

## European regions for sustainable tourism

The city of Alba Iulia is located in Transylvania, Romania. The city, known for its vineyards, is often considered as the cultural and spiritual capital city of Romania. In 1918, Romanians and delegates from all Transylvania met in Alba Iulia and decided the unification of Transylvania with Romania. The gentle climate and the richness of the soil made the area around Alba Iulia inhabitable since ancient times and established Alba as a leading wine growing region with its rolling hills and deep, wide valleys. Temples, mosaics, thermae and statues, amphitheatres, the governor's palace "Daciarum Trium" as the miniature copy of the mother Rome. In 1599 the union of the three main provinces of Romania: Walachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. In the old town visitors can stroll along the wide, tree-lined streets of the Habsburg

citadel, one of the most impressive in Europe, to discover the historical, cultural and architectural places of interest of Alba Iulia: the Roman Catholic Cathedral – the oldest and most valuable monument of architecture in Transylvania, the Batthyaneum Library, the Orthodox Cathedral of the Reunification, the Babilon Building – housing the National Museum of Unification, the Union Hall, the Apor Palace, the Princely Palace, and the University of Alba Iulia. For those interested in natural attractions and outdoor adventures, Alba Iulia is a good starting point for exploring the Apuseni and Retezat



## Preserve Conference in: Romania

The PRESERVE partners are actively preparing for their upcoming dissemination conference scheduled in Alba (RO) from 16-18 March 2010. This interregional event is a crucial milestone in the project's lifecycle as it marks the mid-term point of the time plan.

The seminar in Alba, entitled "European tourism in the economic crisis: how can regions use sustainability for stability?" will gather regional politicians, officers and various stakeholders active in the field of tourism to discuss the effects of the economic downturn on their activity. Experts will present statistics and potential scenarios while practitioners will share their experiences in these difficult times.

But the financial crisis can also be considered as an opportunity for new, sustainable growth; representatives of regions and local authorities will highlight some good practices that they have developed to ensure that tourism can become a tool for long term, stable, economic growth rather than a volatile and opportunistic activity.

In addition to stirring a lively discussion on the above-mentioned point, Alba will also be a time for self-evaluation and reflection. Partners have been working on a fine-tuned methodology of "peer reviews". They will present some tips for carrying out successful peer reviews which is the central part of the "exchange of experience" component of PRESERVE.

Four more peer reviews will take place in 2010; Avila (ES), Sterea Ellada (GR), Eszak-Alföld (HU), Carinthia (AT). Finally, partners will report about the other dissemination and coordination activities.

The conference will take place in parallel to other events: the Assembly of European Region's Committee 1 plenary session; the AER European Citizen Forum on "Youth Employment in times of crisis"; the PRESERVE steering committee and partner coordination meetings; the field visits; the official dinner and social programme at the kind invitation of the host region. For further information and for registration, please visit our website: <http://preserve.aer.eu/news-activities/mid-term-conference.html>

## Peer Reviews

Only 1 year after the official start of the project PRESERVE in the frame of the Launch Conference, the partners can report of first concrete results of a very fruitful co-operation. During the year of 2009, 2 peer reviews have taken place: the first in June in Örebro, Sweden, the second in October in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia.

The 2 review teams consisting of experts coming from 3-4 countries have been faced by partly different framework conditions, potentials and expectations in the 2 regions, but could also experience something "common": the warm and friendly atmosphere of the hosts for example. What we could learn, is a lot. First of all, the amazing experience of mutual learning should be mentioned: the peer review gives the

opportunity for active exchange of ideas, good and bad practice, experiences. Getting to know new cultures, traditions, products, regions in general on site is a marvellous experience and we have to say an honest compliment for the hosts who managed to transfer a clear and multi-layered picture of their regions within a short time of some days.

We could also learn that the preparatory work is of essential importance. It is not only about arranging accommodations and organising meetings, but the challenge begins at identifying the right interviewees representing entrepreneurs, decision makers, scientific institutions etc., bring them together, select a variety of site visits, provide a good overview of local products and

services, organise adequate translation as well as properly present the tourism potentials and capacities.

On the other hand, the peers have also challenges to face: basing on paper-based information, they should make a picture already in advance of a region that afterwards they should get to know in depth within some days of intensive work where they meet over 30 actors, visit various touristic sites and generally experience the region.

In any case, our peer review tool could prove its adaptability and usefulness in both regions. We are looking for the next "trials" among others in Eszak-Alfold, Hungary (in April 2010) and in Avila, Spain (in June 2010). Good luck for preparation!

## Peer review in Örebro region:

Örebro region hosted a Peer Review during the 22nd - 26th of June.

**The peer reviews were focused on different sector.**

**Day 1** was focused on politicians, Regional Development Council and Community Business & Industry.

**Day 2** was focused on Sweden's biggest landowner - Sveaskog, The County Administrative Board and nature preservation. We also meet representatives from Örebro Promotion - Sweden's largest society for company owners and 2 entrepreneurs working with to big events in our region 'O Helga natt' a music event which take place in the middle of December outdoors in the city of Örebro and the sculpture park 'Konst på Hög' (Art on a Hill).

**Day 3** was focused on community tourism work. We meet the tourism managers from the cities in our region. In the evening we went to an island in Lake Hjälmaren - Vinön, where we took heard about their way of working with tourism.

**Day 4** was all about country hotels and food. Our region is working to be a central place to experience good food and drink. In Grythyttan we met representatives for Örebro University - School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts & Meal Science, Destination Grythyttan, a network of companies, which is promoting local tourism attractions in the north of the region and Grythyttan Inn - one of Sweden's most well-known country inns and restaurants. The afternoon was spent at Loka Brunn.

This is the region's most famous SPA but it is also the well of the Loka mineral water.



# Welcome to the green heart of *Slovakia – Banská Bystrica*

The second Peer review in Banská Bystrica region was organized from 19th – 23rd October 2009. Different partners were invited, such as Region Syddansk, Region Karinthia, Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung e Eurobic Toscana Sud.

The meetings was realized at the Office of Banská Bystrica Self – governing region in Banská Bystrica with the representatives of local government, state organisations and agencies, the University of Matej Bell, tourist information centre and travel agency.

The first day, after an internal team meeting the press conference were prepared. Mr. Monêek – the coordinator of the project in our region warmly welcome all participants and the deputies of the PRESS.

The conference was well organized as well as the room, it is hoped for the future to involve all local actors and even the younger generation susceptible to the processes of growth of sustainable tourism.

The next two days peers and hosts from Carinthia got the opportunity to make the interviews at the meetings, e.g. with the Representative of Department of Regional Development, Ground Planning and Environment – Tatiana Reizerová, who showed that the Region has a great potential under the natural and cultural point of view. Also the interview with the Representative of Tourist Information Center of Banská Bystrica – Magdaléna Machunková was very interesting.



## Summer mountain and water tourism

All year round, mountains provide you with tremendous sensation while hiking, cycling, rock climbing, paragliding and golf.

Tourists can profit also from natural treasures hidden deeply underground.

Caves: Harmanecká jaskyňa – Izbica, Bystrianska jaskyňa and unique Jaskyňa mŕtvych netopierov (Cave of Death Bats) are open to wide public.

Rafting on river Hron returns to its former attraction for tourists.

The objectives of the talks was to evaluate the potencial of our region for tourism development.

After these meetings we did a field visits in the parts of Banská Bystrica Self – governing region with the aim to meet the active stakeholders and to show the tourist centres regarding the fields of tourism development.



## Urban and cultural tourism

There was the possibility to do Sightseeing in Banská Bystrica town, which seemed of great importance and interest for some peers, because it shows various ways of life, religion and history.

Also the urban and cultural attractions were visited: A real gem is "Silver" Banská Štiavnica with its system of artificial ponds listed in UNESCO world cultural heritage.

Cierny Balog covers a large part of tourist expectations since the municipality has set there a whole integrated system between natural attraction, sport facilities and museums.

There are 1700 cultural monuments in the region.

You can admire wall-paintings in medieval churches, urban architecture, castles and more. Apart of that the Wellness and Health tourism is dynamically developing in Banská Bystrica.

Abundant springs of thermal and mineral empower development of spa and relaxing tourism in towns and villages like Brusno and Sliac.

Unfortunately the Banská Bystrica spa is still far from modern facilities in Europe where the spa is wellness, body and spirit, while it still shows more therapeutic and curative structures.



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## Winter tourism

Regarding the Winter tourism one of the most important tourist centers is Donovaly.

It ranks among the top five winter resorts in Slovakia. The integrated ski pass system is a good practice that the peers considered as the most valuable in winter tourism.

The future network of cross-country tracks in Kremnicke vrchy with a starting point in Banská Bystrica would be unique all over Europe. Several winter resorts provide favourable conditions for popular winter sports.

Banská Bystrica Self-governing region has a good potential for tourism development, but we need to build more the road infrastructure.

Good example of tourism development is the cooperation between local selfgovernment, non profit organisations, entrepreneurs in the village Cierny Balog.

Positively she evaluated the Strategy of tourism development in Banská Bystrica Selfgoverning region and its application in practice step by step. There are very active stakeholders in the field of tourism, and she recommended their networking.

All these recommendations will be the objective of the final report which will be produced by the peer review team. During this peer – review we organized also the social programme in Slovak villages Rykynčice and Nenince.

The team had the opportunity to visit typical vineyard houses and to taste a local products.

