouses do their work according to environmental standards; they should prefer usage of natural materials in design, furnishing and catering, and they should contribute to sustainable tourism by employing local citizens and buying local products. There are also other ways they can contribute to sustainability such as saving resources of our planet by using solar energy, saving fresh water, using environmentally friendly detergents for cleaning, reducing the amount of waste and/or treating waste properly, and cleaning sewage with water treatment equipment, thus preventing pollution of rivers.

Because most Armenian farms are operated by small landowners, there is great opportunity for customization and uniqueness in agritourism attractions. Provided activities under the aegis of agritainment can be farm tours and visits to show the growing, harvesting, and processing of locally grown foods. There may be overnight farm stays with related education or entertainment services, direct farm sales, or in large scale festivals, garden or orchard tours, including apricot picking or grape harvest and winemaking, education and participation in other farm activities, tours to wineries, distilleries, dairy product factories. Other tourists are interested in wildlife tours, or in home and lifestyle of local villagers. Tourists may participate in traditional customs, bread (lavash) making, picnic, hiking, horse-riding, cycling, visiting nearby cultural values, picking various berries, and even trying photography or painting beautiful scenes.

Armenia, where one can find many untouched pieces of unique natural phenomena is the heaven for rural tourists. Each picturesque mountain village with its inimitable landscape, local traditions and unique cultural and historic monuments hidden in rocks, has a great potential to lure in the tourists.

These rural areas are of great interest for the development of tourism with the combination of eco-, rural-, agri- and adventure tourism. Hiking, skiing, horse

and donkey riding, culinary and wine tours, fishing, historical tours can be served for tourists. However, the huge potential of nature based rural tourism is not properly developed.

There are several local initiatives that aim to develop tourist activities in the regions. They involve both small private business enterprises and local NGOs and community initiatives. Service providers, tour operators, hotels-, guesthouse-, restaurant owners are networking and besides developing their business, they deal with environmental and sustainable tourism issues as well.

GASTRO AND FOOD TOURISM

Gastro tourism refers to trips made to destinations where local food and beverages are the main motivating factors for all or part of the travel. In its broadest sense, gastro tourism is defined as the intentional pursuit of appealing, authentic, memorable, culinary experiences of all kinds while travelling internationally, regionally or even locally.

A commonly held theory in many recent research fields is that gastronomy can contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of places while potentially representing elements that increase those places' attractiveness and competitiveness.

A gastro experience is a food or beverage-related activity that involves behind-the-scenes observations accompanied with cultural or regional illuminations. It may include hands-on participation that culminates in festive, casual, or formal partaking of food or drink. It is part of cultural tourism, as cuisine is a manifestation of culture and it is also considered to be a kind of experimental tourism. Gastronomy tourism forms an integral part of local life and is forged by the history, culture, economy and society of an area. This bears the natural potential to enrich the visitor experience, establishing a direct connection to the region, its people, culture and heritage.

Travellers like to discover the local cuisine of the destination, to explore its restaurants, to taste the typical products, the traditions, and to be able to have

surprising, unique and special experiences. According to the World Tourism Organization, more than a third of a tourist's spending is dedicated to food. Gastronomy has become one of the main reasons to travel. In many destinations, gastronomy has become a strategic sector that contributes to the generation of wealth and employment, creating value for the entire value chain from the production of quality food, its transformation, to the hotel or tourism companies and the promotion of the country brand.

Recently, tourists have changed the focus of their travels. Now, instead of wishing to visit sites at the destination in a contemplative way, they wish to enjoy their experiences and want to carry out memorable activities that allow them to connect and participate and that should be the expression of the atmosphere, lifestyle and gastronomic culture of the place. **Today's gastronomy tourists want to find the essence of the place they are visiting.** They search for authenticity and identity, not only of the food products but also of the social context around them. They are interested in product origin and culinary techniques and they see gastronomy as means of socialization. Such tourists consume more than average, they are demanding and reject uniformity.

Sustainable culinary experiences are alternative tourist food-products that are traditional, respect the local environment and local producers and appeal to the visitors desire for authenticity.

It's not a secret that excellent food can rival landmarks, museums, climate, and nightlife as a draw for tourists. **We can say that food ranks within the top five most important considerations for travellers when booking a trip.** Gastro tourism has gained popularity with increasing speed, largely due to the digital age and social media. As such, cuisine often takes center stage as the primary or even sole reason many travellers select their destination. **Gastronauts learn about food and drink when they visit a destination and claim that eating and drinking help in understanding the local culture and in capturing the unique character of a place.** It can also be a differentiator; if a destination can promote their local cuisine in an authentic way, they can win the tourists' attention.

As gastro tourism has gained more visibility in recent years, so has sustainable tourism. Defined as travel that avoids the depletion of environmental, economic, or cultural resources, sustainable tourism is a response to over-tourism. It occurs when the number of visitors in a destination exceeds its resources. There are many ways travellers can support sustainable tourism.

One way is to consciously choose destinations that are not overcrowded and where resources are abundantly available. More and more travellers are looking beyond conventional tourist attractions and supporting sustainability by visiting lesser-known but equally enriching locations.

The concurrent rise of both food tourism and sustainable tourism presents an interesting opportunity for marketers, particularly those places that are not conventional tourist destinations. By leveraging the growing appeal of food tourism to draw in more visitors, travel marketers can increase bookings while contributing to a more balanced distribution of visitors.

Today tourists want to know and understand lifestyle and local traditions of the destinations. Therefore, tourist products must reflect the true local culture and must be authentic. The search for authenticity, identity of places, historical roots and, more generally, the need to move closer to lasting values in a changing world are consequences of the modern alienating lifestyle. The rediscovery of authenticity can be a tool for sustainability. Attractions based on specific elements of the local life and traditions can therefore become the core of a sustainable way of tourism. This represents basic values of the community. It is an instrument that allows everybody but specially the younger generations to rediscover and preserve forgotten forms of culture and traditions of the community and it is a prerequisite for the sustainability of tourism development. Besides, authenticity and involvement of residents can substantially increase the experiential value of the holiday, offering unique and unforgettable tourist experiences.

Experts say that visitors are expecting traditional dishes made from local ingredients to be available year round. In order to preserve the lands and their harvest, it is important for farmers, chefs, and other-food tourism providers to honour seasonality and educate themselves on sustainable growing practices.

A large part of modern tourists are flexitarian, meaning they follow plant-based diets with occasional meat consumption. There has been a growing focus not only on the health benefits of following a plant-based diet, but also the environmental concerns of people's dietary habits and how important it is for our planet that people eat mostly plant-based meals. It is also confirmed the plant-based trend is gaining traction in restaurants.

FORMS OF APPEARANCE OF GASTRO TOURISM

Gastronomic events

The tools for increasing the marketability of national gastronomy include gastronomic events as the most typical tourist attractions. The gastronomic elements combined with folklore and the diversity of the countryside can be turned into unique products. These events are not just gastronomic presentations; they usually take place in a natural environment, with cooks, appliances and fixtures reminiscent of the past. They are like living museums where old exhibits are on display and their function becomes clear to interested visitors.

Types of gastronomic events:

- National food related events (barbeque festival in Akhtala, Tolma Festival, Mets Pur Festival);
- Events relating to raw materials (festivals for cereals, dairy products, honey, vegetables and fruits, apricot, various berries, watermelon, tea and coffee);
- Folk, regional gastronomy events (Sheep Shearing Festival, Areni Wine Festival, Yerevan Wine Days, DiliTon Festival);
- Events related to the history of the Armenians (Birthday of Yerevan);
- Professional events such as gastronomic conferences and exhibitions.

Gastronomic museums

Elements related to the preparation and traditions of a product, food or drink of a regional gastronomy are collected by gastronomic museums, such as wine museums, beer or cognac museums, visitor centres of different producing factories, as well as exhibitions related to certain agricultural or food products.

Sightseeing of gastronomical thematic trips

Thematic journeys that cover gastronomic products based on the main food

or drinks in the region are also popular among gastronomists. The wine routes of individual wine regions are probably the best known in this category. All the wine regions may have their thematic paths that include vineyards, cellars, restaurants and hotels.

An agricultural product can also be a theme for thematic trips, depending on the nature of the landscape. Good examples of this are the so called fruit roads, which are typical for a certain region. Usually, they offer both traditional and modern recipes; creativity is also a crucial part of the establishment of these trips with entertaining and educative activities for people of different ages.

Restaurants as tourist attractions

These can also be divided into groups:

- restaurants with national traditions (Lavash Yerevan, Tavern Yerevan)
- internationally acclaimed, suited to the needs of the modern age Michelin starred restaurants (Vinograd).

Establishment of functional, visually pleasing, environmentally friendly and easy to maintain landscapes in resorts is a very impressive and effective element of tourism industry. Organic fresh food can be cultivated in the restaurant itself or on hotel property for use in their kitchen. This can be performed either in small part of the adjacent garden or in nearby agricultural areas.

Themed dinners

In recent years, more and more people have been opting for experience packages in hotels. Some hotels or inns also try to make their thematic weekends a culinary experience, by offering, for instance, such features as themed feasts or even gourmet dinners. In such case, the menu of the given meal, and often the whole weekend, is organized around a theme, ingredient or event: Newborn Feast, Harvest Dinner, New Wine Feast or even a Sheep Weekend. During the feast, you can sample the foods traditionally consumed during the holiday. Of course, tourists can try themed dinners on more than just red days, as many ingredients or nationalities are at the center of the meal, such as halcyon, chestnut days, different international cuisine weekends. We can also find something that is not just about food: chefs create dishes to complement the wines of a winemaker or a region.

Other gastronomic attractions

Cooking related programmes are a very popular type of tourist attraction. From the cheaper one-day cooking classes to the one-week, more affordable cookery course, almost everyone can find something that fits their wishes. In addition to traditional local recipes, we can try the cooking of other regions and countries as well.

Open kitchens are places where travellers are invited to dine in the home of chefs to savour personal stories in an intimate setting. By spending time in a real home and away from tourist attractions travellers can make a direct connection with a local chef, often preparing the most traditional dishes of the region, and catch a glimpse of life in a village or neighbourhood. It doesn't get more authentic than that.

Food tours are mostly thematic and showcase the typical cuisine of a particular country or region so they preferably focus on local traditions.

Joint efforts for success

In case of gastro tourism, it also makes sense that it is better not to work alone. The opportunity to create a network for the participants of gastro tourism within a certain region is a huge advantage. Being part of a network makes it possible to preserve and promote the common, unique gastronomic heritage. Different networks can also distribute other local networks' offer and visit each other's events as well. Members of the networks can share their work, methods and experience and usually search and collect the following:

- traditional food from the regions,
- touristic and gastronomic services,
- local products, original recipes.

The focus of the activity can be the development of a gastronomic route that links the areas concerned and gives the visitor a unique gastronomic experience. The network may include the members of tourism and gastronomy training institutions, cultural and developmental forces of the area, producers of local products and artisanal food, restaurants and tourism service providers.

Gastronomy is not just a dish. To reach that dish, a value chain has to be built that includes elements associated with the production and processing of foods, as well as their distribution, transformation and ingestion. The processes include added values such as gastronomic landscapes, the destination's cultural and culinary identity, tangible and intangible heritage including culinary crafts, traditional recipes, utensils, etc. These are linked to other elements having a greater or lesser impact such as public policies, administrative regulation, infrastructure, training and research to achieve the sustainable environmental, economic and social development of the region.

People dealing with sustainable tourism support the production, economy and human resources of the place they live, promote regional uniqueness and the responsibility of hospitality, offer services which highlight local culture and gastronomy, and respect the environment and the sustainability of their homeland.

GASTROTOURISM EXAMPLES IN HUNGARY

TASTE OF ANCIENT HUNGARY – GASTRO FESTIVAL

It is an annual large-scale culinary festival in the recreational area of Nyíregyháza city in September, attended by the teams of several local and national self-governments, non-governmental associations, open-air ethnographic museums and the Knights of the Hungarian Taste Watch. In addition to the folk and regional dishes of Nyírség, Szatmár, Nyíri Mezőség, visitors can also experience the Hungarian specialties of Transcarpathia in Ukraine and Partium in Romania. Besides the culinary delights, there are many entertainment programs waiting for those interested. Various formations playing folk music, entertainment for the children provided by puppet theaters, dance shows and craftsmen.

The event is held in the open air Sóstó Museum Village, which is a place full of life at this time; the representatives of several crafts present the tricks of their profession on the workshop line there.

The organizers announce a competition between the cooking teams, and guests can choose to award the title of 'The Tastiest Food of the Festival'. This event

is based on cooperation among local touristic institutions and traditional food promoters.



Photos: Municipality of Nyíregyháza

PLUM ROAD IN SZATMÁR-BEREG

This initiative is focused around a special plum fruit which is the most characteristic fruit of the Szatmár-Bereg area. The event is a very good example of networking of interested parties and is a good illustration of thematic tourism. People who live there make special plum jam and dried fruits, as well as the famous Szatmár Plum Brandy.

The organizers established an association to manage the idea and the necessary related activities on the area of the 17 participating villages. They created this Plum Road as a common touristic product and promote each other's festivals, events and celebrations as well. As they plan for the long term, they popularize sustainable solutions and use only the necessary resources.

They worked out one-, three- and five days long journeys which show the natural, cultural and gastronomic values of the region for the tourists. These include daily programmes, places to visit, activities to try, accommodation offers, gastro events and even transportation.

As the region is close to Romania, they made a cross-border version of the Plum Road as well.

As they say, the beauty of nature, the diverse appearance of the culture and the hospitality of the people will captivate you and you will see that you will long to return to this region later.

So while you learn more about the special plum, you visit the precious natural areas, riversides, oxbow lakes, forests, meadows with unique species. At the same time you can learn about the local history, cultural values and enjoy the taste of the region and the hospitality of inhabitants.

More info: www.szilvaut.hu



Photos: Plum Road Association

AGRO EXAMPLE

SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE PROGRAMME – GÖMÖRSZŐLŐS

It is situated in a small hidden village, managed by the Institute for Ecological Foundation for Sustainable Development. The institute aims to serve the development of society's knowledge and approach to sustainability and to contribute to the elaboration of practical steps on the road to a sustainable society. Their GömörSZŐLŐS programme, as a model, was established in 1993.

GömörSZŐLŐS is located 50 km north of Miskolc, very close to the Slovak border. The settlement of barely seventy people carries with it all the features of small-village rural areas: an aging local population, buildings that have lost their function, vacant local markets, the traditional peasant culture still found in its traces, the revitalized natural landscape, relative tranquillity, silence, clean environment.

The GömörSZŐLŐS program tries to offer a solution to this dichotomy in terms of sustainability. How can we live in this socially and economically sinking world without damaging the natural environment?

They invite you to this spiritual adventure tour with great hospitality and talk all about their more than twenty years of experience, struggles, achievements and failures. At the same time, the visitors can learn about the beauty of the Gömör landscape, local tastes, surviving local customs, or even innovative solutions in and around the house that support sustainability, and get a taste of Gömör from the members of the school of sustainability.

The Institute bought some abandoned houses and renovated them, combining traditional methods and renewable energies. First, they offered accommodation for tourists as the village is along the National Blue Touristic Route. Later on, they organized trainings related to the theory and practical side of sustainability. They involved local people to make local quality food for the visitors and also provide rooms for them. They also encouraged the local government to clean up the settlement, cultivate the abandoned agricultural areas and orchards, established a craft museum and started to do local branded craftworks with the

involvement of locals, many of whom found jobs this way. They also waited for new inhabitants, those who were willing to try out the life in rural areas, with less comfort but in an environmentally friendly way.

The Institute started to organize events for interested people, potential tourists under the aegis of sustainability: family camps, craftwork camps for children and adults, rural wellness, horse-riding camps, how to bake your bread training, different cooking schools, how to cultivate your land without fertilizers and pesticides, etc.



→
Foto:
Zsuzsanna Köllő

Photos:
Balázs Nagy
↓↘



VIRÁGOSKÚT (FLOWER WELL) BIO FARM – BALMAZÚJVÁROS

Organic farming is the future – this is the slogan of a biofarm which became a very popular agrotouristic attraction in Hortobágy region. Everyone should visit the Flower Well organic farm! The farmer, Péter Rózsa, is not only obsessed with clean, chemical-free organic farming, but is also a successful and funny businessman.

Under the Flower Well brand, they offer their customers healthy and tasty organic food and beverages that are free of preservatives, artificial colours and sprays.

On the Flower Well near Balmazújváros city, vegetables, herbs and field plants are grown on 25 hectares with the use of biodynamic methods.

The other part of the farm is located in Hortobágy, where they breed and keep their native Hungarian animals right next to the river bank, while also keeping in mind the aspects of organic animal keeping. Hungarian gray cattle, racka in black and white versions, blonde mangalica, donkey studs, bald-necked hens, curled feathered geese, guinea fowl, turkeys, comondors (a breed of a domestic dog) can all be found there.

In the summer of 2003, the bio-processing plant satisfying all needs was handed over. This plant is where canned vegetables and fruits are now made on the basis of old Transylvanian and traditional local recipes, e.g. charcoal baked eggplant, peppers, zucchini and aubergine cream.

The biofarm owners opened their own restaurant, and they also hold Visitors' Day every June. During the Visitors' Day, every interested visitor can see how the farming is done on the biofarm. Additionally, many entertaining programmes, which are simultaneously professional lectures on organic farming, are available as well.

The company sacrifices a lot to preserve and nurture old crafts, customs and traditions.



Photos:
Péter Rózsa,
György Hajnal

ETHNOGRAPHIC TOURISM WITH POLISH EXAMPLES



MARIA STANISZEWSKA / POLAND

In the last few decades, the cultural landscape of rural areas has been undergoing a transformation. The old wooden construction style is going out of fashion; traditional country farms and cottages are being demolished and replaced, as are small churches. Furthermore, rural regions are increasingly no longer dedicated strictly to agriculture, but are becoming more and more multifunctional. One such new emerging function is tourism, whose growth has been facilitated by people's growing interest in both the traditional architecture and local folk culture. It is due to this interest that ethnographic tourism, or broadly understood cultural tourism, is gaining significance in the rural regions. As the presence of the tourist industry can stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life for the locals in a region, it is vital that this opportunity is taken advantage of.

By generating interest in local culture, tourism also plays an important role in cultural preservation. In places where local folk culture had been kept out of the public eye and nearly forgotten, it is now used to promote the region. This creates an additional incentive to keep local culture alive and thriving and provides the resources to do so.

Ethnographic tourism is based on learning about the spiritual and material cultural heritage of a given community as well as the life of the members of that community through making personal contact with the locals and by experiencing or witnessing their art, craft, music, literature, dance, food, drink, entertainment, language and rituals.

The cultural heritage that people who engage in ethnographic tourism often express interest in include: traditional architecture and construction (residential, religious, industrial, farm), spatial layout of a village, folk art and craft products, customs and rituals, lifestyle, dialect and regional cuisine. These elements can be experienced in: various types of museums such as open-air, regional, and memorial, as well through participation in cultural events, eating a meal

in pubs and inns and local restaurants that serve traditional cuisine, finding accommodation on agritourism farms, sightseeing and exploring places of cultural significance including local production and manufacturing plants, and by observing and participating in the work of local communities.

In Poland, ethnographic tourism is implemented in various ways, both material (such as through museums and ethnographic villages) and immaterial (for instance, the promotion of rites and customs.)

OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS

It's worth noting that the reason open-air museums have earned their place in European cultural landscape was the need to protect and preserve national European culture, which has been cultivated alongside agricultural and pastoral economy. As such, their exhibitions and displays will be intrinsically intertwined with these topics.

Open-air museums are museum facilities whose exhibitions are held outside. The main exhibits are typically residential, industrial, and farm buildings with the appropriate equipment and furnishing. The role of these displays is often educational in nature with a scientific basis. Their main function is helping bring people closer to the tradition and everyday life of times that have long since passed. Open-air museums not only play an important part in preserving historic farm buildings, but also the natural environment as the various flora is oft considered to have historical value and is preserved alongside man-made objects. For this reason, the preserved plants and other natural elements are carefully cultivated in an environment as close to natural as possible. This way, the open-air museums can be considered snapshots of actual authentic historical life and work environments. Amongst the types of open-air museums we can find: rural museums (ethnographic parks), folk culture museums, folk architecture museums, folk technique and craft museums, small-town museums, beekeeping museums, technical/technology museums, homestead museums in situ.

An additional advantage of open-air museums is the relative ease of organizing folk festivals and events on the premises. These events could include local folk band performances and exhibitions of traditional crafts, customs and rituals. By launching craft and industrial facilities, the visitors are given the unique op-

portunity to witness the full and authentic scope of the traditional activities of the showcased exhibitions. Furthermore, it is possible to organize and hold large-scale educational and popular-scientific campaigns in the museums. Nowadays, open-air museums not only in Poland but in the world overall are working on making their offer more attractive by introducing new types of museum visits and events.

Amongst the type of events that can be organized in open-air museums are; recreation of traditional ceremonies, rituals and holidays, festivals, fairs, parades, contests, feasts and workshops on the traditional folk arts and crafts. All these events make up the cultural calendar of a given region and are a vital part of the tourism focused on non-material performing heritage. In Poland, many folk events that take place in open-air museums are considered to be part of Christian tradition.

Another important way that open-air museums contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage is by allowing restaurants that serve traditional food to set up shop on their premises. This way, open-air museums let visitors participate in culinary tourism. Participating in culinary tourism isn't only about tasting the food, but also about learning culinary traditions, which is a form of cognitive tourism. These culinary traditions include various processes, such as: obtaining raw materials on the farms, as well as activities connected to the storage, the processing, the transport and the consumption of the food. In the area of culinary tourism, open-air museums can offer their visitors the possibility to taste local produce and cuisine (this is typically done in the inns that are located on the premises of the museum) as well as the opportunity to take part in various culinary events (fairs, markets, festivals, demonstrations of food preparation etc.) These events can be further divided into the following categories: events connected to the production and processing of food (e.g.: digging up potatoes, gathering honey), the production of traditional food products (e.g.: baking sourdough bread, churning butter), the preparation of regional cuisine (e.g.: baking *kołacz*es, frying the traditional pancakes), the production of cutlery, crockery and other kitchen appliances (e.g.: starching fabric, ironing tablecloths using a mangle, planing wooden spoons, the production of flour sieves.) These events play a vital role in preserving the culinary heritage of a region by allowing tourists to form a personal, emotional connection with the

authentic traditional culinary practices and traditions. This personal approach can then further convince people to help preserve this heritage.

An example of an open-air museum in Poland is the Żywiec Ethnographic Park in Ślemień.

The Park is a great representation of the urban village layout and the traditional farm buildings in the Żywiecki region. Nineteen historical architecture monuments have been moved to this 6ha area. Examples of these monuments are as follows: a school building from the 1900s, a granary build in the XIX century, a farm with a residential building from 1895, a charming cottage that once belonged to a herbalist, a house built in the Wallachian style from 1901 and many more. This is all complemented by nearby roadside crosses and chapels. The Park's employees have prepared a robust range of educational activities; visitors can sign up for workshops where they can try their hand at painting glass, making a clay pot, or they can learn about the properties of various herbs.

Highlander's cottage typical of the Żywiec Beskids.
Photo: Maria Staniszevska



ECOMUSEUM

A slightly different form of ethnographic tourism is represented by **ecomusems**, which can be defined as a combination of an open-air museum and a nature reserve. Ecomuseums are typically established on the initiative of the local population; indeed, it is the locals who mark the tourist trails, restore historical monuments and showcase their interests and passions, as well as the history and culture of their region. It is also this local initiative that sets it apart from other types of open-air museums whose establishment and funding is typically up to the government or non-local organizations.

Ecomuseums are characterized by their authenticity, as well as their ability to inspire engagement in the local communities by helping them feel like they are a part of a 'small homeland' that has its own unique past and customs. The exhibitions are comprised of historical monuments and memorials, presentations of traditional everyday life, cyclic events related to a region's cultural heritage and the customs of its people, interactive workshops and shows based on local resources. An ecomuseum is a place that protects, preserves, and provides a way for the public to enjoy the unique qualities of a region. Ecomuseums are also a vital factor in engaging the local communities, forming their sense of self-governance, independence and responsibility for their environment, both natural and cultural. They make a significant impact on the ability to preserve traces of the past in the landscape, in their place of origin, and the possibility of sharing this heritage with future generations.

A good example of an ecomuseum is the 'W Krainie Bobrów' (pl. In the Land of Beavers) Ecomuseum located in Kotlina Uherczańska (villages: Orelec, Uherce Mineralne, Zwierzyń, Myczkowce). It is a specific 'live' museum that exhibits monuments of material and immaterial culture of the region, its flora, fauna and interesting and spectacular places. The trail includes, amongst other things: five nature reserves, a brick Orthodox church, a Roman Catholic Church and 'Cudowne Źródło' in Zwierzyń (a spring thought to have healing properties.) The beavers in Uherce (an area over 27 ha big) live between Uherce and Zwierzyń in the gravel pits on the river Olszanka. Five breeding pairs were moved into the area in the eighties; nowadays, the population has grown so big that the beavers have been making colonies further and further out in the nearby streams and rivers near, for instance, Zwierzyń and Orelec.



Another good example of an ecomuseum is Chlebowa Chata in the village Górki Małe located in the mountain range Beskid Śląski. One of the museum's iconic offers are bread-baking workshops held in an old highlander's cottage. The bread is baked using authentic traditional equipment; the participants can then churn butter in an old-fashioned butter churn which can then be eaten together

with the bread. These workshop usually last about three hours; the participants can not only make their own bread and butter, but can also learn about the old traditions related to the duties of a rural housewife, as well as go on tour to see the traditional farm equipment and facilities, including a mill and a smithy.



Inside of smithy.
Photo: Maria Staniszevska

TOURIST TRAIL

A particularly interesting form of ethnographic tourism is an ethnographic **tourist trail**. Here, the tourist product is a marked trail that connects a set of places and objects under one overarching theme. This theme can be tied to architecture, technique, ethnography; however, it can also relate to more immaterial topics such as the life of a specific person, traditional activities or customs. Additional components of the tourist product of the ethnographic trail are: food service in regional inns, historical monuments, museums, towns and settlements, landscapes, souvenirs, festivals and trips. It is also important to note here that not all tourist trails have one continuous marked route; some have a series of marked spots as suggestions for the tourists to visit.

Among the most popular of such tourist trails in Poland is the Wooden Architecture Trail. This trail connects the historical monuments of folk architecture and construction in the area of four Polish voivodships. On the route, tourists can see many churches, chapels, granaries, huts, villas, foresters' lodges, open-air museums, mills, inns and manor houses. They are also a great representation

of small-town buildings and rural layouts. Special attention should be paid to the objects on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, such as: the churches in Dębno Podhalańskie, Lipnica Murowana and Lipnica Sękowa, the wooden Orthodox churches in the Podkarpackie region, as well as those in Powroźnik, Owczary, Kwiaton and Brunary Wyżne.



A wooden church in Lipnica Murowana. Photo: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C5%9Bci%C3%B3%C5%82_%C5%9Bw._Leonarda_w_Lipnicy_Murowanej



CERTIFICATION OF REGIONAL PRODUCTS IN CZECH REPUBLIC

**KATHERINA HOLMOVÁ and
KRISTINA GARRIDO HOLMOVÁ / CZECH REPUBLIC**

Each region in Czech Republic has its own unique character, given by the natural wealth, culture and centuries of traditions of its inhabitants. The products originated in a particular region carry part of this character – the work of local craftsmen and farmers, and part of their soul.

Regional branding is one of the ways to highlight a particular region and the interesting products that are being created there. Additionally, it helps the visitors of the region get oriented in the services offered.

There are dozens of regional brands in the Czech Republic. A substantial part of them is associated with the Association of Regional Brands (Asociace regionálních značek – ARZ). Brands involved in ARZ are characterized by a uniform visual style of logos and promotional materials. Brands with similar logos also respect the same award rules, emphasizing on eco-friendliness and regional uniqueness in addition to their origin in the region. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways – by the product's link to the traditions, by using local materials, by the specificity of the particular region, but also by other exceptional qualities. Similarly, tourist services and experiences that uniquely present a particular place or the whole region are evaluated.

The main objective of regional branding is to highlight the individual regions (both traditional, known for example for their well-preserved nature, healthy environment, folklore traditions, and 'new' or forgotten ones) **and highlight interesting products that are being produced there.**

Since 2004, 27 regions have been involved in the regional brand system – Krkonoše, Šumava, Beskydy, Moravský kras, Orlické hory, Moravské Krušnohory, Górolsko Swoboda, Vysočina, Polabí and Podkrkonoší, Haná, Českosaské Švýcarsko, Jeseníky, Prácheňsko, Broumovsko, Blaník's Knights Region, Železné hory, Moravská brána, Zápraží, Znojensko, Toulava, Opavské Slezsko,

Krušnohoří, Pernštejn Region, České středohoří, Poohří a Kutnohorsko. Each of the regions has created a regional brand for its products with guaranteed quality and environmental friendliness, with focus on their origin and a link to a particular exceptional area.

In some regions branding is also used to support selected accommodation and catering facilities and even the 'experience' itself can be branded.



Photo: www.regionalni-znacky.cz

The system of regional products and services branding is coordinated by the Association of Regional Brands, z.s. (ARZ) at the national level, an association of regions with its own brand. The activity of ARZ is regulated by its statutes and internal rules. The current list of members can be downloaded on the webpage of the Association.

Each region has a regional coordinator who manages the brand and communicates with local manufacturers and ARZ. The product brand is approved by an independent Certification Committee (autonomous in each region) after the fulfilment of the uniform rules.

The branding is intended for both the visitors of the regions, allowing them to discover the region and enjoy its atmosphere in a new, unconventional way, as well as for the local residents who can then purchase labeled products to support 'their' local producers. Thanks to the brand, manufacturers gain various advantages, mainly the uniform promotion of their production, new contacts and the possibility of new forms of cooperation.

The regional branding system is open to any region with clearly defined borders. The new brand must be initiated by a local organization or institution which, by consensus of potential brand holders and other stakeholders, will take on the role of the regional coordinator.

The regional branding helps to advertise and promote the products, to market the products and, last but not least, to increase the prestige of products and services at home and abroad through the reputation of the region. At the same time, the brand strengthens the local population's belonging to the region, encourages people's involvement in the region and facilitates contacts between producers and other local subjects. By presenting the region externally through the brand as a whole, its image is effectively strengthened. Promotion takes the form of, for example, articles, press releases, leaflets, product catalogs, seasonal newspapers or conjoined stands for fairs and points of sale in the region.

The regional brand is usually used for **handicraft products** (e.g. knitted wood products, straw products, photographs, ceramics, jewels, snowshoes, lace, glass, furniture, paper packaging, etc.), **food and agricultural products** (bread, milk, cheese, meat, cereals, wine, fruit, vegetables, beverages, berries, fish, honey, etc.) **and natural products** (medicinal herbs, herbal teas, reed for building purposes, plant extracts for cosmetic purposes, compost, mineral water, etc.). A brand can be awarded to a traditional product, but also to a new product as well, if it meets the criteria and the Certification Committee decides to award it. In some regions, the brand can also be given to **accommodation and catering services** and experiences related to the region.

Often the branded products are exceptional for their links to the region, its character, traditions, culture or history, and thanks to their uniqueness they have great potential in tourism. Therefore, regional brands for local products are being introduced as one of the ways to support the local economy.

A customer who purchases such a product can be confident that the product meets the following criteria:

- Origin of the product in the region

- Quality
- The product does not harm the environment
- Uniqueness resulting from its relationship to the region (e.g. tradition, local materials, craft work, region theme or other exceptional quality).

Other regional brands

In Czech Republic, there are other brands that are not members of the ARZ, but they implement their brands based on similar principles. These are mainly the brands: Tradice Bílých Karpat (Traditions of the White Carpathians), Regionální produkt Český ráj (Regional Product of the Bohemian Paradise), Regionální produkt Jizerské hory (Regional Product of the Jizera Mountains), Regionální produkt Lužické hory a Máchův kraj (Regional Product of the Lusatian Mountains and the Macha Area) and Místní výrobek ze západu Čech (Local Product of West Bohemia).

BRAND 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS ORIGINAL PRODUCT®'

One of the 27 certification marks united under AZR is the 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS original product®' brand, which is provided to products, services and experiences produced and provided in the majority of Rychnov nad Kněžnou district and part of Ústí nad Orlicí district on the border of Hradec Králové and Pardubice regions.

Principles for the award and use of the brand

The brand 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS original product®' is awarded to natural and agricultural products that meet the certification criteria. The aim of the brand is to raise the visibility of the Orlické Mountains and Podorlicko Region, including the Orlické Mountains PLA, and to take advantage of its socio-economic benefits. The brand is intended to help local producers (farmers, traders, small and medium-sized businesses) who support environmentally friendly, healthy and traditional ways of production in accordance with nature protection. **Another aim of the brand is to contribute to sustainable tourism – by improving the recreational experience of tourists by guaranteeing the origin of the product in the region, respect for the environment, quality and direct connection to the particular territory.** The purchase of local products and the use of local materials also reduce the environmental footprint due to shorter transport distances.

The visual form of the brand is determined by a graphic manual approved by the brand Coordinator and ARZ. The logo consists of a graphic part depicting an eagle in green color, accompanied by the text 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS original product®" '.



The Certification Committee (hereinafter referred to as the 'Committee') decides on awarding the rights to use the brand (certificate) for a specific product. The Committee has 15 members consisting of 4 producers and one representative of the following subjects: LAG POHODA venkova, LAG Sdruzeni SPLAV, LAG NAD ORLICÍ, LAG ORLICKO, ARZ, Association of private agriculture, PLA Orlické Mountains board, regional authorities (Pardubice and Hradec Králové), Glacensis Euroregion and Destination Society of Orlické hory and Podorlicko.

The Committee may invite additional guests (with an advisory vote). The Committee has a quorum of at least 10 members.

The Committee meets at least once a year, following its own rules of procedure. Meeting dates are published at least one month in advance on the www.region-alniznacky.cz web page.

Conditions of the brand awarding

A legal body or natural person may become the holder of the certificate authorized to use the brand. The certificate is granted if both the product and its manufacturer meet the certification criteria. Thus, the Certification Committee may refuse to grant the brand for a product that is contrary to the brand's objective, contrary to moral and ethical principles, general aesthetics or it could damage brand's reputation in any other way. The brand applicant (manufacturer) receives the brand application form from the Coordinator. He then fills it in and submits it. The Coordinator checks the formal correctness and completeness of the application and, if necessary, asks the applicant to make adjustments. Only applications that meet the compulsory requirements and criteria are forwarded to the Committee. The Coordinator transmits extracts from all applications containing product descriptions and the description of the fulfillment of the certification criteria at least 5 days before the meeting to the Committee.

The applicant or his representative has the right to be present at the Committee's meetings but cannot be present at the Committee's decision-making. The Commission considers the level of fulfillment of the certification criteria and decides whether to grant the certificate or not. After that it communicates its decisions to the Coordinator.

In case of a positive decision, the Coordinator grants the certificate and concludes a Brand Use Contract. In case of a negative decision, the Coordinator informs the applicant within 14 days and informs him about the reasons for the rejection of the application.

There is no legal claim to the brand. All information provided in the application are considered confidential.

Brand award procedure

The applicant submits the application together with the sample of the product or, when appropriate, supplies the sample of the product by the date of the Committee meeting. In case of food and drinks samples are tasted. After the Committee meeting samples may be returned to the manufacturer. In the case that it is not technically possible to submit a sample or if there is any doubt about the quality of the product submitted, the product might be assessed by an authorized Commissioner directly at the manufacturer or other location indicated by the manufacturer. The manufacturer must allow the access of the Committee member to his establishment upon request. If necessary, the manufacturer may require specific conditions (e.g. health card holding).

The application is submitted for a specific product or a uniformly defined product group, where all products meet the criteria defined in the application.

If the manufacturer already holds a valid certificate for some of his products, he does not need to show compliance of the manufacturer's criteria in the application when asking for the certificate for another of his products. If the manufacturer applies for a re-granting of the certificate (upon expiry of the certificate) and there are no changes in the level of fulfillment of the certification criteria, a simplified form of application can be used.

Brand Use

The right to use the brand (certificate) is non-transferable and unpurchaseable. The newly granted certificate is valid for 2 years from the date of issue. Renewal of the certificate is valid for another 3 years from the expiry date of the previous certificate. The application must be sent no later than 1 month after the coordinator's e-mail request; in the case that the application is made on time, the certificate is extended until the next Commission meeting.

During the period of the certificate validity, its holder guarantees continuous fulfillment of the criteria as stated in the application and is also obliged to report any changes to the facts stated in the application in written form within 3 weeks of the change occurrence. In case of significant changes, the Coordinator forwards the information about the changes to the Committee, which then decides if it is necessary to issue a new certificate and whether the certificate will be issued.

The manufacturer ensures that the certified product/service/experience is labeled in accordance with the Brand Use Contract. If the certificate holder has his/her own website presenting his/her certified products or certified equipment (service/experience), he/she is obliged to place the brand logo (or brand banner) on the home page, together with a hyperlink to the www.regionalni-znacky.cz web page.

The logo may be accompanied by a text such as 'We are the holder of a certificate to use this logo (logo)'. At the request of the Coordinator, the certificate holder is obliged to deliver supporting documents for the promotion of its product without undue delay. These are mainly photographs and text for web presentation of a product, printed catalog and other printed materials.

When on sale, certified products must be labeled properly in one of the following ways (*Rules of use of the brand are always described in the brand's graphic manual*):

- incorporating the brand (logo) into the product packaging based on the brand's graphic manual;
- labeling the product (or its packaging) with a sticker or a tag with the brand purchased from the Coordinator;
- printing a stamp made in accordance with the graphic manual of the brand on the packaging or other components of the certified product;

- if the product cannot be individually labeled (e.g. pastries), the method and conditions of branding will be determined individually upon agreement between the Coordinator and the manufacturer, e.g. by marking a counter or shop shelf etc.

The Coordinator may negotiate individually special conditions with the manufacturer, e.g. if the manufacturer is not interested in branding a specific part of his production intended for particular customers. These requirements should already appear in the brand application (in the product specification) and must be determined in the Brand Use Contract.

The certificate holder may also use the brand in other ways according to the graphic manual, e.g. on letterhead, advertising materials, business cards, along with the text such as 'We are the holder of the certificate for the use of the brand (logo)'.

The compliance of the certification criteria and principles (e.g. proper labeling of products) is checked by a person authorized by the Certification Committee (this authorization must be demonstrated). The brand user is obliged to cooperate with this person and provide them all the necessary documents and access to the premises. There must be a written report about the inspection. All information found during the inspection is considered confidential and is used only for the purpose of product certification.

Fees for granting and using the brand

For the brand awarding, the manufacturer pays a registration fee of CZK 1,500 (cca 50 EUR). The fee is intended to cover the costs of processing and reviewing the application and awarding the brand. If the manufacturer already holds a certificate and applies for a new certificate (for another product or before the certificate expires), the fee is reduced to CZK 1,000 (35 EUR). The fee is paid when the certificate is handed over and is the income for the Coordinator. The Coordinator may decide to reduce the fee.

To partially cover the brand's marketing, promotion and presentation costs, its users pay an annual fee for the use of the brand in the following amount:

- Small tradesmen (self-employed) without employees: CZK 500 (18 EUR)

- Companies with less than 10 employees or non-profit organizations: CZK 1,000 (35 EUR)
- Companies with 10 or more employees: CZK 2,000 (70 EUR).

Presentation of the brand and points of sale

Unified presentation and marketing is guaranteed for the brand, especially in the following ways:

- International, national and regional media presentations
- Printed materials promoting the brand and branded products
- Presentation at the www.regionalni-znacky.cz webpage
- Facebook presentation of the brand
- Presentations of producers, products and brands at regional and national events (fairs, tourism fairs, etc.).

The points of sale of the certified products may become official points of sale with the right to bear a special label (sticker, certificate, poster, etc.) with the brand logo and text such as 'We sell original products from the Orlicke Mountains here'. Official points of sale are promoted together with the products on the www.regionalni-znacky.cz website, or in other informational and promotional materials.

Use of the brand by other subjects

Other entities (government institutions, local government institutions, NGOs, etc.) based in the region can use the brand with a Coordinator's agreement to promote the brand.

In this case, the brand may be placed on the subject's informational and promotional materials, on the website (with a link to the official website of the branding project), letterheads, etc., accompanied with the text such as 'We support local products branded' (logo). However, this needs to be done in the way that makes clear that it is a brand promotion and not a specific product or service promotion. The Coordinator discusses the possibility and terms of use of the brand with each entity individually.

Policy violations

If a violation of policies or certification criteria is found, the Coordinator will ask the user to adjust it within a reasonable time or decide to remove the certifi-

cate. The decision to withdraw the certificate is confirmed by the Committee at the next meeting. Detailed procedure is dealt with in the contract with the manufacturer. After the withdrawal of the certificate and the subsequent expiry of the right to use the brand, the user is not entitled to any refunds of the fees paid. The unauthorized use of the brand is subject to legal proceedings.

CERTIFICATION CRITERIA FOR THE BRAND 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS ORIGINAL PRODUCT®'

A. Criteria for manufacturers:

1) Local entity

- a)** Self-employed person, company, organization established in the delimited area of Orlické Mountains and Podorlicko.
- b)** A farmer working in the area of the Orlické Mountains and Podorlicko.
- c)** A beekeeper whose hives are located in the delimited area of the Orlické Mountains and Podorlicko.

2) Qualification for the relevant production

Producers must have a valid trade license for the given production, farmers must have a trade license or be kept in the records of the locally competent municipal authority of the municipality with extended powers, and beekeepers must have a certificate of a member of the Czech Association of Beekeepers.

3) Debtlessness

The applicant for the brand declares that his/her company is not declared bankrupt, has no arrears of taxes or social and health insurance and is not being prosecuted by the Czech Trade Inspection.

4) Guarantee of standard production quality

The applicant for the brand guarantees that he/she complies with legal regulations and standards (hygienic and technical standards, safety at work, etc.).

5) The production process does not harm nature

The applicant guarantees that he/she does not harm the environment or the

components used beyond the limits set by the applicable legal regulations in his/her business activities and, according to his/her technical and financial possibilities, fulfils (or will comply with) the principles of environmental protection:

- gentle water management – economical behavior, water saving equipment, separate use of drinking and service water (if technically possible), use of environmentally friendly (biodegradable) cleaning agents, proper waste water disposal
- nature friendly energy management – energy-efficient behavior, use of energy-efficient appliances (class A or B), energy-saving lamps, efficient heating (heating regulation, lower temperature in unoccupied areas), thermal insulation of buildings, efforts to use renewable or alternative energy sources if technically possible)
- waste management – minimization of waste and packaging, consistent waste sorting (especially paper, plastic, glass and dangerous waste, eventually compost)
- material, raw materials – preference of reusable, recyclable and recycled materials (also for packaging), use of local raw materials, minimization of hazardous substances usage (toxic, flammable, carcinogenic, etc.) and their proper disposal
- farmers – minimization of chemical products (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.), ethical treatment of animals. The Czech Environmental Inspectorate does not take any action against the applicant.

B. Product criteria:

1) Consumer goods, works of art, or agricultural and natural products produced in the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko district

In order to assess the nature of the product by the Certification Committee, the applicant submits a sample of the product. If this is not possible or appropriate, he/she provides a photograph, description, etc. In the case that some parts of the product are fabricated out of the region, or some phases of the fabrication are happening out of the region, the Committee decides individually if this product can be considered to be manufactured in the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko area – whether the production phase which takes place in the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko can be considered as the main one for the nature of the product.

2) Standard quality assurance

The applicant for the brand guarantees that the product complies with all the relevant regulations and standards.

3) Nature friendly attitude

The product and its packaging do not harm the environment, its components, or human health beyond rules specified in the applicable legislation at any stage of its life cycle (production, use, disposal), and meet (or will meet in future) environmentally friendly principles:

- material – preferably from recycled, recyclable or reusable materials, biodegradable, preferably from local raw materials, minimizing hazardous substances
- packaging – as economical as possible, returnable or recyclable
- nature of the product – the product is not environmentally unfriendly to human health or nature. The product is not intended for single use (as an alternative to similar products with long-term use).

4) Uniqueness of the product associated with the region

The product must be unique in its relation to the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko area. This criteria can be met by at least 10 points in total according to the following five sub-criteria:

(a) Traditional local product

The product or production technology or company has existed in the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko for more than 100 years.

(b) Local raw material usage

The product is made at least partly from local raw materials – that is to say, raw materials from the delimited area of Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko. Raw materials listed as local must never be replaced, mixed or combined with other raw materials.

(c) Hand/craft or mental work

The product is manufactured at least in part by hand, craft or intellectual work. Such work means that the craftsman/author brings his own personality to each product/work – each piece is an original. In such production, the craftsman can use a variety of tools and instruments (e.g., with electric drive), as long as the resulting product depends on his personal skill.

(d) Works with the main motif of the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko Region/products specific to the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko Region

For works of art (decorative, souvenirs and promotional items, photographs, books, printed materials, etc.), their main motif or content may contribute to its uniqueness if it relates to the Orlicke Mountains and Podorlicko Region. A utility product can earn points for its specificity in the Orlické Mountains and Podorlicko region. If utility products are more of a work of art (motifs and artistic work outweigh utility properties), they can be evaluated on a scale for works with motifs. This also applies to souvenirs and promotional items intended mainly for the promotion of the region (e.g. keychain with the brand logo, etc.).

(e) Exceptional (above-standard) product properties

The product, due to its quality or other exceptional characteristics, represents the region very well.

The Certification Committee may take into consideration other awards for quality or innovation, eventually environmental friendliness, Czech (national) or European quality and/or environmental certificates (ESV, Czech made, Czech Honey Standard, BIO, ISO, Flower, Tradition bearer, KlasA). If the product is manufactured in a sheltered workshop or by disabled fellow citizens, it receives min. 3 points.

If an agricultural or forestry enterprise manages the territory of the Protected Landscape Area of Orlicke Mountains in accordance with the regulations of the PLA Administration and the product or raw materials originate at least in part from the its territory, it obtains min. 3 points.

The Certification Committee has the right to refuse to grant a brand to a product that is contrary to the brand's objective and is contrary to moral and ethical principles, general aesthetics, or could otherwise damage the brand's good name or the name of the Home Products brand system.

As of 01.01.2020, 36 products have been awarded the 'ORLICKÉ MOUNTAINS original product®' certificate. As of the same date, the 'Original product' certificate has been owned by 990 products, 90 services and 90 experiences from the whole Czech Republic.



Photos:
www.regionalni-znacky.cz

EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN CZECH REPUBLIC

PLUNDR ' S FISHING

Location: Orlicke Mountains, Dlouhonovice

We are a small family fishing farm, located at the foothills of Orlicke Mountains. We focus primarily on breeding traditional Czech carp, complemented with the breeding of other freshwater fish. We manage ponds in Ustí nad Orlici district and our history goes back to 1993, when the founder of our fishery Milan Plun-dra bought the first pond. This step started his and his father John's dream of having their own fishing pond.

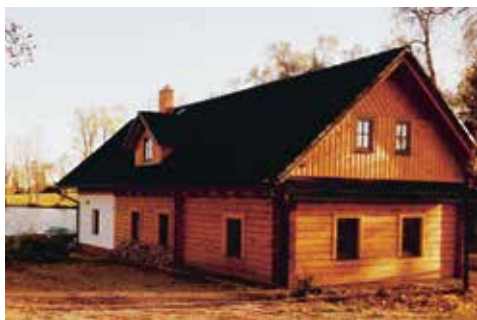
However, if farming was to make any sense, it soon became clear that it could not remain with only one pond. Gradually, we grew and acquired other water areas which are so essential for this specific type of business. Recently, we have started to expand our activities and in addition to traditional fish breeding, we launched a year-round retail sale of fish and operate a pond for sport fishing. In our ponds in Dlouhonovice, people can buy fresh fish all year round or catch a trophy fish in the nearby pond.

The essential fish of our fishery is Čermen ' carp, complemented by breeding other fish. We have an abundance of catfish and amur in our waters, as well as pike, silver carps, tench, sturgeon, perch, Prussian carps, roach and trout in the fish tanks. We breed our carp from their birth (spawning) to their market size (2.5 to 4 kg), which takes about 4 to 5 years in our conditions. We usually catch these Christmas carp from Čermenský Pond on the last Saturday in October. After their stay in the tanks, most of them travel to the Christmas Eve table of many families around the Orlickoústecko region. Thanks to their taste, the carp from our farm has a great popularity. The delicate taste is influenced by the very favorable environment of the Čermenský pond, which went through a major reconstruction between 2005 and 2007. We offer carp, trout and catfish all year round at our fish tanks in Dlouhonovice. Amur, pike, tench, sturgeon and other fish are being available occasionally. Right on the ponds you will find not only our new shop and facilities, but also a pond designed for sport fishing, with

really trophy-worthy pieces planted in it, including 30 pound carp, two-meter catfish, amur and pike of 1 meter.

We offer an accommodation in a newly built timber house located right at the sports fishing pond. There is a total of 12 beds in 3 rooms (4 beds in each room – 2 single beds and 1 double bed for 2) in the building. Fishermen accommodated in our log automatically get reservation for the closest possible catching places on the shore (place number 15 to the left of the pier and place number 16 to the right of the pier). These two places are suitable either for one group or for 4 fishermen.

In addition to sport fishing there are many recreational opportunities in our region (foothills of the Orlicke Mountains), which the guests of our timber house can enjoy. From spring to autumn it is mainly hiking or cycling and downhill or cross-country skiing in winter. You can visit the swimming pool in Písečná (2 km), in Žamberk (3 km) or the dam in Pastviny (10 km) on hot summer days). Directly in the village of Dlouhonovice you and your children can enjoy a walk through the nature trail and see the panorama of the Orlicke Mountains from the local lookout tower.





Photos:
www.regionalni-znacky.cz,
www.plundrovorybarstvi.cz

D-AGRO S.R.O.

Location: Orlické Mountains, Javornice

Pension and restaurant 'Venclův statek' (Vencl's farm) in the quiet foothills of the Eagle Mountains.

The renovated family pension 'Venclův statek' is located in a quiet part of the village Javornice in the foothills of Orlické Mountains. We will be happy to welcome you in our restaurant, where we prepare specialties not only from the meat of our own breeding.

We offer accommodation in stylishly furnished and cozy double, triple and quadruple rooms, equipped with a private bathroom, air conditioning and a minibar. There is also a single room with a bathroom, adapted for disabled guests. Are you planning a wedding, a family celebration or a company meeting? We have a lot of experience with the organization of these events here at Vencl's farm. Do not hesitate to contact us.

The beef from our farm comes from cattle that are kept in Bela u Liberka. The owner is D-agro s.r.o., a family company which takes the farm as a valuable historical family heritage.

The cattle are kept freely on pasture in summer and in the stable in winter. Throughout the year, the cattle are fed the feed from our own production. The animals are kept free on mountain pastures in accordance with their natural needs. Reproduction takes place in the form of natural breeding, the bull is present in the herd throughout the year and the calves are reared in the herd together with the mothers. Stress-free treatment, quality care and feed are essential for quality meat production.

All veterinary and hygiene standards are respected during the meat processing. We slaughter animals up to 2,5 years old in a certified slaughterhouse where the bovine animals are examined by a veterinarian after slaughter. Next, we transport the meat in quarters to our farm in Javornice. There, the meat matures for 2-3 weeks in a facility registered by the Regional Veterinary Administration (a facility in which products of animal origin are handled).

We sell matured and vacuum packed meat according to the wishes of customers who use the e-shop for their orders. The 'out of farm' direct sale guarantees a direct contact with the customers as well as the necessary feedback, as customer opinions are an important part of the sale. Thanks to the quality and natural conditions of breeding and careful processing, our beef is a pure natural product. In cattle breeding and beef production, we do not focus on the quantity but the quality as we believe it is priceless in the case of our final product – mature beef.

The location of our farmhouse is ideal for exploring not only the picturesque natural landscapes of Orlické Mountains, but also castles and chateaux in the nearby surroundings.





Photos:
www.regionalni-znacky.cz,
www.d-agro.cz



RESTAURANT 'U HUBALKU'

Location: Orlicke Mountains, Kotelecka Lhota

Just two kilometers from the earldom of the most important aristocratic Kinsky family, in the picturesque foothills of the Orlicke Mountains, in the valley of the wild Orlice river, there is a family restaurant.

Search for Hostinec U Hubalku on the Internet and you can virtually visit the kingdom of our chef Pavel Hubalek, whose renowned home cuisine prepared according to traditional recipes will satisfy even the most demanding gourmet. In the village where dogs bark, roosters crow and the grain exudes a pleasant smell during the harvest, you can forget the "madness" of everyday life at least for a moment. The folk pub, which was completely renovated in 2012, offers a comfortable accommodation in 3* standard, quiet and non-smoking environment for business meetings, seniors, and families with children.

Have you tasted the apple and pear jam from Hubalek yet? Fruity delicacies with the brand 'Orlické Mountains Product' are not only a great gift, but can also be a reminder of the culinary experience after visiting the local restaurant. The type of fruit for the jam is selected depending on the crop in a given year. In the five years of operation, this home cooked delicacy has become very popular. We also offer other very popular products such as goose liver pate or onion marmalade.

Perhaps the production of homemade jam from individual types of fruit may not appear to be so very rare, but we must point out that apple and pear jam is practically unavailable on the market. Production processes, based on family recipes, have been handed over from generation to generation in the Hubalek family for more than four generations. The production processes do not use any chemical preservatives. This is achieved by long-term cooking and steam sterilization of products in the original packaging, which preserves the unique taste of the fruit! Our products have a 12 month warranty.





Photos:
www.regionalni-znacky.cz,
www.uhubalku.cz

SOKOL FARM (FALCON FARM)

Location: Orlicke Mountains, Rampuse

Our guesthouse offers cozy and spacious 4 bed rooms that are stylishly furnished. Our pension also has a restaurant where you can enjoy traditional Czech dishes prepared from local ingredients. The accommodation in our pension includes breakfast from delicacies produced on our Farm SOKOL.

On sunny days you can enjoy sitting on the outdoor terrace, while your kids play on a natural wooden playground. We will be happy to rent you a ball or other sports equipment.

The farm SOKOL that belongs to our pension is engaged in the production of dairy and meat products of the highest quality and the production of high quality meat from domestic breeding. Many awards that SOKOL Farm has received for its products testify for the quality of our food. Are you looking for quality products from a regional manufacturer? Are you looking for sausages that are really made of meat and gluten free, yoghurts without preservatives and unnecessary additives? Do you want to eat real food and not just substitutes? Then taste the products from our Farm SOKOL.

A novelty at our guesthouse is a 'Farmer's backyard' (open only in the summer months), where children can get to know pets and farm life.

Our products:

- Cheese from Rampuše – we offer several variants of this product – natural salty, olive, walnut, garlic, onion or smoked.
- Pate from Rampuše – made from pork and pork liver, free from preservatives, naturally gluten-free. The pate has a distinctive liver flavor and it is an ideal gift.
- Salami from Rampuše – made from pork and beef, smoked using the traditional method of cold smoke on cherry wood. We supply the salami semi-hard and for obtaining hardness desired we recommend to unpack from vacuum packing and let dry.
- Sausages from Rampuše – made from pork and beef and with slightly spicy taste. Sausages are smoked using the traditional smoking method. They are suitable for both, cold consumption and cooking / grilling.



Photos:
www.regionalni-znacky.cz,
www.farmasokol.cz

ABOUT AUTHORS

ŠTEFAN SZABÓ, SILVIA SZABÓOVÁ

We are working in SOSNA association, focused on environmental education and nature/environment protection. Our programs include experimental education in nature and promotion of activities for children in nature. Part of our activities are concerned with nature based tourism; for example, since 2005 we have been organizing the Festival 'Different Journeys' which is focused on the promotion of responsible tourism with regards to nature and landscape. Other than that, travelling to the untouched nature is our personal hobby.

More info: www.sosna.sk or www.facebook.com/ekocentrum.sosna



BOTOS ISTVÁN CSABA

I work for the VISION Association. We all have to have a positive vision to improve our common future and this organization contributes to the development of disadvantaged people, families, youth, cultural, economic and sustainable grassroots initiatives. However, as a geographer, I have a strong conservation background from the past decades with various NGOs dealing with a wide range of environmental education. Activities vary from organizing open-air school and summer camp for children, via waste and resource management, energy efficiency, organic farming, and local healthy food, till the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns and festivals to popularize local nature values and sustainable tourism.

More info: www.jovokepegyesulet.hu



MARIA STANISZEWSKA

I am a Chairwoman of the Main Board in the Polish Ecological Club, as well as the primary coordinator of events and activities organized by the Polish Ecological Club Gliwice Chapter. I have worked with the organization for over 20 years, and in that



time, I have led numerous projects related to the topics of climate, agriculture and environment. The aim of many of our activities is raising knowledge and awareness; we achieve that by producing and disseminating educational material and by organizing workshops, conferences and events. Our activities are directed towards both the general public, including youth and children, as well as experts, such as farmers, agricultural experts and entrepreneurs who are interested in conducting their businesses in an environmentally friendly way. We also have experience in advocacy work and legislation. As for myself, I am a chemist and an environmentalist. In my free time, I enjoy hiking in the mountains and playing with my cats.



KATERINA HOLMOVÁ

Katerina Holmová is the brain of Sdruzeni SPLAV. Originally an architect, she made a career change towards rural development in Kralovehradecky region, which she led her towards three very different job positions – first in the Ministry of Rural Development, later in the Regional Development Agency and finally in a non-profit organisation LAG Sdruzeni SPLAV, where she has been working as a chief manager since 2008. Her main task is finding funding and the coordination and implementation of the projects within the rules of a particular program. She likes hiking, birdwatching and nature in general.



KRISTINA GARRIDO HOLMOVÁ

Kristina Garrido is responsible for international projects. She has a degree in landscaping and horticulture and wide experience and interest in this field. Since 2008, she has been working in Sdruzeni SPLAV as a Community Led Local Development program administrator and international project coordinator. Kristina is very enthusiastic when it comes to meeting new people, forging connections with various partners and topics and of course travelling :)

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