



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Just a few steps to responsible luxury

Destination Name: **Bratislava Region Tourism**

Country: **Slovakia**

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Position: Sustainability Coordinator/ Online Marketing

Nomination Category:

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery
- Other

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## DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Bratislava region is a destination situated on the west side of Slovakia, sharing borders with three other countries: Hungary, Austria, and Czech Republic. This unique condition makes Bratislava the only capital city in the world which has such a special location and access.

Even from the historical point of view, the location of the region is strongly influenced by all the surrounding nations, and you can feel it on our culture, cuisine as well as our spirit. Regarding the fact that Bratislava region consists of the Slovak capital, the region is also culturally and naturally rich. Throughout the whole area you can find rivers, lakes, sand beaches, forests, mountains, wetlands, vineyards as well as many smaller towns with rich cultural history. In addition, the region is providing a well-developed network of cycling paths and hiking tracks.

Despite the small size of the region (2 053km<sup>2</sup>), its diversity of natural and cultural heritage as well as the broad display of possibilities is more than abundant. Therefore, our motto is “Just a few steps...”, meaning that in our “all-inclusive destination” you can experience in a very short period of time all types of adventures and leisure.

### Issues faced

The region has many interesting places and features to offer. One would think that tourism is well spread all over the region, but due to the logistic behind the mobility and transport system, the reality is different. International tourists coming to our destination are staying in the capital as they do not know how to travel further within the region, or it's just too complicated and in their opinion not worth it. Additionally, the locals are preferring their own personal transport, for their own comfort causing even more transport chaos.

Therefore, the key to reach sustainable tourism in our destination is to increase the attractiveness, awareness and to add last mile solutions. Better planned and well spread mobility will increase more balanced tourism, visitability in all corners of our region, equally strengthening the tourism development. During the pandemic it became even more noticeable, as locals started to seek nature spots to separate themselves from the masses. As a result, all the most favourite places started to be overwhelmed, which produced even more traffic jams and worsened the parking situation.

The idea is to develop a mobility system that will enable a smooth transfer from the capital towards all corners of the region and back, for locals as well as for international tourists. Implementing high quality public transport will increase sustainable mobility, which in the end improves regional development and overall sustainable tourism in the area. Additionally in



order to attract the tourists to the region, a new initiative inspired by sustainable development has been created in a form of new extraordinary accommodation.

#### Methods, steps and tools applied

Firstly, we will introduce you a new addition towards the sustainable mobility scheme. Eversum are new shuttles which are going to be used for the last mile solutions, when traveling from the capital further to the region. The shuttles are powered by electricity with additional power generating from their own solar panels. By providing such a modern option (connection of high-tech vehicle with traditional craftwork as winery), it is expected that locals will choose public transport instead of their own vehicles, decreasing the number of vehicles on the road. For international tourists, such an option is meant to simplify their stay and increase the chances of them traveling outside the capital.

Another project which will be introduced in the Good Practice Story is our new product line, with its main goal to expand services in the region, aiming to keep the tourists overnight. We are creating a network (of approx. 50) treehouses in Small Carpathians (a mountain range stretching throughout the region starting in the capital). The treehouses will be situated near the main hiking tracks to provide comfort and easy access for the tourists, but still deep enough in the forest to ensure a natural and adventurous experience. The purpose of the treehouses will be mainly to offer tourists a unique experience of sleeping high in the tree branches, with the possibility to enjoy a peaceful scenery, far away from the stress and rush of the metropole, supported with the feeling of freedom. The treehouses will be equipped with fundamental supplies, leaving out electricity to enable a raw experience. This product supports the public transport options as at the end of your trip you may find yourself far away from your starting point.

Another advantage of the project is to support the local community. Giving tourists a reason to travel into the region will bring more work for local enterprises, which will equally increase the development of the regions. Furthermore, the initiative creates an opportunity for locals to be involved in the project of building and operating the treehouses. The range of Small Carpathians stretches from the capital towards the north, meaning both subregions (Malé Karpaty and Záhorie) may gain.



### Key success factors

Nowadays, more and more people are realising the beauty of nature. The treehouses will be built from only natural materials from local resources, specially designed to be attached to the trees without any harm. Seeing that neither electricity will be used, the accommodation is being planned and constructed with no carbon footprint. The choice of accommodation will also have an impact on the overall carbon footprint per tourist, helping to minimise the overall levels.

By choosing this project we are also trying to refer to the new luxury, which in our perception are no longer huge hotel complexes with all-inclusive options and huge amounts of food, drinks etc. Rather spending time in the nature with the possibility to experience unfiltered rawness, minimalism, original scenery, flora, and fauna of the area as well as the possibility to turn down every-day problems and responsibilities. Such an experience may bring peace and calmness to your body and mind and will help you to recharge your energy.

Another aspect of this project is to lead by example. We believe that teaching sustainability is not enough. We can not expect that by telling people to live a certain lifestyle they will change their long-term habits and manners. Instead, we believe that if we provide them with the opportunity and show them “how to” they might get inspired. The treehouses are not supposed to only inspire the individuals visiting, but also the touristic industry as such and our colleagues to start building more sustainable friendly accommodations and provide more sustainable additional services. Such an experience may lead towards the need to adapt such practices further in everyday life.

### Lessons learned

The project started at the beginning with a thorough research, throughout which we found out that accommodation in a form of a treehouse is a touristic trend and is quite often sought by individuals. The selection is pretty extensive from the basic ones to the 7\*ones. At this point we realised that destinations (whether it's ours or other) are full of high luxury options, and that in our perception the luxury may started to be associated with different aspects. As we see it, luxury is being able to be in nature, without any unnecessary accessories, in a form most natural for human beings. Implementing such a philosophy, the project is taking the individuals back to the roots, not only in the natural way but also in a touristic perspective, as in the same area in the year 1892 the first Slovak Hiking Association was established. Since the choice was to build basic treehouses made mainly out of wood, the project is not financially difficult, giving destinations worldwide an option to get inspired and start doing tourism more sustainably and “luxuriously”. Just a few steps to the new luxury of pure nature.

## Results, achievements and recognitions

Even though we can not present you with actual data of our achievements, as the project is still in the process, based on our previous experience and the support of the Mayor of city Modra, who provides a big territory of forest areas, we are confident it will have a positive impact on the community. There are already 4 individual treehouses in our region, with different levels of quality which are fully booked all the time and have plenty of satisfied customers.

The project also meets all the pillars of sustainability. Planet - both presented projects (Eversum shuttles and the treehouses) are minimising the carbon footprint and are leading towards sustainability with example. People - treehouses are advantageous not only for the tourist for whom they are built, but especially for the involving community which will also gain from the development of their region. Profit - the last pillar is also met as both products are encouraging tourism development within the whole area.

