



Via Mariae - the spiritual pilgrimage route

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Type of best practice

Cooperation between Museums and Heritage sites

Keywords

pilgrimage, local community, cultural heritage, cultural heritage management, sustainable cultural tourism

"The Via Maria pilgrimage route is a spiritual tourist road, which is based on the veneration of Saint Mary by the peoples, but also unites the Marian places and the historical and cultural values found along the route, without distinguishing religion. It aims to build in Central Europe a network that systematizes the religious values of this region, it connects in the east-west direction and in the north-south direction. The road traces a cross on the map of Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Bosnia), thus creating a network of pilgrimage routes based on local values.

Organisation in charge of best practice

Via Mariae Association

Location

Harghita County Council, Romania

Dates

2016-2020

Description

Via Mariae – the last 100 km was built in a partnership by Harghita County Council, Transylvanian Way of Mary Organization, Harghita Community Development Association, local municipalities and associations.

The 6,500 euro project (building of the routes, pilgrimage insignias, certificates and passports, promotional materials, event organization etc.) budget was funded by partners. The 100 kilometres pilgrimage route is available on foot, bicycle and horse. Pilgrims can experience a lifelong adventure with the possibility of learning about local history and attractions, and also which will help them not only to get closer to the environment but to prove their own physical and mental perseverance.





The www.100km.mariaut.ro website contributes to a calm and meaningful pilgrimage, including accommodations, attractions, shops, cafes, pharmacies, health centers, police stations, and other important locations. Local contacts are available in each settlement to support pilgrims. This road addresses everyone, it calls everyone.

They are waiting for those who, regardless of nationality, religion, want to be pilgrims for religious, spiritual, self-knowledge purposes and they are also waiting for those who want to step on this road for now only for touristic or sports purposes. This road will be a bridge between nations, religions, people, connecting the west to the east, thus becoming the Road Connecting the Nations of Central and Eastern Europe, the "Road of Reconciliation", which in the future can become a European cultural road.

The road is divided in 7 sections, each section is described according with all information that it is needed.





Links

<https://viamariaecj.ro/2020/11/13/sfaturi-practice-pentru-drumeti/>

Resources needed

Training for guides and hosts Maintaining and developing the road Maps and brochures.

Challenges encountered

Clear understanding from the local authorities, the real benefit from the pilgrims expenditures for local community.

Evidence of success

Number of participants: On the Road 1day pilgrimage (connecting shrines from Austria, Hungary and Romania): 2500 Rosary pilgrimage: 200 Thematic pilgrimage: 50 Registered participants/year: Pentecostal 40 days pilgrimage from Budapest to Șumuleu Ciuc (Csíksomlyó): 100 individual pilgrims: 50 Last 100 km pilgrimage: 60 Horseback pilgrimage: 140 Bicycle: 150 Marathon of Holy Mary: 50 Sacred Marathon: 350 New guides and volunteers: 30. This project received the 2nd Prize in the ECTN Awards 'Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism 2023', in the category 'Spiritual, Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism', by a joint jury with Europa Nostra and European Travel Commission.

Potential for transfer

Communication strategy for local community, adopted local tourism products to develop and promote the the route, promotional materials to engage the pilgrims to move forward,



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Organizing pilgrimage for groups Cooperation with local stakeholders (land owners, mountain rescue teams, local authorities, churches). Revitalizing local traditional activities.

Further Information

The main Via Mariae routes start from Mariazell in Austria and go to Şumuleu Ciuc. They do not end here, they cross the Eastern Carpathians and continue in Bucovina and Moldova. The terminal points at the moment are in Putna and Iasi. Starting from Harghita county, Via Mariae goes together with the thematic road Via Transilvanica. The network of pilgrimage roads in Cluj county consists of two main routes and several secondary routes. Route M05 marked with purple color enters the county at Aghires, and exits at Năoiu. The M01 route marked in red enters the county at Aščileul Mic, passes north of Cluj, reaches the Nicula monastery, then joins the M05 route. In addition to these main routes, secondary routes are alternatives. They touch other localities and are of different degrees of difficulty. To cover the distance Cluj Nicula we have several alternatives. We can go on the route Cojocna, Sic Nicula. Another option is via Borşa, Bonţida, Sic. Another option is via Răscruçi, Gherla. The third option is via Apahida, Juc, Bonţida, Sic. These alternative routes can be combined according to everyone's liking. Circuits can also be made. It is good to choose the optimal option depending on interest, physical condition, time available.

