

DanubeHIKE



*Guidelines for implementing and improving/
positioning hiking tourism along the Danube*



Summary

The guidelines for implementing and improving hiking tourism along the Danube are part of the Project DanubeHIKE involving partners from Austria, Germany, Slovakia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The overall objective of the project is to create a substantial basis for the development and recognition of hiking tourism within the Danube area and to integrate hiking areas along the Danube.

The guidelines provide different ideas, recommendations and good practices not only for implementing and improving the quality of hiking infrastructure and tourism product offer along the Danube but also for a common marketing for the whole Danube region. The contents of these guidelines are based on hiking infrastructure situation analysis, marketing and image studies, as well as on research of the existing hiking tourism offer in all Danube countries.

The **aim** of these guidelines is to answer general questions about hiking tourism product development and marketing as well as to transfer ideas and information between different potential stakeholders. It also gives a short overview of hiking tourism products which have been developed along the Danube so far. The ideas and recommendations are based on concrete issues and obstacles for diversifying hiking tourism offer in the region.

The **first chapter** gives a short description of the Hiking report made by Naturefriends International and WGD Tourismus Ltd. in 2011. It provides information on the hiking infrastructure along the Danube, outlining what is to be further improved.

The **second chapter** presents two studies (made by National Austrian Tourist Office and the Danube Competence Center), assessing tourism trends and analysing the market and image in the Danube region, which can serve as a background for developing further guidelines, marketing strategies and quality criteria.

In the **third chapter** target groups, markets and hikers' profile are shortly described.

The **forth chapter** consists of two main issues: creation and improving of hiking offers and establishing proper quality criteria. It provides ideas, recommendations and good practice examples for five target groups: destination managers, tour operators, nature protected areas, accommodations and transport providers.

The **last chapter** emphasizes marketing aims for improving the image of the Danube region as a destination for hiking tourism. It presents different marketing measures (e. g. advertising, e-marketing and social media, event marketing etc.) and their applicability to the needs of the Danube region.

Tourism stakeholders can use the guidelines to improve their existing offers and/or create new offers in order to better serve hiking tourists and foster sustainable tourism along the Danube. For further understanding an additional workshop for tour operators can be offered. For further information the partners of DanubeHIKE can be contacted.



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Preface/*Foreword*

Hiking tourism is getting more and more important. It combines sports and leisure activities with spending time in nature, which are very popular concepts for people when it comes to spending their leisure time.

As people also like to spend their time near the waterfront the Danube area bears big potential for hiking tourism. Therefore all Danube bordering countries should put more effort into the development and marketing of hiking routes along the Danube – not only on a regional or national but also international level.

The guidelines in the following could be some collected guidelines when it comes to marketing effort concerning hiking in the Danube region.

It has to be considered that these guidelines are only an idea outline. There are no concrete plans for implementing or financing these ideas, but to collect different ideas not only for a common marketing for the whole Danube region, especially for “hiking along the Danube” but also for implementing and improving the quality of hiking infrastructure along the Danube.



1 Situation Analysis

In 2011 a report concerning hiking infrastructure and hiking offers along the Danube was made by Naturefriends International and WGD Tourismus GmbH.

It was found that all countries do have in common that there are touristic highlights, exciting natural sights and interesting culture in the region, worth creating a hiking trail along the Danube. In terms of existing hiking trails, the extent is highly differing between the countries. Germany and Austria do already use the potential of hiking tourism along the Danube, either integrating bordering communities or providing hiking, cruising and cycling infrastructure. But there is also potential for countries such as Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia using the European Long Distance Trail. In terms of signalisation all countries have different trails, being differently signed. Hence in order to create cross-border cooperation, the use of similar or the same signs would be an asset. In terms of maps and brochures the existing basis highly depends on the touristic use of the Danube bordering regions. In the majority of the analysed countries maps are only provided for parts of the respective Danube regions. Only Austria and Germany cover the majority of the infrastructure in the Danube region in their countries. This could motivate further Danube countries to pooling their marketing efforts in order to promote the Danube region by more detailed data, maps and brochures. Accommodation is provided in all countries, Germany and Austria even provide special accommodation facilities with certain quality-criteria for hikers. The majority of the accommodations in the Danube region are not dedicated especially to hikers. In terms of tours and packages it has to be mentioned that hiking is the basis for many national and international tour operators. Nevertheless guiding is also subject to national hiking associations. Given the fact that within the European Rambler's Association international trails are established under maintenance of national hiking associations, this would be great potential for a continuous hiking route along the Danube.

Most countries mentioned their motivation for cross-border collaboration as well as the will to improve their hiking infrastructure. In terms of cross-country collaboration the already existing ones such as the Donausteig or EU launched projects such as the ENPI Cross-border Programme bear potential for the integration of cross-border hiking along the Danube.

Putting all these aspects to a nutshell, there is great potential for the establishment of one common goal – enlarging the offer and creating standards for cross-country hiking within the Danube countries in order to realize hiking infrastructure and offers on a high quality level.

Central questions the next chapters try to answer are:

- **WHY** is “Hiking along the Danube” worth fostering and putting an effort in marketing, improving/implementing infrastructure and tourism offer? Which trends and studies emphasize the potential of hiking tourism especially in the Danube region?
- **WHO** could be interested in “Hiking along the Danube”? How old are they/where do they live ...?
- **HOW** can the aims mentioned above be reached? Which partners are important for the successful implementation and which steps are therefore to consider?
- **WHAT** is important for the development of interesting packages, offers and high-quality infrastructure? Which existing tourism offers can be seen as good practices?
- **WHAT** forms the basis for marketing in the Danube region? What are the aims of common marketing efforts?

2 Trends & studies

2.1 Austrian Tourist Office: “Summer-trends 2012”

The Austrian Tourist Office (Österreich Werbung) has published a study¹ in 2012 focusing on the most important trends in tourism.

Following tendencies of vacationists could be identified:

- Regeneration by tranquillity and individual servicing (focusing on the hosts)
- Outdoor leisure (e.g. hiking without luggage, long-distance hiking trails, guided hiking tours, nature parks etc.)
- Vacation in the water or at the waterfront (e.g. hiking through gorges)
- Vacation with sustainable effect (regional culinary arts, handcrafts, environmentally friendly locomotion etc.)

All these tendencies emphasize the potential of the Danube region as an attractive hiking region and underline the efforts of establishing hiking infrastructure in the region.

1 Österreich Werbung: TIP: „Sommertrends 2012 in den Märkten“, 2012

2.2 Danube Competence Center (DCC): “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube countries”

The Danube Competence Center (DCC) initiated a research in 2011 supported by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) concerning the analysis of the market and image of the middle & lower Danube countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine).²

Main results were an analysis of supply and demand, a product analysis in the source markets and an analysis of the inside and outside perspective.

The analysis characterizes the Danube area in the middle & lower Danube countries as an attractive experience space with great touristic potential because of its natural highlights (richness and diversity of fauna and flora, many nature reserves etc.), its cultural background (attractive cities, historical testimonies of the Byzantine, Ottoman and Habsburg Empire, churches, mosques, synagogues, traditions, festivals, modern events etc.), its culinary arts (influenced by the Habsburg’s cuisine, Turkish-Ottoman cuisine and regional, traditional specialities), and the vast variety of activities (sightseeing, hiking, biking, river cruises, enjoying regional cuisine, visiting nature reserves, horse riding, climbing, paddling/rowing/rafting, sailing).

2 DCC: „Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube countries“, 2011



The sales volume of tourism products in the middle & lower Danube countries is expected to develop more than 60 % in the next three years by both – insiders and outside tour operators.

The idea of establishing a common marketing initiative for the middle & lower Danube region is considered as very interesting by insiders (69 %) and tour operators (48 %). Important is, that all Danube countries act jointly in this point, more cooperation with upper Danube countries is desirable.

Recommended strategic implications:

- to professionalize and extend market research (standardized collection of tourism related data in all countries, regular implementation of market analysis and visitor surveys etc.)
- to improve infrastructure conditions (analysis of infrastructural framework → already done within project “Hiking along the Danube” by WGD and NFI, improve accessibility & signage, maintenance of historic sights, acquisition of subsidies for expansion and improvement of infrastructure)
- to strengthen internal marketing and establish strategic partnerships (cooperation at local and international level, DCC acts as interface, strategic collaboration between DCC, NTOs and Danube municipalities, alliances with tour operators)
- to implement minimum standards (improvement of quality of service providers, development of specific minimal standards for the middle & lower Danube region → developed within DanubeHIKE, provide incentives to companies)

- to encourage qualification (establish a professional destination management structure, strengthening of inbound-agencies, qualification of other service providers)
- to develop innovative (cross-border) products (emphasize on local features/authenticity, creation & selling of experience, dynamic packaging)
- to strengthen external marketing (image brochure → developed within DanubeHIKE, cartographical material → collected within DanubeHIKE, central website → created by DCC within DanubeHIKE, social media and public relations → International Hiking Conference in November 2012 within DanubeHIKE, online bookable services etc.)

All these trends and tendencies show the high potential of hiking tourism – and also show that the Danube region with its different natural and cultural landscapes, its culinary arts and the Danube itself, which allows hiking at the waterfront, is absolutely suitable for hiking. Within the project DanubeHIKE some sub-goals have already been realized, but there is still a long way to go towards professional common marketing of the whole Danube region.

2.3 Market research in the future

In order to make it easier for tourism actors to forecast future demand trends and to plan marketing activities it is very important to foster standardized data-collection in the whole Danube region. Especially in the middle & lower Danube countries, statistical data is either not available or not comparable. A standardized methodology for the collection of relevant statistical data but also continuous monitoring of the collected data, regular market analysis and visitor surveys seem to be very important and is also recommended in the “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube” (DCC).



3 Target groups & target markets

According to the study “Hiking: A Megamarket”³ of the Deutsche Wanderinstitut e.V. the average age of hikers is about 49 years – gender-differences are not remarkable. Higher-educated people and people with higher income become more and more overrepresented.

Therefore when it comes to promoting hiking along the Danube the focus clearly should be put on people aged 30 to 60.

As it is important to raise the awareness-level for hiking in the Danube region within the Danube countries first, the focus of promoting hiking trails along the Danube

should lie on the ten Danube countries (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine).

Therefore it is necessary to integrate hiking offers or combined offers promoting sustainable tourism of high quality in marketing efforts of regional and national tourist organisations, destination management organisations etc.

A further step in the promotion of the region would be towards non-European target markets, which would recognise the Danube region as an “European destination” and perceive the hiking tourism offer along the Danube as an European product.

3 Deutsches Wanderinstitut e.V./Rainer Brämer: “Hiking: A Megamarket”, 2011



4 Implementation and realization of hiking offers

As the aims and the target group for common marketing for the whole Danube region already have been defined in the previous chapter it now comes to the question how to reach the aims and how to realize the efforts for improving the image of the Danube region as a potential hiking area.

4.1 Establishment of high-quality infrastructure

These guidelines are going to be distributed to partners in the Danube countries (ministries, NTOs, DMOs etc.) who will further disseminate them to stakeholders. Creating guidelines is also recommended in the “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube” (DCC) mentioned above.

Aim for the future is to establish a continuous route with standardized markings and signposts along the Danube by connecting existing infrastructure. This route can also be a combination of different means of transport (hiking, biking, cruising, bus etc.). But this is still a long way to go.

The following steps show what has to be considered when it comes to planning and establishing new top-quality hiking trails.

4.1.1 General questions

- The demand for hiking trails/offers in a certain region has to be determined by market and trend researches.
- The resources have to be checked, such as if the region is suitable to hiking and if it is worthy to be further developed.
- The target group has to be defined and specified.
- Municipalities which are going to be affected by the establishment of new infrastructure have to be contacted, informed and involved and written affirmations of each project partner have to be requested.
- It has to be decided if the trail is going to be a leading trail in the region and if it should be themed.
- The route has to be planned and defined in order to have a basis for further discussions. Therefore the needs of hikers (such as moving in beautiful landscape with fresh air or experiencing nature, clean environment, joy of motion etc.) have to be considered. A concept for staging the trail and displaying its theme in signposting, infrastructural elements, access points etc. is very important not only with regard to quality seals but also to convey the trail as one unit to guests.

4.1.2 Planning steps

- The most beautiful hiking routes with special characteristics of the region (e.g. nature reserves, nature parks, sights, view-points, fauna & flora etc.) have to be selected.
- The most attractive highlights and already existing infrastructure (signposted trails, accommodation, public transportation) should be connected.
- Good accessibility of the main route has to be guaranteed. Therefore workshops for route planning with regard to natural/cultural highlights make sense with affected regions, municipalities, localities etc.
- Also a common logo is desirable.
- The establishment of a detailed cost plan and as a further step making efforts to assure the financing (by EU, governments, funding projects etc.) are also very important for successful and qualitative development of hiking infrastructure.

4.1.3 Trail creation guidelines

In order to ensure high quality trails and evaluation the following Do's and Don'ts should be taken into account.

DO's

- Diversified trails, which are well integrated in the surroundings
- One-day-stages (20 km)
- Paths, nature and grass trails, historic trails (LIMES, defiles etc.), contemporary culture trails galleries, museums (including also natural historic museums)
- Trails directly along the Danube, waters, Protected Areas, natural and cultural sights etc.
- Dramaturgy of the route
- Experience of silence
- Viewpoints
- Hiker's stops
- Integrate hiker-friendly infrastructure

DON'Ts

- Straight trails, without natural and cultural sights
- Asphalt, concrete, cobbles flooring
- Interrupted trail
- Use of highways or highly frequented streets and cycling trails
- Insecure or dangerous trail parts
- Intensively used areas (residential areas, industrial parks, shopping centres, intensively used agricultural areas etc.)
- Hiker's stops without weather protection

4.1.4 Indication for time schedule and costs

In order to plan and establish concepts for high-quality hiking trails, a time frame of about 2 years is realistic and should be considered just for planning and conception. A detailed concept forms a good basis for fund-raising. It is not recommended to start with implementing the infrastructure until then.

Establishing 1 km of hiking trail incl. way-marking costs about € 2.000,- when the tracing has already been done (according to Alpines Wandermanagement, Austria).

4.2 Creation of offers and packages

4.2.1 Existing infrastructure & offers

In Germany the trail “Hiking along the Danube without luggage” from Donaueschingen to Passau at the moment is neither signed nor marked. But different organisations (e.g. the Eastern-Bavarian tourist board) already have projects in mind for marking the trail.

In Austria there is a concrete project for connecting Donauaustieg and Welterbesteig Wachau in the Nibelungengau-region. The routes have already been chosen and the implementation of the main trail should be finished in spring 2013.

In the lower Danube countries the collection of GPS-data of potential Danube hiking trails and areas is an important issue. Within the project DanubeHIKE quality-criteria for GPS-data have been developed. GPS-tracks will be collected and an interactive hiking map will be implemented for the web, where all those tracks can be found in the future.

But still there are some more open issues left: Concrete cross-border hiking-products have to be developed in the whole Danube region. Therefore the situation analysis forms the basis so that each country and each region can improve their infrastructure for hiking tourism.

4.2.2 Ideas & recommendations for the creation of new offers & packages

In order to increase the interest in the Danube region of guests, tour operators, stakeholders etc. concrete offers and packages have to be created.

For the moment combinations with different means of transport including public transport make sense for bridging the gaps between hiking areas and trails. Therefore cooperation with tour operators providing cruises on the Danube or with railway associations is possible and necessary.

Some tour operators are already offering some of these packages mostly in combination with biking on the Danube cycle path and cruises or bus tours. These tour operators might be interested in combinations with hiking as well and should be contacted. Therefore the most important hiking paths, natural and cultural sights and other highlights have to be emphasized and presented, to let them know why the region is worth visiting and bears much potential for varied packages.

An idea for the combination of cruising and hiking could be to offer one-day-hiking excursions to trails and areas that lie within easy reach of some of the landing stages of the cruise ships. In this way cruise-guests get in touch with both – the river itself and the hikeable surroundings of the region.

Each partner of DanubeHIKE has to foster the communication with tour operators, relevant tourist partners, national parks etc. in order to provide attractive hiking-offers in the future. The partners of DanubeHIKE do also have the responsibility to circulate the guidelines developed within DanubeHIKE to all relevant partners and contacts as a basis for further tourist development.

Some guidelines were developed for destinations, tour operators, nature parks, accommodations and public transport in the Danube region as well to harmonize the quality level of service and offers along the Danube.

4.2.3 Ideas and recommendations for destinations

In the overall destination development managers develop marketing programmes and stakeholders create various tourism products that fit with them. Such programmes then become tools to promote, sell and reinforce the values, culture and heritage of the destination to both stakeholders and visitors.

Recommendations:

- Develop and maintain a Tourist information office (good placement, professional staff, sufficient information materials – either in printed version or interactive tables/apps)
- Organise (thematic) campaigns and events to promote the destination (festivals, exhibitions, adventure races etc.)
- Include local events (concerts, festivals) in tourism packages: “Hiking & Event”
- Organising week-end tours for hikers to visit monumental areas and spots with specific flora and fauna, including getting inside view to rare species of plants and animals, areas with usually limited/restricted access
- Organising local traditional activity for hikers who stays (1–2 days) in domestic households (making domestic products, telling interesting stories ...)
- Specialized programs for children and families with kids (including educational components related to natural and cultural heritage)
- Define in advance who is in charge of maintenance of the route, how frequently to offer new programs etc.

Examples for existing offers:

Wine Streets of Serbia

www.serbia.travel/destinations

In the Reflection of the Danube – Fruska Gora Winestreet

Mt. Fruška Gora is famous for its wines, which can be sampled in one of 60 privately-owned wine cellars. Thematic Route with information on wine cellars, accommodation, sights, restaurants and transport in the region. The route is promoted through a thematic brochure and the National Tourism Organisation website.

Good Practice: detailed description and a map of the “Wine Streets”; thematic route – combining wine tasting and hiking (the Fruska Gora winestreet passes along the Danube), information about accommodation, restaurants, wine cellars etc. (PDF)



Donau Festival Ulm, Germany

www.donaubuero.de

The Danube Festival, which has been organised by the Donaübüro since 2004, has different artistic emphases. Thrilling concerts from folklore to outstanding pop, from classical to hip-hop, literature readings, dance and theatre, demonstrate the broad cultural diversity of the Danube Region

Good Idea: the event can be included in a tourism package



4.2.4 Ideas and recommendations for tour operators

For a standard hiking itinerary participants will expect a balance between physical activity and culture/nature experiences as well as the ability to explore areas that are difficult to access by car or train. Opportunities for different types of hikers should be available (e.g. hiking trail divided into stages with resting points and accommodation facilities). Various levels of accommodation should be identified for each stop in order to meet different needs, from tented camps to high end hotels. Routes should be designed to take travellers into remote areas of low tourism.

Recommendations:

- Create integrated products including transfers, accommodation, meals, museum fees, wine degustation etc.
- Keep balance between nature and culture experience
- Integrate other outdoor activities, such as biking, rowing, boat trips
- Combine hiking with cruise or other kind of transportation (hiking without luggage)
- Create cross-border products by including routes and services from neighbouring countries, but keep one guide for the whole tour (second local guide if required by local legislation)
- Create conditions for self-guided tours – provide tourists with hiking “information set” (model itinerary, insurance, “insider” tips, GPS coordinates, maps, guide books, information on accommodation, transport etc.)
- Cooperation with local organisations (LTO, Nature Parks ...) and private accommodation owners for organising different short time thematic routes or activities
- Programs for specific target groups – seniors, children, youth, families

Examples for existing packages:

Sightseeing cruise Wachau/Austria (Combi ticket Ship + Cycle + Picnic)

www.ddsg-blue-danube.at

Small or grand Wachau cruise combined with cycling tour and picnic

- Services included: Wachau cruise, bike rental, picnic rucksack (mineral water, softdrink, sandwiches, fruit)
- Price: € 30,-/€ 40,-

Good idea: this type of tour could be also adapted to a cruise + hiking + picnic tour



Package “Danube path Passau-Linz – The Danube always in sight” by Upper Austrian Incoming agency “OÖ Touristik”

www.touristik.at

Your way leads you along the rolling mountain ridge of the Danube valley from Passau to Linz. You hike through shadowy forests, crest the impressive ruin of Fortress Schauburg and stop for a well deserved break at the Schlögener Blick a magnificent view point. Traditional inns and restaurants welcome you with delicious specialties and self-pressed must or fruit juices – truly a highlight for body and soul.

Arrival: daily from 14th April to 13th October

- Included services:**
- 6 nights with breakfast
 - luggage transfer from hotel to hotel as far as Linz
(1 piece of luggage per person incl. a max. € 500,- commitment)
 - boat trip Passau to Kasten
 - liqueur tasting in the monastery of Engelszell and an individual walk around the church
 - transfer by train from Eferding to Linz
 - city tour with the Linz-City Express
 - transfer by train from Linz to Passau
 - hiking rucksack with information material and route description per room
 - service hotline also at the weekend

Prices per person and per stay: € 419,- double room
Season C: 12.05.–31.08.: € 559,- single room
€ 129,- half board supplement

Good Practice: Hiking without luggage; combination hiking + boat trip; good balance nature/culture; hiking rucksack with information materials for self-guided tours



Package “Tour: Vienna – Bratislava – Vienna” by “Tour4U”

www.tour4u.sk

Explore with us the capital of Slovakia – Bratislava, just 60km distant from Vienna. During your cruise to Bratislava and back you can either follow the main stream on a board of a hydrofoil ship crossing the dam Freudenu, or discover the Danube Channel by a catamaran boat.

In Bratislava, you will take part in a sightseeing tour and have lunch, while still having enough time to feel the atmosphere of the city on your own. During the river cruise you will see beautiful Danube nature, the Devin Castle ruin, a lovely town of Hainburg and of course Bratislava and Vienna.

Arrival: Catamaran 22.3.–3.11. – daily/Hydrofoil 24.4.–12.10./24.4.–29.9. – Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday/4.10.–12.10. – Friday, Saturday

Included services:

- Danube Cruise from Vienna to Bratislava and back
- Bratislava Sightseeing Tour by Presporacik Oldtimer
- Time for individual walk within the city
- Lunch in the historical centre

Price per person: € 125,-

Good Practice: Cross-border offer including cultural and natural sights along the Danube



Bulgaria and Romania Wild Nature in the Lower Danube

www.wandernbulgarien.eu

The journey begins with hiking in Rusenski Lom Nature Park. It preserves beautiful rocky valleys with great variety of bird species and important historical monuments, such as the Rock churches of Ivanovo (UNESCO). On the way to the Black Sea we will visit the protected area Malak Preslavets – paradise of white water lily and the biosphere reserve Srebarna – a wonderful lake with around 150 species. Two more UNESCO monuments – Sveshtari Thracian tomb and the Madara Horseman rock relief are on our way to Varna – the sea capital of Bulgaria. After the city Constanta and its beautiful beaches we reach the natural paradise of the Danube delta, where we devote 2 full days to natural landscapes and bird watching. At the end of the trip we make a sightseeing tour of Bucharest.

Duration: 11 days (The best time is from mid-April to mid-June.)

Services included:

- 11 nights in small hotels; Double room with shower/toilet
- 11 breakfasts and 10 dinners
- Transfers by bus
- German/English speaking guide

Prices: From 10 to 14 people: € 950,-
From 15 to 20 people: € 850,-

Good practices: cross-border guided hiking tour, good nature/culture experience balance, cultural and natural highlights (UNESCO heritage), hiking in natural parks, cooperation of local accommodations in Bulgaria and Romania



4.2.5 Ideas and recommendations for nature parks

Guided tours and other services provided by National/Nature parks can be an additional asset to hiking tourism product development in the region. Services can be offered directly to visitors or included in tour itineraries of tour operators. For parks directorates this kind of services would be a financial support and a good opportunity to raise awareness on responsible hiking among visitors.

Providing services for tourists enhances parks promotion and image and supports directorates' purposes and aims.

Recommendations:

- Organise tours with professional guides (ornithologists, botanists etc.)
- Provide equipment needed (boats, bicycles, first aid kits, maps etc.)
- Offer thematic routes (e.g. "Flora & Fauna", fairy routes for children etc.)
- Network with tour operators in order to include the tours in their packages

Example for existing offer:

Guided tours in Nature Park Kopacki Rit, Croatia

www.kopacki-rit.hr

Tour 1 The Special Zoological Reserve and Tikveš Castle Complex tour program includes the entrance fee, a presentation of the Park, a boat ride, visit to Tikveš Castle Complex and a professional guide

Price: Adults 70,00kn/Children 50kn

Tour 2 Small tour boat program includes the entrance fee, presentation of the Park, a tour through the Special Zoological Reserve or other waterways with a small boat – max. 4 persons

Price: 100,00kn (per person/per hour)

Tour 3 Tikveš Castle Complex and "Old Elm" nature trail tour program includes the entrance fee, a presentation of the Park, visit to Tikveš Castle Complex and "Old Elm" nature trail – 2500m with professional guide

Price: Adults 50kn/ Children 40kn

Good Practice: combination hiking and boat trip; balance culture/nature



4.2.6 Ideas and recommendations for accommodations

Accommodations may offer additional services for hikers in order to meet hikers' needs (such as late dinner, hiking equipment, guidebooks, maps, transfers to hiking trails etc.) It is also a good idea to offer hiking/cultural tours for the guests (including services provided by local guides, museums, farmers etc.) Hiking tours offered by accommodations can be promoted through their web pages, as well as through travel agencies, tourism organizations and local tourist offices.

Recommendations:

- Adapt quality of main services to hikers needs (late check-in, possibility to wash/dry clothes, healthy nutrition etc.)
- Offer additional hiking services (equipment, guidebooks, maps, information on trails and sights, guided tours

Examples for existing offers:

Austria – Landgasthof Donau-Traum-Blick

www.eselgut.at

Offer: Night hiking with torches along the Danube

Serbia – Capetan Misin Breg (Donji Milanovac)

Offer: Picnic, Boating, Angling, Fishing, Swimming, Hiking in protected nature territories of “Djerdap” National Park, Bird watching, Mushroom and berry picking, traditional culinary courses, Water sports, Bicycling, Rock climbing

Bulgaria – “Black Stork Family Hotel” (Nisovo)

www.black-stork.com

Offer: trekking, cycling and cultural itineraries in the region, information on local cultural sites and traditions

4.2.7 Ideas and recommendations for public transport

Public transport is of great importance for hiking tourism offer, especially in case of insufficient hiking infrastructure. Collaborating with tourist offices and tour operators is important in order to draw public transport services closer to hikers needs. Combinations such as cruise and hiking tour would also be great opportunities for tourists to hike all day without having to carry heavy baggage.

Recommendations:

- Sufficient information on transport services and timetables on key spots (e.g. Bus station, train station, tourism offices, guest houses, hotels, restaurants etc.)
- Shuffles and transfers to nature parks/hiking trails (to be arranged with tour operators and nature park directorates)
- Thematic tours offered by transport companies (e.g. Narrow gauge and forest railways)
- Availability of combined transport based on hip on hip off module, stop and change system with bicycles, boats etc.

Examples for existing offers

Bulgaria – One-day trips by bus

web.ovanesovi.eu

Guided tour From Rousse to the Srebarna biosphere reserve

- Services included:**
- Transport in minibus/bus
 - English speaking guide

Hungary – Gemenc Forest Railway

www.gemenczrt.hu

Narrow gauge (760mm), not electrified. This line runs from Pörböly (connection to MÁV) to Bárányfok, but most trains terminate at Gemenc-Dunapart.

4.3 Guidelines for quality criteria

Primarily quality criteria ensure comparability and recognition. From a tourist's perspective quality criteria for hiking trails or service providers offer orientation when choosing a hiking destination. For the service providers, being mainly accommodation facilities, restaurants, transportation companies and tourist offices, quality criteria can serve as marketing tool, benchmark and can be taken into account when developing offers and packages to best serve the tourist's demands.

The objective of quality criteria for hiking tourism along the Danube is an agreement of all Danube bordering countries. This should enable partners to work towards the implementation of the criteria on the long run.

Moreover the increase of quality hiking tourism along the Danube should contribute to the development of a marketing strategy and a brand for hiking tourism. Besides branding and marketing the Danube region for hiking tourism further contributes to the EU strategy for the Danube region.

Example:

Range: 1 to 5 points per criteria (e.g. walkability); 1 = not/few/low; 5 = entirely/many/high

1 2 3 4 5

The criteria have been established on the basis of existing criteria and through the working process of DanubeHIKE partners and should be seen as a motivating and supportive guide when it comes to concrete implementations of trails and services in order to reach a similar high-quality-standard in the whole Danube region. The guidelines only form a basis, but have to be adapted to local circumstances.

4.3.1 Quality criteria for hiking trails

The evaluation for hiking trails will be mainly made in a range from 1 to 5 whereas 5 points is the highest score and 1 is the lowest. The basic idea is to evaluate the trails on the basis of an average score in order to put the information about the trail quality on the hiking web portal that will be established by the DCC during the project DanubeHIKE. The criteria are split into the sections of Routing, Substance and Maintenance, Marketing and infrastructure. The proposal for common signposting is provided on the basis of international trail standards, which are already used in some Danube countries and regions e.g. in Upper Austria. It should help destinations to focus on common signposting and quality.

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR HIKING TRAILS	1	2	3	4	5
Routing					
Walkability (distinction between gaps or entirely walkable trail)					
Safety					
Winter conditions safety and walkability					
Natural sights along the trail					
Cultural sights along the trail					
Unique viewpoints along the trail					
Accessibility of starting/ending point (public transport)					
Level of difficulty					
Substance/Maintenance					
Maintenance of trail					
Space of trail (broad, narrow)					
(Common) signposting					

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR HIKING TRAILS	1	2	3	4	5
Distance of stages					
Accessibility for physically handicapped persons					
Attractive resting points and signs (good substance, proper location)					
Information boards about local geology, flora, fauna					
Marketing					
Authentic naming					
Actual information material available (online, offline, maps, brochures, information about packages)					
Promoted via hiking offers (included in packages)					
Internet presence					
Information available in different languages (at least in English)					
Infrastructure					
Connectivity with other trails					
Connectivity with other means of transport, hiking and ...					
Shipping (cruising)					
Biking					
Accessibility by public transport					
Resting points along the trail					
Water supply (springs) along the trail					
Accommodations along the trail					
Restaurants along the trail					
Provisions along the trail					
	Yes		No		
Trail sections passing through private property					
If trail is passing through private property, access allowed					
Signposting					
Existing signposts					
Material:					
Aluminium					
Wood					
Other (specification):					
Colour of the sign:					
Yellow					
Green					
Blue					
Red					
Other (specification):					
Distance	Yes		No		
More than 5 km					
Between 5 and 2 km					
Less than 2 km					

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR HIKING TRAILS	1	2	3	4	5
Content:	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulty					
	Yes			No	
Target destination					
Time					
Pictogram					
Language – English					
Language – Other					

The range of 1–5 is a preliminary range, which is still subject to discussion. Also the possibility of a range of three, based on the colours of traffic lights needs to be considered. On the one hand it is important to identify high quality trails in order to ensure comparability. On the other hand the range should be easily implemented and identified by all Danube bordering countries and destinations, no matter how much hiking infrastructure already exists. Moreover recommendations have been created in order to provide guidelines for destinations and hiking organisations when establishing new trails or evaluating existing infrastructure.

4.3.2 Recommendation for signposts:

Material: Aluminium

Size: Sign – Length – min. 650 mm, 60 mm for arrow, Width – between 80 mm–200 mm

Letters: 20 mm target destination, time, difficulty and pictogram, 15 mm for route numbers; Font: Arial, without serifs, normal – not big, not italic

Colours: Sign: yellow (RAL 1023), letters: black (RAL 9005)

Content: Difficulty, target destination, time, pictogram, not more than 3 destinations

Location: not more than 2 km distance, at trail branches

Example for existing trail network:

Austria – Donausteig

www.donausteig.com

450 km Donausteig- Along both banks of the river from Passau to Grein the Danube trail leads through varied natural and cultural landscapes.

- 41 Donausteig rounds – Branching off from the main route many trails lead to the hinterland, thus enabling a deeper immerse and experience of the region.
- Optimal integration of rail, bus and boat- facilitating arrival and return to the starting point
- The Danube Trail is ideal for: Distance hikers/Short distance hikers, excursion hiker, families etc.
- 165 resting and panoramic points – The courses offer beautiful views and insights into the breathtaking Danube country.
- Story Telling – 120 Danube legends retold and illustrated, are put on the signboards and are an additional facet to the picture that draws the region of the Danube Trail.
- 52 Donausteig hosts – Hiking experts from the region advise its guests and submit quality criteria for accommodations and dining establishments
- Targeted Packages – Different types of hiking tourists are targeted and packages are aligned in different categories, so that guests can find a package tailored to their needs.
- Donausteig interactively – The interactive trail map and trip planner allows the guest to create individual route profiles and print PDF.

4.3.3 Quality criteria for accommodation

Due to the fact that accommodation providers often do already follow quality standards for their general service, the criteria for “hiker friendly” accommodation are mentioned separately. Two choices are possible – yes and no. In some cases the information needs to be specified (separately indicated within criteria).

Example:

Professional staff can give extensive information about the hiking region and its infrastructure.

Yes

No

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR ACCOMODATION	Yes	No
Hiking service		
Accessible from hiking trail (within walking distance)		
Hiking information (maps, brochures, further: weather, sights)		
Professional staff (knows the hiking regions, foreign languages, personal service)		
Service for hikers – hiking equipment (rental and/or shop)		
First aid for hikers (salves, band aids etc.)		
Possibility to wash/dry clothes, shoes; store them		
Shuttle service for hikers, luggage		
Black board with news, contact point for hikers		
Outdoor activities offered (guided tours, boat trips etc.)		
General services		
Certification (stars etc.) – (yes/no, specification)		
Early morning breakfast, late check-in, short-term check-in		
Healthy nutrition, light breakfast, whole meal products		
Products from the region		
Internet presentation of the accommodation provider		

Example:

Bulgaria – Green Lodge

www.baatbg.org

Green Lodge® is a certificate issued to guesthouses and small hotels that correspond to ECEAT and Eurogites quality standards. Hosts of these houses are local people who pay special attention to local nature and culture. They will be your guide to interesting sites and events in the surroundings and will saturate your experience

- Contribution to nature protection
- Focus on cultural heritage
- Environmental information services to guests
- Continuous improvement of environmental performance

4.3.4 Quality criteria for service providers (tour operators, tourist offices, restaurants)

Only two choices are possible. Yes, no and in some cases the information needs to be specified (separately indicated within criteria)

Yes No

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS	Yes	No
Accessible from hiking trail (within walking distance)		
Variety of hiking information about the area (maps, brochures, weather, sights, GPS)		
Information about:		
Hiker-friendly restaurants		
Hiker-friendly accommodation		
Luggage transport		
Shuttle services		
Public transport		
Hiking guides		
Special hiking offers/packages		
General information about exchange rates, visa, country information, embassies, hospitals		
Internet presence		
Internet presence in several languages, at least in English		
Booking channels for offers:		
Internet		
Fax		
Phone		
Professional staff – knows the hiking regions, foreign languages, personal service		
Black board with news, contact point for hikers		
For restaurants: use of regional products, offer of light meals (adapted for hikers)		
For restaurants: Hiker-friendly service ev. band aids etc.		
For tourist offices: hub for all service providers and regions, fostering cross-country collaboration, especially hiking maps and info about sights along the trails		
Tour operators: fostering cross-country hiking offers, collaboration with other service providers focusing on hiking tourism		

Example:

Salix Tours, Ukraine

www.salix.od.ua

We can arrange special tours to meet your own requirements – for yourself, your family or your friends. Whether it’s a day out, a long weekend or an extended period, we can help you plan the ideal holiday, at any time of the year. And you can rest assured that we will provide comfortable accommodation, delicious food, expert guiding, reliable transport and any other support you need. Visit our pages on nature and locations for a sample of what you can see and do in Ukraine. Here are some more ideas in and around Odessa:

- April 1st is Odessa Sea Carnival Day (Yumorina): come and see the amazing pageant.
- June 29 is Danube Day, celebrated throughout the river basin – come and join in the events organised in the delta.
- September 7th is Odessa Foundation Day: enjoy the open-air concerts and fireworks.
- From June to October, the fishing for carp, pike, catfish and zander is excellent. Camp out on the Danube banks and catch some.
- Or try your hand at ice-fishing on the lakes during February: whatever your luck, there will be a warming mulled wine and stuffed pike meal ready for you at the end of the day
- Go for a canoe tour along the Danube channels.
- Spend some time in a local community and brush up on your Russian language.
- Set up an easel and paint the fantastic landscapes.

4.3.5 Quality criteria for public transport and transport providers

Only two choices are possible. Yes, no and in some cases the information needs to be specified (separately indicated within criteria)

Yes No

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TRANSPORT PROVIDERS	Yes	No
Public transportation company		
Private transportation company		
Accessible from hiking trail (within walking distance)		
Registered transportation company		
Frequency and transparency of timetables		
Services limited to main season		
Services all year long		
Luggage transfer		
Language – English information available		
Language – Further languages available		

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TRANSPORT PROVIDERS	Yes	No
Possibility to carry rucksacks, store shoes		
Information about hiking areas, hiker-friendly accommodations		
Collaboration with tourist offices and tour operators (packages and special offers)		
Pick-up service		
Flexibility		
Booking channels for offers:		
Internet		
Fax		
Phone		
Information about other means of transport, connection points		
Internet presentation of the accommodations providers, several languages, at least in English		
Professional staff – knows languages, needs of hikers		
Special rates for hikers		

Example:

Serbian Railways – Tourist train Romantika

www.serbianrailways.com

The project of the heritage train “Romantika” was brought to life in 1996 aiming to give passengers the impression of coming back to past and to let them enjoy romantic journeys with the smoke of the steam locomotive. The heritage wagons from 1930s (first, second and third class, as well as the restaurant wagon) represent proper tourist offer.

- The heritage train “Romantika” is composed of one first class wagon, twelve second class wagons, the restaurant wagon and the wagon for bike transport.
- The commercial offer is very content-rich- the goal of “Serbian Railways” is to please all needs of different tourist groups.
- Beside the regular commercial offer and favorite destinations such as: Sremski Karlovci, Palić, Vršac, Bela Crkva, Požarevac, Smederevo, Despotovac – Resavica, we offer to our customers to rent the train, what represents a unique way to mark jubilees, to present business projects, to organize presentations ...
- Steam locomotives, which were used for the heritage train rides, were external items of the Railway Museum.
- The train capacity is 420 seats.
- Striving to enrichment of the journeys with new content such as: visits of fairs, wineries, grape harvests, festivals, carnivals, sports games, and other events organized by the tourist agencies across Serbia.

4.4 Creation of professional management structures

According to the “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube” (DCC) an important step towards successful marketing for the Danube region is to improve or in some places establish professional destination management structures at local and regional levels.

The DCC would support the middle and lower Danube region in establishing new structures but also in improving existing ones. As these structures already are well established in the upper part of the Danube region, those countries should also provide consultancy and support.

The DCC's and upper Danube region's support should include for example: guidance and technical advice in the areas of planning, management, service, marketing and infrastructure as well as to ensure long-term funding.

To foster networks and cooperation with other regional/national/international partners and the DCC has to be of very high importance to each tourism organization.

Given the fact that not only the establishment and the implementation of hiking infrastructure is important, but also further maintenance (such as checking and renewing way-marks/signposts, keeping resting points clean, repairing damages etc.) has to be done, professional management structures have to form the basis in order to guarantee high-quality not only in the beginning but continuously in the future.

5 Marketing Aims

The main objective is to create a brand for the entire Danube region, including all Danube bordering countries. Providing high quality tourism offers, communicate the Danube region as one brand, attract national and international guests and acquire sustainable tourism projects beyond the borders are the major aims to be achieved with the respective marketing measures.

5.1 Product development

As a first step towards successful marketing for the whole Danube region new infrastructure has to be established and new offers and packages have to be created. Those main topics will form the basis for hiking offers in the region (see chapter 4).

5.2 Improving the image of “Hiking in the whole Danube region”

The image of the Danube region being a region perfectly developed for hikers can be improved by first developing and second promoting new high-quality hiking infrastructure.

Therefore the USPs of the region – especially for hiking – should be emphasized:

- river as a connection of 10 countries/different landscapes etc.
- hiking along water
- different natural and cultural landscapes
- sights, landmarks, cities + villages, castles, ruins etc.
- nature parks, national parks
- combination of hiking, biking and cruising
- history of the river
- connection with already existing programs focusing on the above-mentioned topics

5.3 Get more overnight-stays and day-excursionists

High-quality offers form the basis for getting more tourists to the region. A common marketing platform enables all destinations, regions and also all tourism stakeholders such as tourism offices, tour operators, travel agencies, accommodation providers, nature parks and other service providers to promote their offers and attract tourists from all over the world (see 5.5. E-Marketing and social media, common internet platform).

5.4 Realization via potential follow-up-projects (EU)

Most conclusions and results of DanubeHIKE are guidelines and should make it easier for potential follow-up projects to find partners and raise funds. Especially the topics of product development in the sector of hiking tourism along the Danube and Marketing the Danube region is of high importance. Continuing collaboration between Danube-bordering countries towards the implementation of the EU strategy for the Danube region is going to stay a major issue, also in upcoming years.

Currently EUSDR Steering Group of PA 3 (Tourism and Culture and People to People Contacts) works towards developing a Danube tourism brand, in order to position the region on the global tourism market. The brand should be built upon existing national/regional sub-brands and supported by a network of main tourism stakeholders, to ensure better-coordinated action and knowledge exchange.

5.5 Marketing measures

Advertising

Within the project a logo for DanubeHIKE was designed. This logo should be used by all partners in the future when it comes to any activities concerning hiking along the Danube.

The brochure “DanubeHIKE” has been produced. This brochure gives a short overview of the whole Danube region

and highlights the topics history, sights and culture, hiking, cuisine, nature, access and transport and accommodation. It serves as a teaser for getting a first image of the Danube region and for raising the awareness-level for the Danube valley being a hiking region. The brochure does not address costumers or potential hiking guests, but ministries, NTOs, DMOs, tour operators, hiking associations, journalists and other potential partners and stakeholders for motivating them to promote hiking tourism in the region, to further develop infrastructure, create bookable packages etc. The brochure should be distributed by the partners of DanubeHIKE and furthermore by ministries and NTOs of the Danube countries.

In further steps image-brochures, flyers, folders, give-aways etc. for customers and hiking guests should be produced as well.

In order to provide high-quality maps and information material some publishers releasing guide books for hiking could be addressed and informed about the hiking infrastructure in the Danube region and the suggested route with all its highlights (comparable to the “Bike-line” guide book for the Danube cycle path of Esterbauer (www.esterbauer.com)).

To guarantee the success of common marketing activities for the whole Danube region the NTOs in each Danube country have to support the marketing strategy and the project DanubeHIKE. Their channels of distribution and communication can be used for promoting hiking offers in the Danube region as well.

E-Marketing & Social Media

According to the “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube” (DCC) the most preferred information channel to get informed about future tourism products in the Danube region are websites (73 %).

The Danube Competence Center (DCC) is developing an international web portal for the Danube region (Danube.travel) which will be presented at ITB 2013. Touristic content of all Danube countries can be found on this website, which forms a comprehensive service portal for people who are interested in travelling to the Danube region.

Furthermore an interactive hiking map with GPS-data of all trails in the Danube region is going to be realized and also linked to the website.

Figure 1 –
The future
web portal
www.danube.travel





Figure 2 – Danube.travel description of hiking routes



Figure 3 – Danube.travel interactive map

A classic E-Marketing-campaign should be used for raising the popularity of the Danube web portal when it is online (e.g. Google-Adwords, search engine optimization, landing pages, banner ads, newsletter of important partners etc.).

Social media platforms, such as facebook, Google+ etc. could also be important and effective possibilities for on-line marketing. Innovative tools of marketing should be used as well – for example FB campaigns, development

of games, competitions, mobile applications etc. In this case it is important to use these tools as common action of different regional marketing holders in order to foster collaboration and benefit from each other in terms of distribution. When it comes to social media channels it is very important that there are enough staff resources available to maintain those channels adequately and regularly.

Further good practice examples for websites in the Danube region:

Figure 4 –
Interactive map
ARGE Deutsche Donau
www.deutsche-donau.de





Figure 5 –
Web portal
www.donausteig.com



Figure 6 –
Web portal
www.donau.com

The website should in a second step be connected with other web-portals which are well-disposed towards hiking to raise the awareness level of DCC's website – e. g.:

www.donausteig.com
www.danube.at
www.donau.com
www.tiscover.at
www.hrs.de,
www.bergfex.at
www.outdooractive.com

www.mmediu.ro/beta
www.rosilva.ro,
www.eco-romania.ro

www.serbia.travel
www.stazeibogaze.rs
www.pss.rs
www.npfruskagora.rs
www.npdjerdap.rs

www.nptara.rs
www.jugoistocnasrbija.rs
www.visitserbia.org
www.kopaonik-online.net
www.serbiatravelers.org
www.explore-serbia.rs
www.traveleastserbia.org
www.istar21.rs

www.slovakia.travel
www.visit.bratislava.sk

www.mvc.sk
www.regionnitra.sk

Event Marketing

One idea for common marketing activities is creating a Danube-Hiking-day which could be connected to the already existing “Danube Day”, which is celebrated on June 29th every year since 2004 in all Danube-bordering countries with various activities and festivals.

Several different hiking-events on different spots in the Danube region could therefore take place on the same day. All those activities could be linked in some way (via internet etc.).

Public Relations

The International Hiking Conference (19.–20.11.2012, Linz, Upper Austria) including a press conference was the first event for presenting the results of DanubeHIKE and the potential of hiking tourism in the Danube region to a broader public.

According to the “Market and image analysis of the middle & lower Danube” (DCC), further regional and international press activities are desirable to ensure effective publicity in the future. A corporate design should be created as well and used consistently in all publications. A central point of contact for the media (which could be the DCC) would make sense to deliver consistent press releases, organize press conferences, press trips, represent the Danube region on international fairs (e. g. ITB in Berlin) etc.





Conclusion

The guidelines and quality criteria are based on the experience of all project partners and have been developed in a discussion process amongst partners and other potential stakeholders. Good practice examples were displayed in order to show which offers already successfully exist and enable knowledge exchange amongst partners along the entire Danube.

It should support tourism stakeholders along in the Danube region to improve their existing offers, infrastructure and marketing instruments. The guidelines should help to create innovative offers in order to attract national and international tourists and offer competitive high quality products and services.

Due to limited time and resources this project cannot provide infrastructure development and intensive product development, but works as a common base for different follow-up activities.

The basis for a common marketing strategy can be further developed by introducing marketing measures for each country as well as common cross border marketing activities. The quality criteria for establishing and improving hiking offer can be adapted to the specific needs and hiking infrastructure conditions of each country. Nevertheless NTOs and DMOs should tend towards common quality standards.

The Guidelines for implementing and improving/positioning hiking tourism along the Danube can serve as a basis for developing workshops, seminars and know how transfer in terms of diversifying and improving hiking offer along the Danube.

Furthermore, these guidelines are an additional step towards developing tourism and strengthen the area according to the aims of the EU strategy for the Danube region.

Now all project partners are asked to distribute the guidelines to ensure the use of the guidelines by tourism stakeholders along the entire Danube.



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