



Erasmus+ KA2 project STORIE

Development of capacities of rural businesses to design and promote sustainable tourism products based on intangible cultural heritage

Grant Agreement No 2018-1-HU01-KA202-047746

Intellectual Output 3: STORIE Insights & Experiences
Rural Tourism Experiences

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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1. Introduction

The Erasmus+ project STORIE aims to improve the competitiveness of small rural companies by developing their skills and capacities to design and promote sustainable tourism products based on intangible cultural heritage. The project introduces an innovative Learning Programme and an online Learning Tool, facilitating the development of local business communities and test pilot tourist experiences in partner regions.

The direct target group is STORIE are small rural companies (managers and employees) belonging to or related to tourism sector, which implement activities related to the following NACE codes:

- I55 Accommodation,
- I56 Food and beverage service activities,
- C10 - Manufacture of food products
- C11 - Manufacture of beverages
- N79 Travel agency, tour operator and other reservation service and related activities
- R93 - Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities
- R91 - Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities

The other potential target groups include rural companies that are considering their future involvement in tourism sector or cooperate with the primary target group in developing tourism products:

- A1 - Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities
- A3 - Fishing and aquaculture
- C13 - Manufacture of textiles
- C14 - Manufacture of wearing apparel
- C15 - Manufacture of leather and related products
- C16 - Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork, except furniture; manufacture of articles of straw and plaiting materials
- C32 - Other manufacturing
- G47 - Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles

STORIE stakeholders are:

1. Associations that represent the companies of rural (tourism) sector.
2. VET organisations on all levels (from lower-secondary to tertiary) that provide training (formal and non-formal) to the companies of rural tourism and related sectors.
3. Policy makers and public bodies in the field of tourism and related areas.
4. People living in local rural communities (in their role as safeguards and transmitters of intangible cultural heritage).

The project has developed 3 Intellectual Outputs:

- O1 - STORIE Learning Programme
- O2 - STORIE Learning Tool
- O3 - STORIE Insights and Experiences

The STORIE insights and Experiences guides are targeted guides, manuals, recommendations supporting the wider take-up and roll-out of the project. Each guide targets a specific group of stakeholders in the project, with the final goal of supporting the small rural businesses in the creation and development of rich tourist experiences using the inspiration from the pilot experiences implemented in the framework of STORIE:

1. STORIE Rural Tourism Experiences, is a collection of rural tourism experiences created and tested using the STORIE Learning Tool in partner countries, and aims to serve as a guide for the development of further experiences in partner and other countries. It is directed towards both the direct target groups of STORIE as well as all relevant stakeholders.
2. STORIE Guide for Educators contains lessons and recommendations for development of training programmes for small businesses in the rural tourism sector. It considers informal training programmes, as well as a possible roadmap for integration into formal education on different levels. This guide is aimed at VET organisations.

3. STORIE Guide for Policy-makers contains recommendations for policy makers related to the support in development and marketing of rural tourism experiences based on intangible cultural heritage.

The present guide is thus part of a wider set of stakeholder insights and experiences within STORIE.

2. Target group

The „Rural Tourism Experiences“ guide is aimed mostly at STORIE project primary target group - small rural companies.

The **primary target group** of the STORIE Learning Programme consists of small rural companies within/related to tourism sector, which implement activities related to the following NACE codes:

- I55 Accommodation,
- I56 Food and beverage service activities,
- C10 - Manufacture of food products
- C11 - Manufacture of beverages
- N79 Travel agency, tour operator and other reservation service and related activities
- R93 - Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities
- R91 - Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities

This approach will lead to a broader impact of the project. It will increase readers understanding about Product club methodology adaptation to real work and its benefits. Rural tourism experiences examples from other countries will broaden worldview and give tested ideas for every SME. STORIE “Rural tourism experiences” also can serve as a guide for small rural companies.

3. STORIE: the project

The present guide has been developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project STORIE, implemented between 2018 and 2020.

Rural tourism addresses the village depopulation issues, encourages environmental conservation and enhancement, helps retain “traditional” skills, increases community strength and local identity. A well-managed rural tourism can be a great tool for safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage and enrich the lives of enormous numbers of people.

Some of the observed trends in rural tourism in the last few years include growing interest in unique authentic experiences and increased quality expectations. However, the rural tourism offer remains extremely fragmented. It consists of a large number of regionally dispersed mostly family-owned and operated businesses that offer a warm welcome to tourists but there is a great lack of consistency with regard to the quality of service and limited integration of different services into a complete tourism product.

While sustainable tourism is promoted in most EU countries, it makes just a fraction of the overall tourism market and a lot of potential remains unexploited. Most rural tourism entrepreneurs do not have much product development knowledge and skills, nor the time or financial resources to obtain them.

Growing interest in rural and eco-tourism creates new business and regional development opportunities, however only for those with relevant strategies and abilities. The fierce competition among tourism destinations requires new knowledge, skills and joint effort at all levels - from policy makers to micro companies. Development of an attractive tourism product can be facilitated by cooperation, coordination and support, as well as understanding of how to use the unique features of the region to create a memorable tourist experience.

STORIE project improves the competitiveness of small rural companies by developing their skills and capacities to design and promote sustainable tourism products based on intangible cultural heritage(handicrafts, culinary practices, music, stories, customs, etc.). The designed learning programme provides a comprehensive view about cultural tourism product development, about the competencies and tasks required for effective and sustainable

product design and encourages cooperation among small rural companies and facilitates development of local business communities.

4. What is a rural tourism experience?

Rural tourism experience is a complex of tourists' emotional and social sensations, which are closely related to the destination, location, quality of the services package, infrastructure and the relations with the hosts or locals. In communication with hosts and local people the important place is taken by hospitality and the authenticity, which help to create this tourism experience. Development of the tourism product is facilitated by understanding of how to use the unique features of the region to create a memorable tourist experience. Intangible cultural heritage includes these social and economic benefits:

- give us a sense of identity and belonging, help us feel a part of the community;
- represents and maintains cultural diversity in the age of globalization;
- produces employment and revenue;
- has a potential to enrich the tourism offer of any destination;
- contributes to sustainable development.

Every experience is created for the particular segment of the tourists and involves not only services providers, but also the local community, which is able to share their traditions, history, and intangible culture heritage. Traditions and practices based on the intangible cultural heritage have a positive social impact by promoting integration, inclusiveness and participation. Traditional knowledge, values and practices in agriculture help to keep sustainability and protect biodiversity. Traditional health practices, based on local natural resources, are more affordable and have a holistic approach to the human health and wellness.

All the related participants on the basis of cooperation, which develop and deliver memorable tourism experiences are the essence of the tourism industry.

Criteria for the STORIE tourism experiences:

- Common product, service or experience across all involved entities (common brand, members come from different parts of the value chain);
- The ideated product, service or experience aligns with the strengths of the destination and whenever possible with the destination management strategy;
- Developed tourism product has the potential to be supported by public authorities or other stakeholders in the field of tourism;
- The Product club has the potential to involve local communities and non-tourism businesses and creates an added value synergy;
- Every member of the club gets a fair share in the benefits (market opportunities, sales, customer satisfaction, destination competitive advantage).

5. Rural tourism experiences in STORIE partner countries

5.1. Results from the product club workshop

Every partner country had Product club workshops in January-March 2021. Tourism product club workshops lead to a number of benefits to workshop members. Developed ideas can encourage better uptake of market opportunities, increased market penetration with less individual effort, controlled seasonality, increased competitiveness, increased credibility and better business image in the future. Also, more complex product, unique experiences will attract more tourists which ensures the smooth running of the business.

5.1.1. HUNGARY

The product club workshop was organised in Mezőkövesd, Hungary on the 21th of January. Mezőkövesd with its 17,000 inhabitants is situated at the borderline of Bükk Mountains and the Great Plain and it was given the rank of a market-town by King Matthias in 1464. The agricultural, developed industrial and cultural-touristic characteristics are reflected in the structure and architecture of Mezőkövesd.

The thermal water of Zsóry-Bath, the rich treasure of matyó folk art and the lively cultural life rightly made the town well known in Hungary, Europe and in the world.

In terms of economy-geography the nearness of Motorway M3 and the railway put the town in an advantageous position of which the inhabitants tried to take the most in the past and they are also making every effort to exploit it in the future.

10 participants took part on the product club, all of them are representatives of the main target group (accommodation, restaurant, information office, spa, guide, craft worker, tourism association, representative of intangible cultural heritage) and live and work in Mezőkövesd. All of them tested the web app before the product club.

After collecting, analysing and describing the features of the potential target groups they have chosen the only one for which the tourism product will be developed. Tourists' groups organised by a travel agency were the main target group of the product club. The value proposition for them: Interactive tasty experiences in Matyóland.

The purpose of creating the product was to develop a tourism product which

- includes cultural and gastronomic experiences
- represents high quality
- is interactive, for example the tourist could create something that he can take home with him
- gives a possibility to experience Matyo folk art close to body

Full created package can be found in Annex 1.

5.1.2. CYPRUS

The Product club workshop was organised on the 8th of March 2021 online (due to the lockdown restrictions an event with physical presence was not possible). The participants came from a small tourism college located in the Deryneia village in the East of Cyprus, close to the famous resort of Agia Napa. They are students and teachers of Akademia College; most of them are also employed in different companies of tourism sector offering accommodation and restaurant services.

The village of Deryneia is famous for its agricultural products, especially strawberries (around 60% of national production) and hosts an annual strawberry festival. In addition to agriculture, many residents of the village are employed in tourism sector and crafts. The village is famous for its dance, theatre and music groups. The village has a number of churches and monuments, an outdoor amphitheatre, a folklore museum and a cultural centre. Although Ammochostos is mostly known as a beach holiday destination, it also has a rich intangible cultural heritage, with legends and myths, crafts and traditions, and a number of festivals throughout the year.

Several days before the workshop, the participants received information about the STORIE project and the intangible cultural heritage of Ammochostos region (where their college and companies are located), as well as an invitation and instructions on how to access STORIE Learning tool online. Thus, the workshop started with a short introduction about the project and the objectives of the event, as well as Product club methodology, and then focused on several creativity techniques that would be used to generate and discuss ideas. The participants worked in teams and developed two tourism experience ideas, focused on local myths, festivals and culinary heritage. They were analysed and presented using the "5Ws and H" model:

	1st tourism experience: Aphrodite Evening	2nd tourism experience: Ammochostos Gastronomy Route
Who?	Tourists who seek to be part of the story of Aphrodite	Tourists who want to experience, taste and learn about Cyprus local cuisine

What?	Interactive theatre-like event, with costumes, traditional food and drinks, dances, music	During the Agia Napa Festival, visitors will have a chance to complement their experience with additional activities relating to local culinary heritage
Where?	Ayia Napa Monastery – internal yard	Ayia Napa and surrounding villages
When?	Repeating once every 15 days, during the Spring, Summer & Autumn	During the Festival of Ayia Napa
Why?	“Experience” the past as it is presented in stories, myths and legends	Exploit the Ayia Napa Festival to promote additional activities related to local cultural heritage
How?	Several businesses will be involved, including local dance groups, singers, theatre, restaurants, bars, supported by Hotels, Travel Agencies, Municipality, Local Tourism Board	Small local hotels and taverns will join forces to create a weekly gastronomy programme that will run along the Agia Napa Festival. By visiting these restaurants and taverns, the tourists will taste meals that belong to local culinary heritage; the special menus will also include the stories of these meals and possibly/ where relevant local legends.

5.1.3. LITHUANIA

The product club workshop was organised in Kaunas, Lithuania in the middle of March. Kaunas is the second biggest city in Lithuania but here the office of Lithuanian countryside tourism association is located. As COVID restrictions didn't allow to gather on bigger group to Product club workshop, Lithuanian partners made two workshops – one in the morning with 7 people and one in the evening with 5 people. All workshop participants were from project target group – people from small villages owning small rural business. In the workshop participated accommodation providers, farmers, small local restaurant, local food producer, village community member.

Both workshops had the same structure: at first participants were introduced with the project, developed learning tool were shortly presented and tested with them. Then, after little break Product club methodology were presented and a time was given to create tourism offer packages for several days' experiences.

In the morning 4 workshop participants were from Molėtai district, 2 participants were from Kaunas district and one from Varėna, so they were divided in two smaller groups to create tourism packages for Molėtai district and for Kaunas district. In the evening there was 3 participants from Radviliškis district and they already had operating Product club-based tourism package. They introduced it to everyone in the workshop (it will be described in detail in 5.2.4. part “Homestead “Panekelpių kaimas”). Other two participants were from Kaišiadorys district. All five participants brainstormed about possible tourism package in Kaišiadorys district.

All brainstormed ideas included cultural activities, nature, local food and local traditions, accommodation in rural areas. Two full created packages can be found in Annex 1.

5.1.4. CROATIA

Virovitica and Virovitica-Podravina County in recent years has become recognizable for the renovation of noble castles and manors and builds its recognizability on the heritage of noble families Pejačević and Janković, so the workshop participants concluded that a competitive tourism product could be developed with the theme of

noble families and their heritage using the brand. Noble families to connect with other attractions in the destination.

Full created package can be found in Annex 1.

5.1.5. SPAIN

The proposed tourism experiences for Extremadura have been developed by students from VET cycles related to tourism and hospitality of I.E.S. Hostelería y Turismo, during the implementation of the product club workshop. The experiences are designed around the Orellana lake and the cultural heritage around the town of Orellana la Vieja (and across the wider area of Extremadura).

It concerns the most important lake in the region, with one of the longest internal coast lines and one of the very few areas which has the Blue Flag certification for its beach and also the hiking/biking route around it. Surrounded by the Dehesa landscape (recognised as natural patrimony), the area also offers a wide range of traditions and cultural activities that are of relevance. The lake, as a sailing school, offers kayak rental and other leisure activities. Fishing is also one of the main tourism activities.

The region of Extremadura has a population of 1.061.979 inhabitants and is eminently rural, with only 3 cities (Badajoz, Cáceres, Mérida), with Badajoz the largest one with around 160.000 inhabitants. Orellana la Vieja has a population of 2.641 inhabitants in 2020.

The experiences designed by the students offered a full experience, between 2 to 3 days, offering a complete programme, with the lake as central reference. All the experiences include local gastronomy and identified the locations for lunches and dinners.

The table below provides a selection of 3 out of the 5 experiences:

Characteristics of the tourist	What is the experience about?	What local resources are used?
Foreign & urban tourist, adult, travelling individually or in pairs	Combination of experiencing recollection of olives and making olive oil, visiting a ham factory and fishing on the lake. Stay at hotel/apartment.	Fishing company Local tourist offers Olive tree exploitation Olive oil mill Local hospitality business
Young adults, adventure oriented, travelling in a small group	Leisure activities around the lake (kayak route, catamaran trip, sailing), bungee jumping and hiking route. Stay at camping	Companies offering the mentioned leisure activities Catering businesses /local hospitality businesses
Family with young children (mono-parental)	Visiting cultural sites in the area (archaeology, monuments, etc), combined with leisure activities around the lake adapted to children. Stay at hotel/apartment.	Companies offering the mentioned leisure activities. Tourist guides. Local authorities Local hospitality business

5.2. Examples of cooperative rural tourism experiences

Existing rural tourism experiences in every partner country are presented as a good example and the inspiration for other suppliers, which are also planning to cooperate and to develop common products or experiences.

5.2.1. HUNGARY

1st example: Balatoni Kör – Balaton Circle

On the 21th of March in 2014 the twenty best-known winemakers and restaurants of Lake Balaton symbolically formed the Balaton Circle in the middle of the lake to raise their hospitality to a higher level with their cooperation and regional-focused gastronomy based on local products. By creating the Balaton Circle the members have set their selves the goal to realize an association based on value protecting around the lake. Their members are such representatives of the quality winery and gastronomy who are open and expect their guests all year round. Their aim is to found a circle with local resources and built on the



basis of local services that will make the region attractive and liveable in every season. They want to create demanding things in a demanding environment, on Lake Balaton, which, as they believe, means the foundation of their entire existence. The Balaton CIRCLE is a society for the association of 3 counties and 6 wine regions belonging to the lake, holding together now 34 members. Among its members there is a local restaurant, a cake shop, a wine bar and several wineries. The main driving force of the association lies in the union, in common thinking, so they kindly recommend each other either.

They created a common wine brand, the Balaton Wine. With the creating of the BalatonWine regional product, their common goal is to stabilize the market position of the vine-growers in the Balaton region and to strengthen their bargaining power. Buying up their good quality grapes at a favourable price, thereby creating a fair-trade product for all market participants. In the long term to promote a regional integration system from the basics, to renew the Balaton vineyards ultimately, to build stabile domestic and foreign markets for wines, and to increase the growing areas around the lake. BalatonWine is made from Olaszrizling (Welschriesling), easy to drink but at the same time rich, especially for gastronomy and regional sales. BalatonWine is the first regional wine-growing brand in Hungary, so they are entitled to say "Wine of Balaton". BalatonWine is a joint product of the Balaton Circle and the Riesling Generation, but anyone can produce it who can reach the following criteria. In addition to the objective parameters, the quality of the product is guaranteed by a jury called by the Balaton Circle and the Riesling Generation. BalatonWine can only be made from wines which pass the judgement, all applicants consider the result as binding.



More information about Balaton Circle and Balaton Wine:

- <https://balatoni-kor.hu/en-GB/Home>
- <https://balatoni-kor.hu/en-GB/BalatonWine>
- https://www.instagram.com/balatonikor_official/
- https://www.facebook.com/balatonikor/about/?ref=page_internal
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZA00eNppw4>

2nd example: Matyó Easter

On the basis of an immaterial cultural heritage, the Matyó folk artist, a unique event in the country, Matyó Easter was created as a result of a product club. With the cooperation of the local government, local businesses (accommodations, restaurants, craftsmen's), and with a non-governmental organization in 2001 was born from the idea a very popular tourism product, the Matyó Easter, which is constantly renewed from year to year.



Local accommodation offers unique packages especially for this weekend, in the skansen district of the town (so called Hadas) tourist can find 2-day-long folk-art programs (performances of folk-dance groups) and a folk-art fair, craftsman's shows in the craftsman's houses, restaurants offer special Easter dishes, and the local government provides the venue and resources to organize the program.

This tourist product is suitable for extending the season, as this weekend the accommodation and restaurants are operating at full capacity, and 15,000 tourists visit the small town and it's surrounding on the weekend.

Most popular programs are on Matyó Easter the followings:

- Traditional cooking show with tasting,
- Performances of folk-dance groups,
- Easter animal-yard,
- Bath at night in the Adventure Bath
- Wooden merry-go round for children and folk toys
- Easter egg-painting show and handcraft occupation
- Market of folk-art products
- Craftsman's shows in the craftman's houses (furniture painting, gingerbread making, music, enamel, pottery)
- Matyó Museum: "blue painting" motifs workshop
- Matyó House "Pipícs" baking, the possibility of putting on Matyó traditional costume



More information:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op9UzpjAisk>
- <http://matyofolk.hu/index.php?content=menu&cmd=view&id=84>

5.2.2. CYPRUS

1st example: Larnaca Free Winter Experiences

Larnaca Free Winter Experiences is a weekly programme with a number of complimentary activities for tourists staying in hotels, apartments and agrotouristic establishments within the Larnaca region. It is organised in Larnaca every winter. The programme runs from November 1 - March 31, and offers different activities every day of the week. All the activities are available on a 'turn up and enjoy' basis except for two village excursions which require one day's notice. The programme includes activities such as birdwatching and basket weaving; a full day out at Mazotos Camel Park, guided walking tours of Larnaca and the local mountain villages, halloumi making and wine tasting, plus visits to local workshops where traditional crafts are practised and local museums.



Photo credit: Larnaca Tourism Board

Providing real insight into what Cyprus is all about beyond seaside fun, the initiative encourages tourists to get out of their hotels and make the most of local traditions, history and culture. The activities are all free of charge upon presentation of a voucher issued by the hotels for their staying guests.

Larnaca Free Winter Experiences are intended for tourists of all age groups, that are interested in exploring the cultural offer of Larnaca region.

The experiences were created by the Larnaka Tourism Board, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism and Local Authorities of the region, and involve several small businesses of the region. Larnaka Tourism Board's strategy is focusing on upgrading the facilities and services within the region, enriching the tourism product and improving the image of the destination.

<https://larnakaregion.com/directory/product/larnaka-winter-experiences>

2nd example: “Honey Routes - Cyprus” Programme

Cyprus is renowned for its biodiversity. Wild lavender, wild rosemary, eucalyptus and another 1900 types of plants constitute the country's flora and make the Cypriot wildflower honey so very rich in aroma and flavour.



Nine honey producing communities of mountainous Larnaca region (Cyprus) form a cluster that is known as Rural Larnaca Honey Villages.

In 2019, under the European MEDFEST programme with the participation of Troodos Network of Thematic Centers, the villages of Kato Drys, Kato Lefkara, Layia, Melini, Odou, Ora, Vavla, Vavatsinia and Agioi Vavatsinias have been branded with a shared identity and participation in the ‘Honey Routes – Cyprus’ tourism programme.

The project started in 2017, when Larnaca Tourism Board asked locals involved in the business of beekeeping for their ideas on the subject. It was decided that each village would have its own approach, concentrating on one of the many uses of bees and beekeeping, so that they would not compete but complement each other.

The participants of the Honey Route promote the beekeeping, help encourage and protect biodiversity through increased bee-attracting plants and offer visitors authentic experiences, from nature trails and annual festivals, to bee hotels for solitary species that can be observed.

The activities include creating beeswax candles and “beekeeper for a day” programme offered by Ecophys in Vavla village, visit to Bee museum in Kato Drys village, watching honey processing and bottling own honey in Odou village, etc.



The villages are also active in promoting the beneficial properties of honey, including recipes, products and the inclusion of honey on local menus.

Three festivals are organized every year – World Bee Day & Bee Festival (Ora village) in May, Honey & Beekeeping Festival (Odou village) in June, and Honey Festival for Children (Melini village) in September.

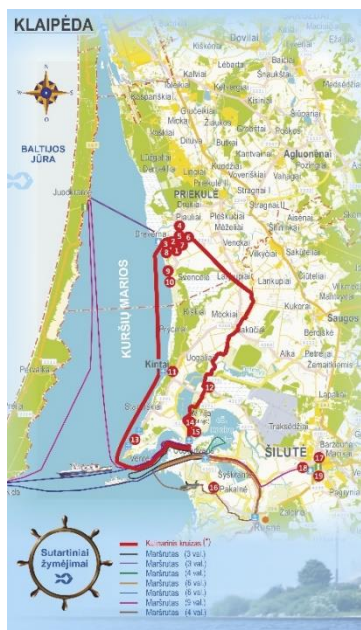
Each community bears the logo of ‘Rural Larnaca Honey Villages’ and is charming to explore, not only for its sweet beekeeping tradition but for the beautiful landscape and traditional architecture.

Photo: Bee hotel. Credit: www.cyprus-mail.com

<https://larnakaregion.com/directory/product/larnaka-honey-villages>

5.2.3. LITHUANIA

1st example: Fish road



Culinary cruise “Fish road” is an exceptional culinary water tourism route in Lithuania coastal region, cruising *King Wilhelm Canal, rivers Minija, Nemunas Delta, the Curonian Lagoon*. During the cruise is possible to admire the coastal nature, to visit region places of interest, get acquainted with the history of fishing in the Curonian Lagoon, traditions, fishermen's way of life and shipbuilding and most importantly – taste the fish dishes of culinary heritage. The program runs during the warm season.

Fish road is the product of Coastal Tourism Cluster. It is an association uniting 20 companies, institutions and persons providing tourism services in Klaipėda district. The cluster includes accommodation providers, fisherman, winery, marina, ship renter, folk assembly, tour operator, tourism information centre, cultural house, etc.

The main target group for this programme is bigger groups of 10-30 people but on individual needs it can be arranged for smaller groups. There is a possibility to choose different length and duration routes. “Fish road” tour can last from 4 hours up to a few days – everything will depend on the tourist wishes and possibilities.

The most popular package consists of:

- excursion in museum with an interactive historical exposition about the history and culture of the region, the craft of a shipbuilder;
- excursion by boat on the chosen route;
- dinner (tasting of the culinary heritage of the fishery);
- Accommodation.



Fish road was the project written in 2016 and finished in 2018.

Since then, the project attracts a lot of people. Popular Lithuanian marketing firm was hired to do the promotion they did the huge work with marketing and communication. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic limitations to travel freely encouraged locals to travel in the country and 2020 summer was packed fully. During weekends people weren't able to book the service if it wasn't done in advance.

More about Fish road:

- <https://www.facebook.com/zuvies>
- <https://www.instagram.com/zuvieskelias/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Nbn6BEUby>

2nd example: Homestead “Panekelpių kaimas”



Village of Panekelpiai is really small rural area in Radviliškis district. Panekelpiai village has less than 10 permanent residents. This village is mainly old buildings, gravel roads and large areas for agricultural activities.

In 2018 young family bought old barn in Panekelpiai village and raised it to new life. They reconstructed the building, tidied up the environment and started their activity as homestead. Panekelpiai homestead is intended for quiet rest and stylish family celebrations or corporate events, gatherings, camps.

The main impact the owners of the homestead did to village is that they encouraged cooperation between small rural entrepreneurs. They started to collaborate with local community, also, with the restaurant chef of nearby city, sauna education provider, local tavern “Skėmių traktierius” and other active people of the district. Now the small rural tourism businessman is supporting each other and can offer wide range of activities to tourists.

Since village's reborn a lot of tourist comes here and ask to try all the activities. The most popular program consists of participation in culinary heritage educations in tavern (with local music, traditional clothes, culinary heritage food), meeting with the local community and purchasing their products (dried fruits and vegetables, fresh bread, herbs, etc.). If the travellers have children, they are offered to participate in a farm cognitive educational program. The night stay usually is planned in the homestead of Panekelpiai. In the homestead they can have sauna education with professional moderator. According to everyone's needs, the hostess of the homestead takes care of additional activities or reduction the existing ones.

The main customer of this village is families and small groups. Homestead can provide only 10 sleeping places in summer season. But there is the possibility to arrange night stay in the tent and to organize this program for bigger groups. The length of the program depends on the customer needs. It can be one day adventure or one-week relaxing camp. As the owner of the homestead speaks fluently English, she loves foreign travellers to come and to show them real Lithuanian rural tourism. Of course, the main tourists are still



Lithuanians, but in the future, they have big opportunity to expand their services to foreign market.

The owners of the homestead are really active, they belong to Lithuanian countryside tourism association, to Radviliškis district council, so they have great support from local authorities. Village people by themselves are happy and supporting their activities.



The homestead is working only in warm season, because of that the number of tourists isn't very big. But the homestead hosts many gatherings, camps, corporate events and it helps easily attract big groups to the surroundings. Comparing village popularity in 2015 and now – the difference is huge!

More about Panekelpiai village:

- <https://www.facebook.com/panekelpiai>
- <http://panekelpiai.lt/>

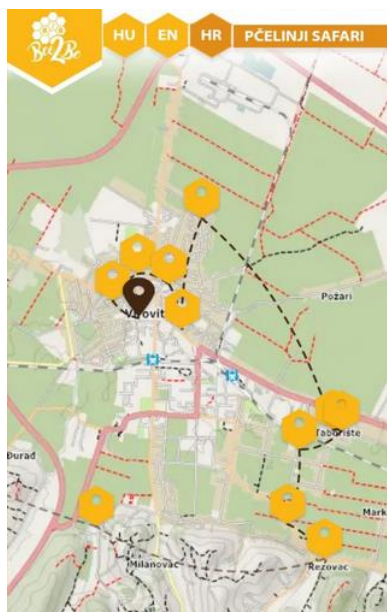
5.2.4. CROATIA

One of the reasons why Croatia has become a hit among tourists is its untouched nature. Apart from the fact that there are eight national parks in the country, which are located on the coast or a few hour's drive from it, there are also numerous nature parks and protected areas. Thanks to its geographical position and morphology, Croatia includes three biogeographical regions, out of nine recognized in the EU. Vast plains in the east, dense forests that cover more than 35% of the central territory, and more than 1,000 islands in the Adriatic host the extraordinary biological diversity of Croatia.

If you've got a serious sweet tooth - just keep "BEEing" you because Croatia's got all of your honey hunger covered. We're bringing you five spots to visit if you can't get enough of the golden nectar: Buzz on over to Medovita Pčelarstvo, make memories on Molat island, Zoom to Zarečje in Istria, Bolta to Šolta, the island of honey, Make way for the bees of Motovun.

1st example: Bee2Be Route

With Bee2Be thematic Route there is established permanent tourist infrastructure that enables and encourages new joint tourism products and brands of cross-border area, especially in the field of tourism and preservation of cultural and natural heritage by linking local communities, NGOs, and the local population. Bee2Be targets beekeeping and apiculture development in the City of Virovitica (Virovitica-podravina Country) and Barany County in Hungary which consists of 1) familiarization the cross-border society with honey and apiary-products to propagate their health-aspects. 2) Encouragement cooperation between beekeepers 3) Bee-safari thematic experience tour 4) Creating trademark to provide the quality guarantee.



The main target group is Beekeepers - inclusion in the tourist offer, promotion of the beekeeping, expert seminars, Unemployed people - who will go through the expert training of beekeeping; Children of school-age - school in nature, workshops that show beekeeping as possible cost-effective calling in life; Beekeeping associations; Indirect target groups: Residents of the local area - primarily due to possible development and recognition of rural areas; Local tourist operators and agencies - who receive a new tourist product; Agricultural institutions.

There is Bee Park which is located in the centre of the city of Virovitica, with the surface of 2.722,81m² that is decorated as an attractive touristic infrastructure on the theme of bees and honey in its every segment, "Bee Safari" Honey Tour that is connected to the existing bike paths, apiaries, users of bee products, cross border map of experience apiaries Development of cross-border "Bee Safari" Honey Tour, Agro-School for Children, Study Tour implemented in Virovitica and Barany county, Honey Competition in Szentlorinc - they examine honey with sensory and in labour. Workshops for Unemployed people to educate unemployed people

on the benefits of beekeeping business with the creation of a business plan for self-employment possibility, Joint Croatian-Hungarian all day honey long festival in St. Ambrus Day - the festival is open with a torchlight procession from Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral Basilica throughout St. Stephen Square and Szehenyi Square to the Kossuth Square, Workshops for making honey products - this workshop is planned for school children (Virovitica and Pecs) where children will learn on the importance of beekeeping and will learn how to make sweets and candies made of honey.

There are a free app and website where you can get information. It contains useful information about producers of honey and other bee products, their locations and accommodation of bee communities as well as available locations of restaurants and accommodation facilities, apitherapy, and a map of the Bee Safari route.



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=hu.pazirik.bee2be&hl=hr&gl=US>

2nd example: By bike and spoon in pocket throughout Podravina – cycle and gastro route

A three-day cycling package that includes a tour of interesting micro-destinations within the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve in Virovitica-Podravina and Koprivnica-Križevci counties. The experience consists of accommodation in traditional facilities in Križnica, cycling along the Eurovelo 13 route and a tour of agritourism farms with a tasting of local traditional dishes and other products.

Day 1

After the group gathers at the Križnički bridge, cross the ferry or suspension bridge to the other side of the Drava. There, guests are greeted by a van, minibus or carriage (at the guests' choice) that transports them to the estate "Dravska iža" in Križnica.

This is followed by a welcome drink, accommodation in rooms, then a tour of the property and a short drive through the village of Križnica. After dinner together, socializing with arrangements for routes over the next two days and overnight stay.



Day 2 - Drive to the village Brodić (53km)



After breakfast, the drive to the estate "Ethno house of the Karlovčan family" in the small Podravina village Brodić starts. Cycling over the suspension bridge, through tame Podravina villages, macadam roads through forests and along the river Drava. On the farm is organized lunch made from food grown on the farm or from other farmers. After lunch, sightseeing and rest, return to Križnica. Upon return, joint cooking of dinner and socializing with tasting of local wines was organized.

Day 3 - Drive to the Đurđevački Peski desert (63km)

Breakfast is followed by a bike ride from Križnica to the only desert in Croatia, or to the geographical-botanical reserve Đurđevački peski. A unique cycling experience on the sand dunes is organized on site (for those who want to try it). A picnic in nature was organized for the participants. A guided tour was organized in the reserve itself with the themes of the origin of this natural phenomenon, the characteristic flora and fauna and other interesting things. Optionally, a visit to the Old Town of Đurđevac, the famous gallery of Ivan Lacković Croatia and a short stage performance of the legend of the Picoks can be organized. In the afternoon, return to Križnica, where all participants are organized to roast fish together and prepare fish stew in the way that local fishermen have done in the past.

See more about the offer at: <http://www.nippyadventures.com/>

5.2.5. SPAIN

The examples of rural experiences listed below, based on the Product Club methodology, are previously existing experiences in Extremadura or Spain, related to rural tourism and the use of its cultural heritage (gastronomy, history, nature, etc.).

1st example: CHEESE ROUTE PRODUCT CLUB

In Extremadura (Spain), the Cheese Route Product Club is a great example of the Product Club Methodology, creating a new tourist experience based on a traditional element of Extremadura's gastronomy. The Extremadura Cheese Route Product Club was initially created in 2017 with the intention of promoting the region as a gastronomic tourist destination, making use of Extremadura's cheese-making tradition and the different types of cheeses with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) labels, which can be found from north to south and from east to west in Extremadura. From the outset, it has enjoyed the collaboration of the provincial councils of Cáceres and Badajoz and the Local Action Groups.



Extremadura is a Spanish region with an area of 41,634 km² and a population of just over one million inhabitants, which makes it a sparsely populated region distributed around three main cities and numerous small and medium-sized rural villages. The dehesa is the most common landscape in the Extremaduran countryside and agriculture and livestock farming have been the most important economic activities in the region for decades. The Spanish network of cattle trails is 125,000 kilometres long and covers 400,000 hectares of the national territory and serves as a green corridor for the conservation of biodiversity.

It is a Spanish region with an abundance of cheeses, which is why it is possible to find three different P.D.O.s, such as: P.D.O. Torta del Casar, P.D.O. Queso de la Serena and P.D.O. Queso de los Ibores. However, cheese culture and production can be found in all parts of the Extremadura region. "The excellent quality and variety of cheeses with which the region delights us can only speak to us of the importance that the production of these delicacies has had in the region's economy and also speaks of the work of the artisan cheese makers who have managed to keep alive the tradition and production methods they have inherited from their ancestors".

The Cheese Route offers gastronomic, cultural and natural experiences distributed around eight routes, such as: Torta del Casar Cheese Route, La Serena Cheese Route, Los Ibores Cheese Route, La Vera Cheese Route,

Monfragüe Cheese Route, Tentudía Cheese Route, Tierra de Barros Cheese Route and Tajo Internacional Cheese Route, Sierra de San Pedro, Los Baldíos. All of them allow you to learn about, as well as savour, the traditions linked to cheese in the region, as well as touring its landscapes to discover the flora and fauna and visiting its museums and main monuments (castles, palaces, religious buildings, etc.). The Cheese Route has rural houses, hotels, restaurants, gastronomic shops, specialised guides, activity companies, incoming agencies and, for the first time, two wine cellars, allowing tourists and visitors to enjoy a totally immersive experience of Extremadura's gastronomic tradition.



As stated on its website, the Product Club is currently made up of around 80 companies and individuals, all united by their common passion for cheese. It therefore includes tourist accommodation, catering services, gastronomic product shops, museums, activity services, tourist offices, cheese dairies and livestock farms, ready to turn a gastronomic experience into an unforgettable emotion. This consortium works with the aim of spreading the word about Extremaduran cheese, convinced that following the Cheese Route will allow tourists to delve into the cultural, artistic and natural heritage of the region, in what is defined as a journey "to diversity that will immerse us fully in tradition".

Learn more about this Product Club on:

- [Cheese Route in Extremadura](#)
- [Ruta del Queso de Extremadura - Home](#)
- [@rutaquesoextremadura • Instagram photos and videos](#)
- [Ruta del Queso](#)

2nd example: ITINERA CAROLUS V PRODUCT CLUB



On 25 April 2007, the Network of Cooperation of Charles V Routes (RCCV) was created in Burgos (Spain) for the purpose of promoting the tourist, historical-cultural and economic resources of the Routes of Charles V. Since then, the Network has done a great deal of work in the construction of a comprehensive tourism programme. Currently, the Network comprises more than 80 European municipalities and historical sites, all of them related to the figure of Emperor Charles V between 1517 and 1557. However, the network of partners also extends to countries outside the EU (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Panama).

The Charles V Tourism Product Club is presented as a "Club of Excellence in Hospitality, Crafts and Agri-food", aimed at giving visibility to the tourism products scattered along the different routes travelled by the King/Emperor Charles of Habsburg. Integrating the hotel, craft and agri-food productive fabric of the cities and regions along the 17 Routes of the Emperor that currently exist, distributed into Iberian Routes, Netherlands Routes, Italic Routes, Germanic Routes and Maritime Routes.

In order to guarantee the highest standards of quality that the experience offers tourists and visitors, the Product Club integrates 5 quality labels that are only awarded once the corresponding entities guarantee compliance with the good practice guides specifically designed for each activity/service provision. The companies that are members of this Club are located in municipalities or cities that are members of the European Routes of Emperor Charles Cooperation Network and that, therefore, are related to some point in the life of the monarch. The classifications within the "Charles V Tourist Product Club" are the following: accommodation, restaurants, manufacture and/or sale of craft products, production and/or sale of traditional food products and collaborating establishments.

The tourist experience offered by the network of European Routes of Charles V is based on the promotion and dissemination of the cultural, historical-artistic, academic and social legacy of the emperor, highlighting the similarities between European peoples since the Middle Ages. Nowadays, the regions represented offer an infinite number of cultural and natural destinations, as well as activities and commemorations linked to the figure of Charles V, representative of European Renaissance society (16th century), open to the knowledge and enjoyment of European and world society.

Some of the objectives of the cultural itinerary:

- *To promote the conservation and dissemination of the European Cultural Heritage of the Renaissance, encouraging joint actions for its management, recovery and social enhancement.*
- *To promote cultural and educational exchanges, paying special attention to contacts between young people from different regions and countries.*
- *To work resolutely on the creation of sustainable tourism products aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens, job creation, the deseasonalisation of tourism, and the creation of a quality tourist and cultural offer.*



With more than 50 events and activities planned in Europe for 2021, the promotion of the tourist destinations located in the Charles V Route at international level has proven to be a success, so that throughout 2020 around 50 new companies in La Vera (Extremadura) have applied for membership. Similar growth is expected in future campaigns.

For more information, please visit: [Itinera Carolus V | Las Rutas del Emperador](#) / [Rutas Europeas de Carlos V / European Routes of Charles V](#)

3rd example: IBERIAN HAM ROUTE



The Iberian Ham Route Product Club has been in operation since 2008, a joint venture of the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura, Andalusia and Castile and Leon, in collaboration with the current Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and promoted by the General Secretariat of Tourism, under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The Iberian Ham Route brings together five provinces and more than 400 municipalities, with more than a hundred participating companies. In this way, the Product Club acts on the

territory of four designations of origin of one of the most outstanding products of the national gastronomy, the Iberian ham of: Guijuelo, Dehesa de Extremadura, Jamón de Huelva, Los Pedroches.

The common characteristic of all the aforementioned areas is the dehesa, one of the most unique ecosystems on the planet, without which Iberian ham would not exist. It is also an exceptional environment for hiking and cycle touring.



The Iberian Ham Route was created "with the aim of promoting tourism development in the regions involved through the strategic and voluntary alliance of the different public and private agents", raising awareness of the exceptional quality of Iberian ham and the culture that surrounds it, allowing visitors to learn, for example, about the traditional processes involved in the production of artisan food products such as cured meats. An ancestral tradition that includes popular festivals such as the pig slaughter. The aim was to promote the quality and competitiveness of companies and the tourism sector in the

regions involved, "boosting their image and diversifying the catalogue of products" for national tourism.

Although national tourists have been aware of the delicacies provided by the dehesa for years, the Product Club has made Iberian ham known internationally, and it is currently one of the most sought-after Spanish gastronomic products.

In a sector as competitive as tourism, it is vitally important to know the demand in order to be clear about the type of tourism product to be developed. For this reason, it is essential to know what the tourist's motivation is. Currently, around 40 different routes are offered throughout the Product Club's territory, which can be adapted to the tastes and needs of different types of tourists and visitors (gastronomy, natural landscapes, local wines, farms, etc.).



To this end, among the many companies that form part of the Route, it is possible to find entities such as ham dryers, Iberian pig breeding farms, restaurants, accommodation and wineries, gastronomic and ethnographic museums, shops and providers of leisure activities (equestrian centres, cycling routes, etc.).

To find out more about the Iberian Ham Route, visit:

- [Inicio - Club del Producto Rutas del Jamón Ibérico](#)
- [Club de Producto Ruta del Jamón Ibérico](#)

6. Concluding remarks

Most of the travellers are seeking authentic, unique experiences and acquaintance with local lifestyle. So, here rural tourism can perfectly suit this trend. Travellers look for places and activities that are entertaining as well as educational. People are in search of experiences which would reflect the unique character of the area, its rural qualities and its cultural assets.

Examples of cooperative rural tourism experiences showed that every partner country have great resources to offer cultural experiences which includes interactions with local communities and the way of life of the area. From all the examples we can see that one of the main reason travellers choose rural areas for holidays is unspoiled landscapes and nature. Also, authentic accommodation mostly managed by the family to which it belongs, local food and traditions (music, art, dances), activities which you hardly find in the big city is in demand.

Product club workshop ideas helped to generate tourism packages which includes accommodation, agrotourism, educations, local food, traditions, etc. Moreover, rural entrepreneurs understands that cooperation in rural tourism and new tourism product creation in the area brings the benefit for local communities. It helps rural areas to develop economically by creating additional income and employment.

The STORIE Product club workshop ideas and existing experiences examples show that rural tourism is an excellent environment for the development of new combined tourism products. This document can serve as a guide for the development of further experiences in partner and other countries.

Annex 1. Programmes created during Product club workshops

1. HUNGARY

The created tourism package is:

Title: Interactive tasty experiences in Matyóland

Target group: Hungarian tourist groups, ages 40-60

Duration: 3 days 2 nights

Content of the package:

Day 1

- Walk across the Main Square to Hadas (open-air museum district in Mezőkövesd)
- Welcome drink and scones in matyo costume
- Visit to Kisjankó Bori Memorial House
- Guided tour for visiting the creative houses, craft worker houses of Hadas district according to individual interest (furniture painter, gingerbread, fire enamel, painter / weaver, music house, potter) – possibility to try all types of crafts
- Evening: Wine cellar visit, dinner, wine tasting, live folk music, outdoor chimney cake baking

Day 2

- Visit the museums of the town: Matyó Museum, City Gallery, St. László church, guided tour in all places
- Lunch: traditional matyó dishes in a local restaurant
- Bathing in Zsóry Spa and Wellness Bath
- Evening: Matyo wedding dance show, song and dance learning, poetry carving, tasting wine and brandy and regional dishes for dinner

Day 3

- Bakery workshop in a 100 years old country house, pasta making, baking, lunch on the spot from the prepared dishes
- Soap making workshop
- Tasting Matyó Manna – traditional dish



2. LITHUANIA

The created tourism packages are:

1st: “See Molėtai from another perspective”

As everyone knows the most popular places in Molėtai, workshop members from this district came up with idea to make three-day long package without all popular places – only places in small rural surroundings.

Target group: All tourists 25–55-year-old

Duration: 3 days

Content of the package:

Day 1

- Arrival to homestead “Alantos žirgai” in Molėtai district
- Welcome drink (home-made lemonade) and trip around the homestead (acquaintance with bred horses and little ponies)
- Visiting three local farms, excursions, educations and possibility to buy their products – bee keeper, goat farmer – cheesemaker and herbalist
- Guided tour in Alanta Manor - There is a museum of local lore in Alanta Manor, art lovers will be able to see the Vaidotas Žukas Art Gallery established here
- Evening: dinner - local beef stew on a scrap, sauna and time to relax
- Accommodation in “Alantos žirgai”

Day 2

- Morning ride on Alanta horses
- After that steaming breakfast from local products
- Guided trip to Labanoras regional park and local lakes
- Lunch: possibility to choose from different traditional Lithuanian dishes
- Evening: Kazimieras Jakutis concert at “Pagulbis” homestead
- Accommodation at “Pagulbis” homestead

Day 3

- Breakfast ant homestead “Pagulbis”
- Black pottery lesson in the homestead “Jlankos sodyba”
- Boat trip to “Robinson island”. The island is located in the middle of Lake Bebrus
- Dinner at homestead “Jlankos sodyba” and possibility to stay for the night in “Robinson island” with tents

2nd: “Urban man in the countryside”

Target group: families or small adult groups

Duration: 2 days

Content of the package:

Day 1

- Excursion at homestead “Senosios gegužinės ūkis”, homestead exhibition presentation and history of the area
- Making traditional meal from local products
- Free time to walk around the farm, possibility to meet all the animals, to feed them and to ride a horse
- Tour to ceramic studio “Molio virtuvė”, education in this place and testing the craft with your own hands
- Evening – dinner, local wine degustation
- Sauna time in “Senosios gegužinės ūkis”, night swimming in the river
- Accommodation in “Senosios gegužinės ūkis”

Day 2

- Morning farm works at 6 AM – feeding animals, collecting fresh chicken eggs, sheep grazing to the meadow, collecting fresh flowers to decorate breakfast table
- Breakfast making from fresh local products
- Trip to nearby farm - exposition of tractors and possibility to drive them, games "guess what grain"
- Possibility to buy local fresh products from local food producers (vegetables, fruits, bread, milk, eggs, meat, etc.)
- Possibility to choose to stay in homestead for one more night

3. CROATIA

The created tourism package is:

Title: Feel and taste the spirit of the past

Target group: individuals and groups of middle age, 35 to 55 years

Content of the package:

Day 1

- Arrival in Virovitica and welcome to the atrium of the Pejačević castle
- Welcome drink with storytelling (homemade brandy Harmund, natural juices "Braná" and wines from local producers, cured meat specialties "Šuvak" and cheeses from local producers, langoustines, etc....)
- Tour and interpretation of the material and permanent exhibition of the city museum Virovitica
- Departure and accommodation in accommodation facilities Heritage Hotel kurija Janković and / or Visitor center Janković castle Suhopolje
- Dinner: "Tastes enjoyed by the nobles" in the newly renovated restaurant Dvorac
- Return to accommodation facilities

Day 2

- Breakfast and morning healing in the wellness facilities of the accommodation facilities
- Guided one-day tour around Virovitica:
 - Going to the river Drava, ferry ride and crossing the pedestrian bridge, tour of the Interpretation Center of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve in Križnica
 - Going to Grabrovnica and visiting the Interpretation Center "House of Petar Preradović" poet, Austro-Hungarian general and nobleman (including creative workshops on writing with a goose feather, filling souvenir pillows with goose feathers...)
 - Continuation of the tour and lunch at the Zlatni Klas Restaurant in Otrovanac. Traditional Podravina-Slavonia lunch with interesting storytelling. After lunch optional, recreational activities in the spacious village yard: badminton, table tennis, horseback riding, cycling
 - Shorter walking route approx. 5 km from the excursion centre in the vineyards to the Vineda Cellar Winery. Wine tasting with a short sommelier course. Dinner made up of local specialties paired with Vineda cellar wines
- Return to accommodation in the evening

Day 3

- Morning bike ride to Virovitica fishponds
- Tour of the educational trail "Virovitica Bilogora" with a guide. Interpretation related to the history of Virovitica fishponds.
- Gastro creative workshop for preparing local dishes on an open fire (shepherd's pie, fish stew, roasted fish on a plate, cauldron)
- Lunch

- Return by bicycle to accommodation facilities, afternoon rest
- Evening tour of the Interpretation Center Janković Castle Suhopolje. Guided tour through the castle space. Evening screening at 5D cinema
- Dinner in the restaurant of the Janković castle in Suhopolje (wild animals specialties paired with wines from the Diba Suhopolje winery)