



Report on Study Tour

Potentials for Tourism Development on Rehabilitated Mine Sites

Slovenia, 6 – 10 October 2008

The study tour *“Potentials for Tourism Development on Rehabilitated Mine Sites”* was organized from 6th to 10th October, for participants from Montenegro: representative of Mojkovac Municipality, Director of the Tourist Organization of Mojkovac, geologist from the Geological Institute of Montenegro and the UNDP Montenegro representatives.

Purpose of the visit was to explore the options for further viable use of the existing abandoned mining site as tourist destinations and consequently possibilities for providing economic benefits for local populations.

Two rehabilitated mining sites in Slovenia were visited: Podzemlje Pece and Idrija.

Participants had a chance to meet:

- representatives of management authorities of the mines and museums,
- mayors of the municipalities where the mines were operating, as well as
- representatives of tourism sector in visited municipalities.

Having in mind the conditions of the abandoned lead and zinc mine site ‘Brskovo’ in Mojkovac, participants were especially interested in following:

- process of closing the mines (expertise, plans, stakeholders involved etc),
- use of the rehabilitated mine sites in tourist and educational purposes,
- funds/programmes for development of the mine as tourist attraction,
- management of the rehabilitated mine sites and museums,
- initiatives for international protection of the rehabilitated mine sites as geo-parks or UNESCO world heritage sites,
- establishment of networks with other similar sites in the region.

During many different meetings/presentations/discussions participants gathered valuable information on all the above mentioned topics and agreed further cooperation with the experts from **both “Podzemlje Pece” and “Idrija”, who are willing to provide all expertise and help on the process of proper closing the mine, as well as on preparing new joint initiatives for viable use of existing resources. Representatives of Mojkovac Municipality invited our hosts from “Podzemlje Pece” and “Idrija” to come to Mojkovac and agree further concrete steps of cooperation.**



Podzemlje Pece is an old lead and zinc mine, which was operational even in the Roman Age. The first written records date in 1665. However, the outstanding development of the mine was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century. The lead and zinc ore deposits on an area of 64 km², with the 350 ore bodies. During the operational period of the mine, total of 19 million tons of ore were mined and 1,000.000 t of Pb and 300.000 t of Zn produced. The overall length of the galleries in the mine is over 1.000 km, going from the altitude of approximately 500 m to 200m.

Due to different, mainly economic reasons, and especially the low price of ore by the end of the 20th century, the decision was made to cease the production. Law on closing the mine was adopted by Slovenian Parliament in 1988, when the mine decided to start to develop the project on closing the mine. In 1994 the Project to close the mine was finalized, including the natural and technical heritage preservation.

The mine is for the last ten years used in educational and tourist purposes. Small part of the mine galleries, app. 10% or some 10 km, has been adopted for the purpose of the visitors. In addition, an excellent Mine Museum have been established, presenting the mining industry in Mezica at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the life the miners lived with their families in this remote mountain area. The museum includes also several small collections and exhibitions, such as ore/minerals or biodiversity exhibitions. In addition to that, the tourist offer includes the visit into the mine galleries, short drive with the old miners train, as well as biking trails in the mine galleries.

After the mine was closed, tourism was one of the substitutes for income generation activities in the region. Therefore, they decided to develop the basic infrastructure for tourism development, and consequently include many different stakeholders in realization of this idea. The approach has been proven very successful.

According to their statistics, 190.000 visitors/tourists visited the Mine and the Museum in the period from 1997 to 2000.

Today, management authority of the Mine developed the idea on protecting the whole region as cross-border geo-park, with the neighbouring municipalities in Austria. The area would cover 607 km², including 9 municipalities (5 Slovenian and 4 Austrian), with approximately 45.000 inhabitants. Since this is the area rich in geological and cultural heritage, as well as biodiversity, the management of the mine and museum believes that Geo-park would bring additional benefit to the local population and significantly improve tourist offer in the region.

All those information were obtained through direct meetings/presentations/discussions with the relevant representatives of the Podzemlje Pece, as well as Mayors of three municipalities, covering the territory of the mine (detailed agenda attached).



The second, rehabilitated mine site, visited during this study tour was Mercury Mine in Idrija. This was the second richest mercury ore deposit in the world. The first mercury ore was found in 1490. The Mine was operational for more than 500 years. During that time 150.000 tons of mercury or 1/8 of the entire world production of this metal was extracted in Idrija. Miners have dug more than 700 km of underground main roads. There are 15 levels in the mine, and the deepest parts of the mine reach a depth of 400m or 3m below sea level.

Due to the economic crisis, and the low price of mercury at the world market, the mine was temporary **closed in late '70s. It had minimal production in the period from 1983 to 1995**, when the decision was made to permanently close the mine. Closing the mine required detailed plans and engagement of many different experts. The plan was made to do gradual closing of the mine, with the deadline of finalizing the process of closing by the end of 2007. The closing plan was developed in 1986, adopted in 1987, approved in 1889, and revised in 2002.

In parallel with the closing of the mine, the management of the mine established the monitoring programme, screening the impact of the mercury production on the human health and the environment. They have also established the Mercury Information and Research Centre with the aim to communicate the obtained results and the on-going activities on closing the mine with the citizens of Idrija.

Nowadays the part of its tunnels within the mine has been used for educational and tourist purposes, with the ex-miners working as the tourist guides. The entrance into the mine is in the city centre, **through "The Antoniev Rov", which has been dug in year 1500**, and is today one of the oldest preserved mine entrances in Europe.

Participants of the study tour had a chance to meet relevant representatives of the Mine, as well as the Mayor of Idrija Municipality, who informed us that nowadays there are no unemployed people in Idrija.

According to the evaluation forms filled in by the participants, the study tour was very useful and well organized, in the sense of gathering relevant information about closing the mines and using the existing resources for the tourist promotion of the region.