



Use of Natural Heritage in Rural Tourism

Good practices in Bulgaria

Diana Miteva, Project Manager
Svetlana Dimitrova-Sotirova, Communication Manager



Area:
111 000 sq. km.

Population:
6 500 000 people



Rural tourism is any form of tourism that presents in the best light the rural way of life, art, culture and heritage, thus benefiting the local population economically and socially. In addition, it makes possible the interaction between tourists and locals, enriching the tourist experience. Rural tourism covers a wide range of activities, but is often considered synonymous with "farm tourism". In essence, it is an activity that takes place in non-urban areas with preserved environment and unique appearance, as well as in places which provide the best combination of hospitality, good cuisine and a specific atmosphere. They are most often found in mountainous and rural areas.



Architecture reserve – Village of Shiroka Laka



Architecture reserve – Village of Kovachevitsa



Wild Farm



The Path of Clay



Architecture reserve – Village of Shiroka Laka



The village of Shiroka Laka is located in Rhodopi Maintain and got its name from the old Bulgarian word "laka" - curve. Shiroka Laka was founded as a settlement in the XVII century, and today is one of the most visited tourist destinations. The village has preserved its Renaissance architecture, musical culture, beautiful nature and rich history.

Shiroka Laka is famous for its beautiful, authentic Rhodopi houses, located amphitheatrically on both sides of the river. The old houses are in the typical architectural style of the Rhodopes - two-storey, with bay windows and an internal wooden staircase. The village has preserved also its folklore. Here were born some of the most famous singers and bagpipers of Rhodopi folklore. In 1972 a National School of Folk Arts was established in the village.

Every first Sunday of March in Shiroka Laka is held an annual Mummer's Festival, called "Pesponedelnik". On this day, every guest of the village witnesses a strange sight - big mummers-monsters, armed with wooden swords, painted red, dancing in the streets to drive away all evil from the houses and souls of people.

One of the emblematic places to visit are the Ethnographic Museum "Zgurovski konak" and the church "Assumption", built in 1834 for 38 days by the entire population of Shiroka Laka. The village has cozy hotels and private accommodation where guests of the village can stay. In the center of the village is the information center, where every guest of the village can get information about the sights, hotels and guest houses, as well as buy souvenirs from Shiroka Laka.



Architecture reserve – Village of Kovachevitsa



The village of Kovachevitsa is located in the Western Rhodopi mountain. The village arose after 1656 during the attempts to convert the Bulgarian population in the Rhodopes to Islam, who in search of salvation settled in the more inaccessible parts of the mountain. The local people were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. During the Renaissance Kovachevitsa was an educational centre.

Due to its typical architecture in 1977 in issue 73 of the State Gazette the village was declared a historical and architectural reserve. The typical two-storey and three-storey houses with protruding upper floors were built in the 18th century.

The village of Kovachevitsa is a suitable destination for lovers of rural tourism and tranquillity. Apart from walking through the narrow cobbled streets, staying in a typical Kovachevitsa house, tourists can try traditional Bulgarian dishes and enjoy the tranquillity of the Rhodopi. From the village there are several tourist routes to the waterfall "Blue Pool" and the area "Goat Stone". Only 8 km from Kovachevitsa is another popular destination for rural tourism - the village of Leshten. The villages of Dolen and Ribnovo are also in the area.



Wild Farm



<https://www.bedandbirding-rhodopes.bg/index.html>



The wild farm is a non-traditional, ecological farm in the village of Gorno Pole. The owners, Vasilievs family, are the only ones in the region to have returned from the big city to develop rural tourism in the old family house.

Now they are an example for many other farmers to follow. They have a herd of over 400 free-grazing cattle of the "Rhodope Shorthorn Cattle" breed, a small herd of Karakachan sheep, donkeys and horses. They grow fruits and vegetables on their own farm, produce their own dairy products, meat and meat delicacies.

They offer accommodation in a guest house, homemade food, horseback riding, hiking and more. The farm is supported by the project and is part of the New Thracian Gold Network. The Trans-Rhodope bike route passes through Gorno Pole.



The Wild Farm offers to all willing to enjoy the touch with the nature and to practice rural tourism different kinds of entertainment:



Photo shooting

Shoot wild animals. Eastern rhodopid are the best place for shooting predator birds in Bulgaria



Horseback riding

Horseback riding for new comers and professionals – 4 pure breed horses Eric and Daret



Birds Watching

In the kingdom of wildlife near Madzharovo, declared an Ornithologically important place of world importance.



Unique atmosphere

This is not the generally accepted "guest house", but an open home for all friends - old and new, a call to the wild and the colour of life.



The Path of Clay



<https://www.thepathoftheclay.eu/>



Duration: 19/03/2016 – 18/03/2018, 24 months

Area addressed:

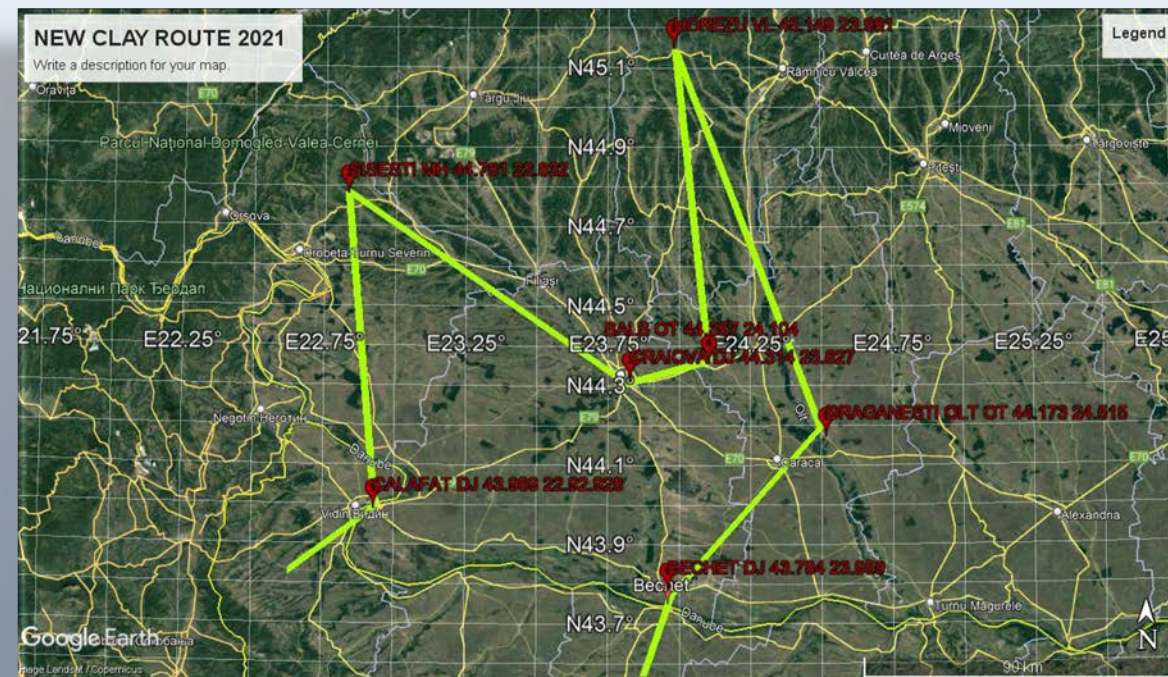
Bulgaria: Pleven, Vidin, Vratsa, Montana in Bulgaria

Romania: Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman in Romania

Main institutions involved:

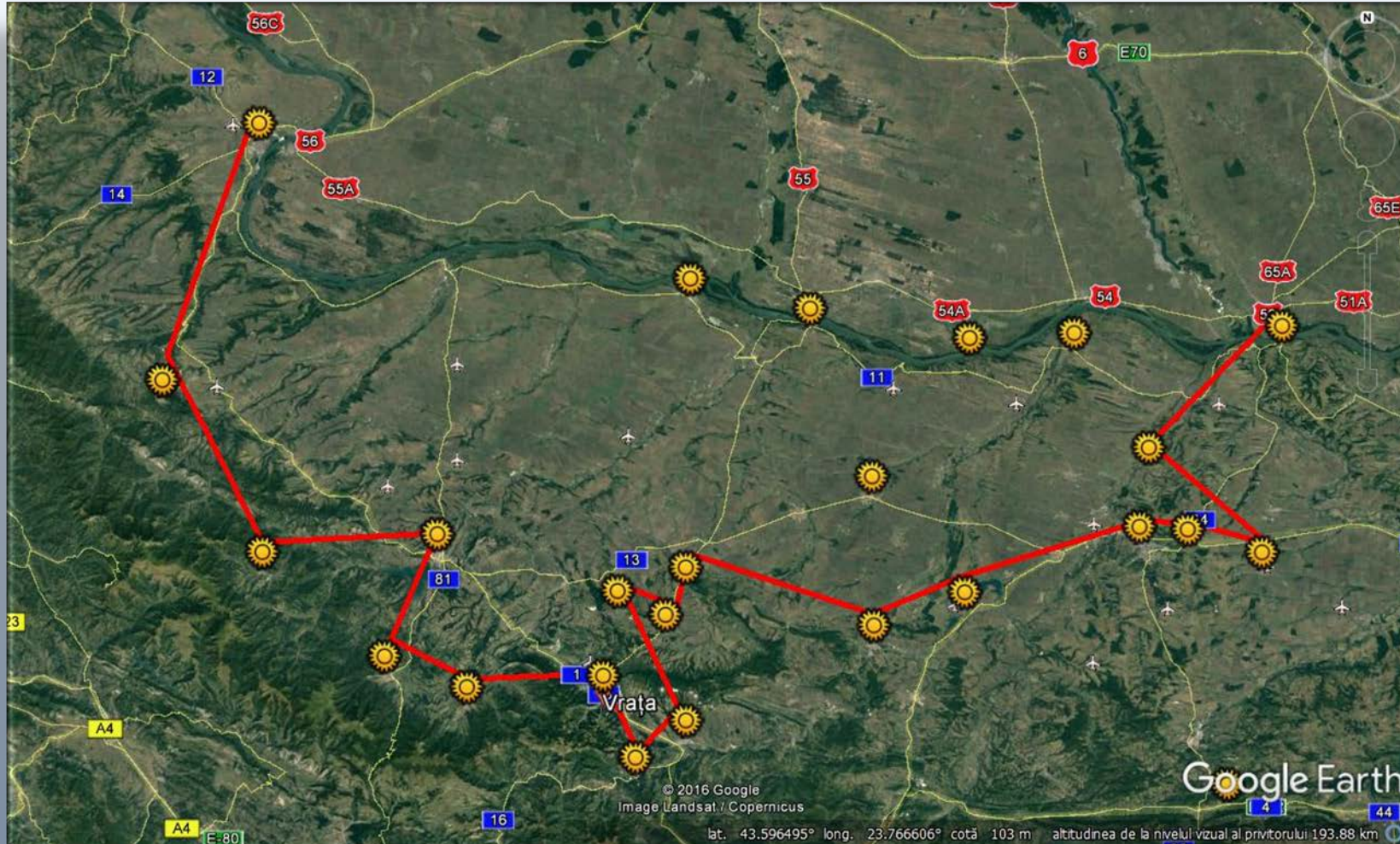
Lead beneficiary: Association Civil Alliance for Development
(Association CUD, Pleven, Bulgaria)

Project partner: Alexis Project Association Filiasi (Romania)



Resources needed:

The budget for the realization of the project is 305,525.97 EUR.



Project “**The Path of Clay**” aims to improve the sustainable use of clay, as a cultural heritage, by developing boutique tourism based on this resource in the area.

Steps in the realization of the good practice:

- Organization and holding promotion events
- Development of a new tourist route “The path of the clay”
- Training in sculptural technique and art shops
- Organizing festivals – in BG and in RO
- New Open Air Museum of Clay Art in Cherven Bryag, Pleven and in Calafat, Dolj
- Audio guides of elements of the joint integrated tourist product
- Elaboration of paper documents: 1) common strategy for the development of tourism boutique, 2) tourist route "The Path of Clay", 3) Catalogue with clay artwork
- Media tour.

‘The project follows identification, evaluation and promotion the processing centres of the clay on both sides of the Danube and the creation of a specific touristic route in the benefit of national identity affirmation in the European context.



Evidence for success

- New tourist route “The path of the clay” developed;
- 1 training in sculptural technique – for 50 youths was organized;
- 2 art workshops in Cherven Bryag, BG and 2 in Calafat, RO were organized 1 festival in BG and 1 festival in RO were organized;
- The Open Air Museum of Clay Art in Cherven Bryag, Pleven and in Calafat, Dolj were organized;
- Audio guides of elements of the joint integrated tourist product were elaborated;
- The followings documents were elaborated: 1) common strategy for the development of tourism boutique, 2) tourist route "The Path of Clay", 3) Catalogue with clay artwork;
- 1 Media tour – for 50 persons, including media representatives and bloggers was organized.



Potential for learning or transfer:

The good practice is suitable for transfer to regions where it exists specific common natural resources with common cultural heritage evidences with a potential for the attraction of tourist flows and to the revenue raise.

It is especially suitable for remote and cross-border areas, as far as the cross-border cooperation aims overcoming common challenges identified jointly in border regions, and the use of untapped potential in the border area through enhanced cooperation process.

It provides a common framework for the promotion and development of tourism in the region through the organization of tourist attractions and diversify the tourist offer and valorizes the main characteristics of the region in terms of natural and cultural heritage.



Thank you for attention!

Euroregion Pleven-Olt Association

evroregionplevenolt@gmail.com

