

Development of the Danube Cycling Route in Serbia and Possibilities to Develop it in Romania

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Abstract: The quiet waters of the Danube flow down from the Black Forest to the Black Sea. Its 2,850-km journey takes the river across Germany, through Austria and Vienna to Slovakia and Bratislava, and then into Hungary, where it splits the capital into its two constituent parts, Buda and Pest. Continuing through Croatia and Serbia, it goes through the cities of Novi Sad, in the province of Voivodine, and then Belgrade. Below Belgrade, the river runs between the Carpathian Mountains of Romania and the Balkans of Yugoslavia, carving its way through the Iron Gates, a narrow valley with a once fearsome reputation, as it is here that the Danube unleashes all its power. From the Iron Gates to Silistra, where it turns north and then west to join the Black Sea in a three-pronged delta, the Danube forms the border between Bulgaria and Romania.

As the second biggest river in Europe (after the Volga) it has also left its mark on the culture of the countries it crosses. From Ovid to Claudio Magris and from Johann Strauss to the unknown authors of fables and legends, the Danube has been a source of inspiration since Antiquity.

The European programme has allowed the completion of most of the more difficult sections between Nevers and Chalon-sur-Saône and between Dôle and Montbéliard, and the outstanding work should be completed within two years. In Alsace and in the Territoire de Belfort, the bicycle route along the Rhone-Rhine Canal has been completed. Switzerland, Germany and Austria serve as models for this great project, as all the work in these countries is already finished.

Key-Words: cycling route, tourism, sustainable development, Danube strategy, prognosis.

1 Introduction

A large part of the itinerary through Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia and Croatia has been signposted and improvement works are underway. In the years to come, and as part of another European project, work should be carried out in Romania and Bulgaria to make the cycle ways beside the Danube safer.

Provisional routes for the sections on which work is ongoing have been chosen. These routes are shown on maps and described in guidebooks.

The symbolic inauguration of the western section of EuroVelo 6 took place between 8th and 15th October 2006, in the form of a cycle tour from Tüttlingen to Saumur. For a report and photos go to: www.biking-europe.com

¹ As a Program Coordinator he was involved in economic development and employment promotion programs in Romania and since 2004 in Serbia and Montenegro in several fields of activity. Tourism-Development has been priority-sector in Romania as well as in Serbia (Danube-Region) and Montenegro (Hinterland-Tourism-Development). Since 2004-2009 he developed the Danube-Cycling Track from Budapest to Black Sea (Eurovelo 6) covering the Countries: Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. In 2009 he initiated DCC-Danube Competence Center – Project (GTZ). Starting with 2010 he established ORGAMARKET again and with Serbian and German Partners he started CDC – (Consulting-Development-Cooperation-) Consulting Company operating in Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia mainly in the fields of Tourism, Regional and SMEs Development

1.1. Why did we support the development of the Danube cycling route in SEE?

- Region of the most undeveloped tourism potential
- High migration rate of population
- Lowest income of population (Mehedinti poorest county in Ro)
- The target group:
 - 77% trekking cycle
 - 13% Mountain bike
 - 10% Racing cycle
- In Germany 153 million daytrips were made in 2008-2009, and overnight trips were around 22 million, in total 175 million spent days on cycling.
- 89% individual travelers
- In terms of target groups 44% have an income in between 2000-3000 EUR, whereas 20% of customers are retired tourists.
- Main season April – October

1.2. Spending structure of cycling tourists

- Total turnover on location in 2008/2009 (German market):
 - 3,8 Billion EUR by cycling tourism market segment
 - 3,4 Billion EUR camping tourism
 - 0,6 Billion EUR canoeing

1.3. Choice of accommodation

- 43 % Pension or private accommodation
- 19% Camping
- 16 % little hotels (garni hotels)
- 10% bed & bike pensions

- Brochures and catalogues within the accommodation: 8%
- Travel reports: 6%
- Catalogues from tourist operators: 5%
- Advertising and media reports: 5%
- Fair visits: 1%

2.2. Reasons for cycling vacations: (multiple answers available)

- Spending time in nature87%
- Active/Sportive activities.....83%
- Relax/Recreation69%
- Fun69%
- Leisure57%
- Leaving everyday life57%
- Time spent with family/friends57%
- Active recreation54%
- Exploring new experiences48%
- To meet other people48%
- Romantic trips32%
- Art & culture28%
- Lush travel27%
- Exploring one owns limits23%
- Childhood memories.....22%
- Learning and getting new knowledges ...21%
- Unique experiences20%
- Exploring city flairs13%
- Shoppnig10%

2.3. Motives for destination choices: (multiple answers available)

- Landscape90%
- Offer of cycling tracks.....87%
- Climate and clean air.....70%
- Recreation possibilities.....47%
- Destination image.....42%
- Silence.....42%
- Country and people.....41%
- Offer of hiking tracks.....40%
- Atmosphere/Flair.....40%
- Sea/swimming possibilites.....39%

Preffered types of landscape during cycling tours:

- River landscape 61%

2 Problem Formulation

Cycling as a niche tourism product has many sources of information related to this new type of tourism, this sport tourism being a sport in nature, health, with multiple valences. The most important valences are:

2.1. Info source of cycling tourists

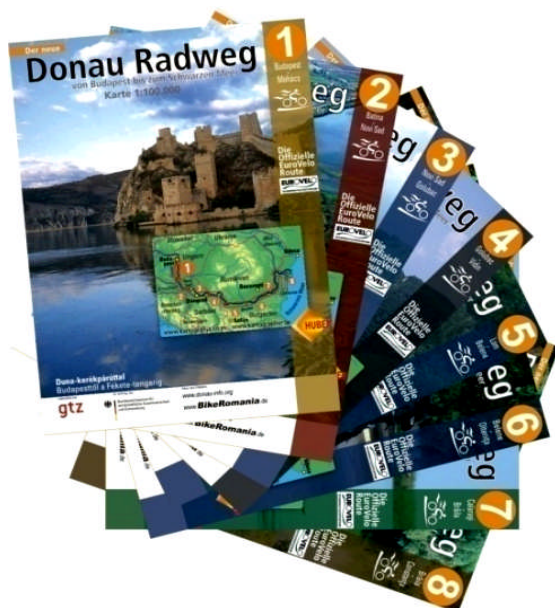
- Internet: 64%
- Friends and acquaintance: 30%
- Tourism Information: 18%
- Travel Literature: 17%
- Country Brochures and catalogues: 16%
- Local outgoing tourist : 8%

3 Problem Solution

It is natural that for launching and promoting a new and of perspective type of tourism: cycling, there is needed and required analysis and diagnose, but also responsibilities from the stakeholders, starting to give answers to some questions which I would like not to remain rhetorical:

❖ What has already been done?

- identification of the best possible Danube cycling route in Serbia (666 km)



- making of a detailed GPS based cycling map from Budapest to the Black sea
- route recognized as European route Nr. 6 (EuroVelo 6 from Atlantic to the Black sea)
- signposting of the 666 km (100%) of the route in Serbia
- installation of a monitoring – systems
- Networking with the partners in Serbia and in the SEE (Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria)



❖ **Some facts!**

- Several thousand individual cycle tourists used Danube cycling route in Serbia in 2010

- Foreign tour operators offer combined bus and bike tours in the Danube in Serbia (2009, 5; 2010 more to come)
- Profile: Young pensioners and students from Germany, Austria, France, The Netherlands
- Average stay in Serbia 5-7 days
- Private rooms, pensions, camping
- Nature and local culture

❖ **Phases of the Development of the Danube cycling route (DCR)**

- Phase I: Planning and field work 2004 – 2006.
- Phase II: Signposting 2007 – 2010.
- Phase III: Promotion 2005 - Ongoing
- Phase IV: Establishing of the monitoring system 2009.



4 Conclusion

Germany finances land route for cycling on the Romanian shore of the stream. The Danube course can be a great attraction for tourists visiting Romania.

The route for cycling arranged along the Danube brings to Germany and Austria 100,000 tourists a year. Until we get to such performance, we must invest at least in accommodation and parking.

GTZ (a German government organization) has allocated the sum of 35,000 euros to Romania for documentation, dissemination and modernization of two tourist information centers and to mark the route, which has about 1200 km in length. Out of this amount, 16,000 euro are allocated for marking two pilot-parts (application of icons and installation of signs and guidance and information billboards).



In Romania, the route will stretch from Naidăș (locality on the border with Serbia), will pass through Baziaș - Turnu Severin - Calafat - Giurgiu - Calarasi - Ostrov - Cernavoda - Braila - Galati - Tulcea - Murighiol - Histria - Constanta. "Marking will be done only on the portion Naidăș - Baziaș - Calafat and portion Braila - Tulcea - Murighiol, Constanta, the part between Calafat and Ostrov will be marked in the first phase only on the Bulgarian bank of the Danube", said president of cycling club Napoca.. Fitting this route could, gradually, bring thousands and tens of thousands of tourists a year. A potential area remains "Mehedinti County which is the least developed region in Romania, with more unemployed people and great poverty. Therefore we have to promote the region and develop it. So far, we managed to finance the opening of nine hostels and a restaurant in this region. But the tourists need maps, and markings" said Wolfgang Limbert.

By 2006, there were marked the routes from Serbia, now being marked the ones in Romania and Bulgaria. In Europe there are 12 cross-border cycling routes, together forming the Euro Velo network. Cycling route along the Danube is part of the Euro Velo route number 6, placed first in the preferences of the German cyclists.

In other areas, eg in Germany and Austria, the Danube route attracts over 100,000 cycling tourists a year, fact that sustain the economical activity of a chain of hotels and pensions and many other tourism organizations. Also, it could be an opportunity for those who will open a business on this route (the cyclists need to download their pictures, eat, places to dry their clothes, etc..).



"The route Cicloturistic Danube" is part of Euro Velo route no. 6, one of the 12 Trans-European cycling routes, which form the Euro Velo network. Regarding the bike paths, this route is on the top in the European statistics. For example, the German cyclists consider it the most popular long distance route which leads abroad. In Romania, the route will have a low level of difficulty, being oriented from West to East.

Not only the enthusiasts, but also everybody who wish to initiate in the future projects in cycling tourism will benefit from the results of this approach (tour operators, travel agents, tour local guides, tour managers, owners of the accommodation capacities etc.) and specific multiplicative effects will be found in the tourism programs created for the sustainable development of this God blessed tourism potential which is beneficial not only to tourism but to the whole economic development of the border region².

² Prof.PhD. Mirela Mazilu, *Danube-Velo-Route*, Project financed by the European Union (Drobeta Turnu Severin), 2010.

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