

An aerial photograph of Europe with a network of roads and rivers. The Danube River is highlighted in a vibrant red color, flowing from the top left towards the bottom right of the frame. The background is a dark, textured map showing various geographical features and infrastructure.

Sustainable tourism concepts

Guideline

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Sustainable tourism concepts

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List of abbreviations

DTP – Danube Transnational Programme

UNWTO – The World Tourism Organization – UN Specialized Agency

SDG – The Sustainable Development Agenda (Goals)

INSTO – The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

GOST – Global Observatories on Sustainable Tourism

EUSDR – EU Strategy for the Danube Region

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

LDL – Living Danube Limes

STUBA – Slovak University of Technology

CHI – Center for Heritage Interpretation

Introduction

Exploring sustainable tourism concepts is one of the basic pillars of the Living Danube Limes project and has its own specifics in this project. Identifying all development potentials and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats arising from tourism in the Roman border areas of Limes Romanus is important for their accessibility, development as well as protection against adverse effects on cultural heritage, natural resources and the socio-economic sphere.

The presented study is developed within the project The Danube Transnational Program (DTP) which promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Danube Region through policy integration in selected fields - specific project – Living Danube Limes - Valorising cultural heritage and fostering sustainable tourism by LIVING the common heritage on the DANUBE LIMES as a basis for a Cultural Route. The main aim of the Danube Transnational Programme project “Living Danube Limes” is to encourage a common connection between all countries along the Danube Region, using the shared Limes Romanus heritage. The project's main objective is the laying of foundations for the creation of a European Cultural Route spanning the whole Danube Region, which will connect the region and help to address challenges of public and political disinterest in the cultural, economic and touristic potential of Roman heritage sites in East-, but also Central European countries. It will further establish the necessary ground on which a sustainable branding of the entire region as a coordinated tourist destination with eco-friendly solutions and offers will be developed. The creation of museum and visitor site clusters that will be virtually connected via the Living Danube Limes app spanning the whole Danube Region in which the visualisation of the entire Danube Limes can be coordinated between all museums, institutions and participating countries, will become the interface with the public and help making the Danube Limes Region a much more visible and attractive tourist destination, supported by the connecting ship cruise and a coordinated series of living history events.

The project therefore also includes work on strategies for sustainable tourism solutions with appropriate proposals for subsequent investments in economically feasible reconstruction and visualization measures.

The Living Danube Limes partnership consists of 46 partners (19 project partners and 27 associated strategic partners) from 10 Danube region countries: Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova.

This text aims to to present the issue of sustainable tourism and define the basic concepts. The aim is to show that the implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism can be successful even in the regions along the Danube River, which can differ from each other culturally, socio-economically, while respecting local, regional or national traditions. Sustainable tourism in the sites of the Roman heritage Limes Romanus is the common goal of European partners who want to present the Roman heritage on the Danube and connect all the countries of the Danube region.

1. Sustainable tourism concepts

1.1 Sustainable tourism – history

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development SDG target 8.9, aims to “by 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”. The importance of sustainable tourism is also highlighted in SDG target 12.b. which aims to “develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”.

In 2015, in Sofia, Bulgaria, the UNWTO engaged itself in a joint effort with the Danube countries to advance sustainable tourism development in the Danube region. It has been agreed that the UNWTO and the countries in the Danube will establish a Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, under the auspices of UNWTO. A Letter of Commitment between UNWTO and the Priority Area 3 on “promoting culture, tourism, people-to-people contacts” of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), representing 14 Member States, to establish a Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories under the auspices of UNWTO, was signed. The Priority Area 3 of the EUSDR brings together 14 countries "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts". The member states are Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The Observatories are meant to measure tourism’s social, economic and environmental impact along the Danube River and help define adequate sustainable tourism policies in the region. The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), formerly known as Global Observatories on Sustainable Tourism (GOST), supports policy makers to implement evidence-based

tourism policies by systematically monitoring tourism's environmental, social and economic impacts. Set up collectively with local stakeholders, the Observatories aim to ensure sustainable and resilient tourism growth while disseminating good practices and supporting capacity building in sustainability among tourism stakeholders.

“The unique cultural and natural assets of the Danube region offer excellent opportunities for sustainable tourism development. I highly commend the Danube countries for taking a leadership role in launching this initiative with UNWTO”, said Mr. Taleb Rifai, the UNWTO Secretary-General. “With this network of observatories, the Danube Region is setting an example in Europe and beyond on how regional cooperation can advance sustainable development through tourism”, he added.

“Tourism is a main pillar in the economies of the countries from the Danube region. In the past year (2014) the Danube countries have been visited by over 120 million tourists, which generated revenues of over 70 billion euro. It is very important to focus our efforts on establishing the Danube brand as such and on becoming more recognizable worldwide, reaching distant markets in particular.”

The three main milestones of sustainable tourism are: social justice, economic development, and environmental integrity. They lay on sustainable business practices, community development, and environmental stewardship.

1.2 Sustainable tourism - definition

Sustainable tourism is a concept that covers the complete tourism experience, including concern for economic, social and environmental issues as well as attention to improving tourists' experiences and addressing the needs of host communities. Sustainable tourism emerged as an outcome of preventing the uncontrolled and excessive use of tourism resources. Sustainable tourism should embrace concerns for environmental protection, social equity, and the quality of life, cultural diversity, and a dynamic, viable economy delivering jobs and prosperity for all.¹

The main components of sustainable tourism are:

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_tourism

- Ecotourism. Ecotourism focuses on socially responsible travel, appreciation of natural habitats, environmental sustainability, cultural appreciation, and the creation of economic opportunities for local communities
- Cultural Tourism
- Responsible Tourism
- Geotourism

Major challenges for sustainable tourism include:

- preserving natural and cultural resources
- limiting negative impacts at tourist destinations, including the use of natural resources and waste production
- promoting the wellbeing of the local community
- reducing the seasonality of demand
- limiting the environmental impact of tourism-related transport
- making tourism accessible to all
- improving the quality of tourism jobs

In 2007 Commission of the European Communities release a Commission Communication: “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism” which recommended the use of the following principles to address these challenges:

- taking a holistic, integrated approach
- planning for the long term

Sustainable tourism (or also sustainable tourism) is a form of travel that pursues three main interests

- make optimal use of environmental resources and help protect natural heritage and biodiversity,
- respect the socio-cultural authenticity of the countries visited and contribute to understanding and tolerance,
- provide economic benefits to all involved, including income opportunities for local people and thus contribute to poverty alleviation.



Fig.1. Sustainability principles/ elements/ pillars refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. Tourism has to be balanced in all three areas to promise its long term sustainability or considered sustainable.

(Source:

[tps://sustainabletourismmbcc.wordpress.com](https://sustainabletourismmbcc.wordpress.com))

It is part of the concept of sustainability, which is not only about conserving and restoring natural resources, but also about socio-cultural and economic aspects. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is sustainable if the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism are taken into account, while addressing the needs of tourists, industry, the environment and indigenous communities.

1.3 Sustainable tourism versus Ecotourism

It is important to understand that sustainable tourism is not a “type” of tourism or a “niche” market, as is often believed, but rather a way of organizing any type of tourism development. It is a (moral) obligation undertaken by all tourism stakeholders towards each other, their local community and to future generations.

“Ecotourism”, on the other hand, is a “type” of sustainable tourism for which the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UN-WTO) set up a clear definition within their 2002 Ecotourism Year. Ecotourism is sustainable tourism in (protected) nature areas. It should include visitor interpretation and should involve or benefit local communities. Frequently “ecotourism” is confused with “sustainable tourism” and also often mixed up with “nature tourism” which involves visiting natural areas but which is not necessarily sustainable.

On 13 May 2020, EC publicized a paper on ‘Transport and tourism in 2020 and beyond’, that declares Europe being the global leader for sustainable and innovative tourism. The sustainability remains the lead criterion for the vital EU tourism ecosystem in the framework of the green and digital transition of the European Green Deal and the tourism of tomorrow based on a roadmap towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem.²

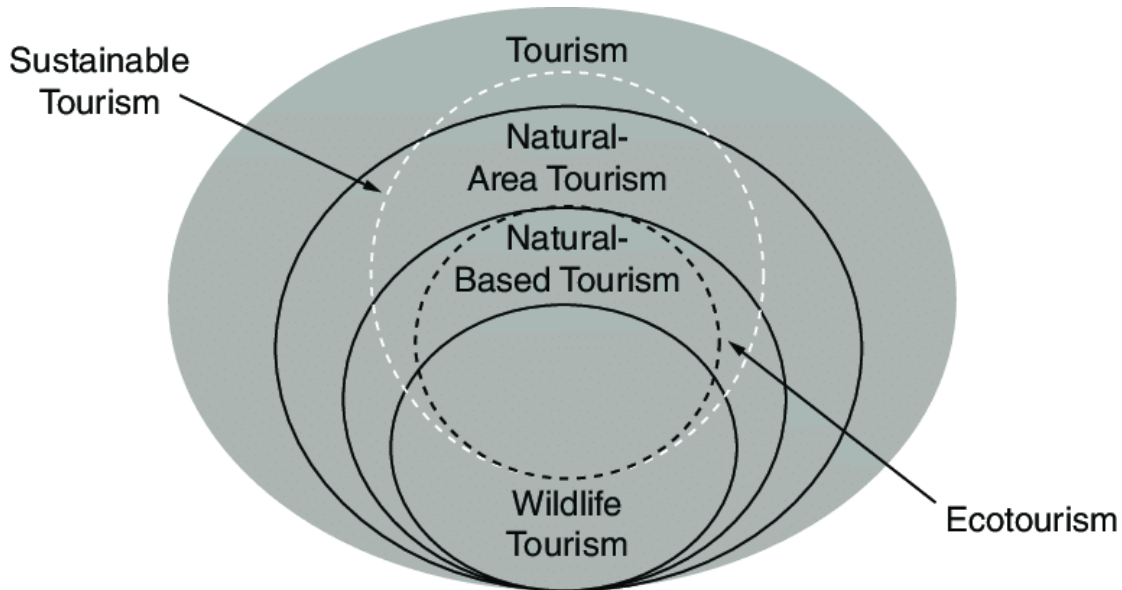


Fig. 2. Relationship between sustainable tourism, ecotourism and some of the main forms of tourism. (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Relationship-between-sustainable-tourism-ecotourism-and-some-of-the-main-forms-of_fig1_283215188)

The Living Danube Limes sites promoting sustainable tourism will add value to the long-term socio-economic development of the Danube area. New itineraries and attractions, based on Roman Limes heritage, sustainable transport and increased advertisement and communication of the sites to the broad public and promote less-known destinations.

The sustainability topics to pay attention at, are:

- Innovative and dynamic itineraries at cross border and regional level;
- Modernised and relevant communication of the local sustainable tourism offer;
- Provision of adequate accessibility infrastructure for sustainable tourism (publicity, transport, food, entertainment, shops, lodging, etc.).

² European Agenda for Tourism 2050

Tourism accessibility is a prerequisite for tourism sustainability of the Roman Danube limes legacy, in line with the EU efforts for “jointly with relevant stakeholders co-creation of a Tourism Transition Pathway towards a European Agenda for Tourism 2030-2050...growth with new destinations emerging off-the-beaten-track,...taking an important place for the renewal of the industry”³

Models of sustainable tourism that would bring people to discover cultural and natural treasures hidden in less known tourism destinations have been promoted by regions throughout Europe for years, in line with the vision expressed under the second pillar of the 2018 European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage.

1.4 Invasive tourism threats

1.4.1 The impact of tourism on the environment and nature

Uncontrolled tourism operations often lead to a deterioration of the quality of the environment. This is mainly due to massive tourism. Excessive tourism means congested streets, congested monuments, congested infrastructure, rising prices, a devastated environment, a general deterioration in the daily lives of the inhabitants. These are the problems that several well-known places have been experiencing lately. Tourism is most often associated with extremely valuable areas in terms of natural and cultural values. The disturbance of the environment is caused by the construction of large tourist facilities that do not respond to local conditions and do not respect the environment.

The new UNWTO report provides examples of concrete actions being taken in cities across the Americas, Asia, the Pacific and Europe. A total of 18 case studies examine specific solutions for such popular destinations as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Prague and Venice.

UNWTO offers 11 overcrowded cities 11 strategies that can help them better cope with visitor growth:

- Try to distract visitors more and more inside and outside the city.
- Try to spread the arrivals of tourists throughout the year.
- Prepare new attractions for tourists.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/news/stakeholder-consultation-transition-pathway-tourism-2021-06-21_bg

- Explore regulation options and tailor it to your needs.
- Increase visitor segmentation.
- Ensure that local communities also benefit from tourism.
- Create opportunities in the city that will benefit both visitors and locals.
- Take care of improving the city's infrastructure and equipment.
- Communicate with local stakeholders and involve them in decision-making.
- Ask about the experiences and opinions of the visitors themselves.
- Set up effectiveness monitoring.⁴

1.4.2 Impacts of tourism on the socio-economic sphere

Sustainable tourism is based on securing renewable economic, social and cultural benefits for the community and its environment. The role of the community in sustainable tourism is affected by variety of conditions in different contexts.

The main negative impacts of mass tourism on society and local economy include:

- Pushing residents out of their own local environment (from city centers, recreation areas ...) because of their non-economic dependence on the economic pressure of tourism industry;
- Services built on mass tourism are particularly suitable for the needs of tourists and in no form suitable for the needs of local residents;
- The intensity and speed of mass tourism is causing social disruption, in particular to rural and smaller communities;
- Using the local population as a cheap labor force goes against the economic development of locals;
- Imported tourism investments value their profits outside of the destinations where they are brought;
- Exploitation of local resources without investments to restore them. After the oversaturation of the destination market, economic and social decline is expected.

⁴ Source: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284420643>

Economic and social sustainability brings profit immediately or in the long term. Its principles are based on:

- Harmonization of the economic and social potential of the locality with the character of tourism;
- Principle of partnerships throughout the entire supply chain from micro-sized local businesses to multinational organizations;
- Application of internationally approved guidelines for training and certification;
- Promotion of ethical and environmentally conscious behavior among clients;
- Development of wide range of tourist activities and their diversities;
- The financial incentives for businesses, which adopt sustainability principles.⁵

⁵ McKercher, 2003

2. Identification of Living Danube Limes sustainable tourism options

2.1 Roman sustainable tourism, entertainment and leisure

There numerous archaeological finds from the Roman times evidencing that tourism in Europe has about 2000 years of tradition. Rich Roman citizens traveled to spa and leisure places everywhere in the empire. In response to the demands of the Romans diverse tourism offers have been designed to satisfy a variety of tastes. The Romans built thermal baths at natural mineral and hot springs all over Europe and made them places to socialise, relax and receive medical services. In later Roman times, even soldiers could visit such places to heal their wounds. After having several hot baths and laying in the pool, they have been moving to the cool tepidarium for massage with oils and scraping the body with metal tools called strigils. The same happens in spa resorts today as well! Roman leisure activities were set on ideals, such as freedom, gratuity and satisfaction, involving masses in active participation to achieve integrity.⁶ The Living Danube Limes project can connect the Roman sustainable tourism concepts to modernity and revive old traditions to reinforce the Limes Romanus destination's identity and pride, using the fact that many of the Roman leisure activities are still remembered and experienced.

Each Roman social group (slaves, freedmen, foreigners, citizens of the plebs, the upper class of landlords, senators and noblemen) practiced different amusements activities but all of them had spiritual festivities, demonstration of sports and show programs, etc. Some of these activities, linked to the Romans' leisure times, can be turned into creative tourism experiences for visitors and tourists of today.

Some of the Roman experiences linked to leisure, that can be revived and demonstrated in modernity in order to attract audiences. For example, Saturnalia, Lupercalia, Equirria, Bona Dea, the circus, the amphitheater and the theatre, children's and adults games, games of chance, etc. Saturnalia is maybe the best known as it relates to Christmas celebrations.

⁶ For more info about the Roman leisure activities can be delivered from the site <https://gloriaderoma.com/en/the-leisure-in-rome/>.

In Rome, SATURNALIA was celebrated from December 17 to 23 and culminated with the celebration of the Unconquered Sun. The slaves exchanged their role with the lords. In these days, all Romans had had good food, free days, no work, no trials, no government meetings. People exchanged gifts and held large public and free banquets in the forum.

Prior to Christianity, Saturnalia festivities demonstrated the notorious Roman hedonism. People removed the shackles of the strict social order, emancipated themselves from restraints and embarked on long orgies and pleasures.

2.2 Possible thematic tourism options

One of the main goals of the development of tourism along the original Roman border on the river Danube is to use the cultural and historical potential of the area. The natural, socio-economic aspect is also related to this. The Limes Romanus phenomenon unites the countries along the Danube. Planning a sustainable tourism system should be an interregional cross-border task and priority, but should be based on local potentials and opportunities in each city and place, and therefore an interregional strategy based on the various sites of Roman heritage is needed.

The historical potential can be attractive especially for a group of visitors looking for historical knowledge but also less demanding sports, healthy and experiential gastronomy, contact with nature. Regional-rural tourism or tourism connected with small and medium-sized cities outside the centers of mass tourism caters to groups of people who prefer opportunities for relaxation near their corner (1, max. 2 hours), short-term recreation (weekend tourism, more frequent recreation during the year). The number of tourists with such preferences has increased significantly in European countries over the years.

2.3 Heritage tourism

Cultural tourism is a relatively new discipline of cultural management, the primary purpose of which is to encourage and motivate people to travel and learn about local cultural values in order to better understand and respect them. However, cultural tourism can also be interpreted by a number of other definitions, which follow from different angles. For example, in

terms of economics, cultural tourism is marketed cultural and artistic objects that have both cultural and economic value. From an organizational point of view, this means connecting several sectors, which gives us, for example, the cultural industry, which has recently seen the fastest growth on the world market.

From the aspect of tourism, cultural tourism, the movement of tourists is stimulated by cultural reasons, while from the aspect of culturology it is primarily a presentation of cultural heritage but also a presentation of contemporary cultural production.

From an educational point of view, such travel is a way to research, become acquainted with and become acquainted with new knowledge about the national and local cultural values of the environment being visited. This is exactly the reason why workshops, seminars, and various other educational contents are often on offer. In terms of marketing, cultural tourism is defining the image of the city, its status and rating. Taking all these aspects into account, we find that cultural tourism includes a cultural offer that includes attractive cultural and artistic content, both those related to the daily life of the local environment, their customs and traditions, festivals and presentations, and those related to the presentation of cultural monuments, and everything that sets the city apart from others.

The Danube River and the Roman heritage of Limes Romanus connect ten European countries, spoken in about twenty different languages and have different cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenon of the former fortified border of the Roman Empire is manifested



not only by the existence of the rest of the fortifications, but also by the findings of technical infrastructure, civil settlements and a tradition linked to the diverse and rich social life of the ancient Romans.

Fig. 3. Limes Day in Gerulata, Rusovce. (Source: Bratislava City Museum)

2.4 Thematic festivals and events

There are numerous festivals, traditional celebrations and entertainment events in the towns and villages along Danube, which meet Past and Present by Expressions of Modernity. These events are scenes for demonstrating cultural heritage and traditions.

The role of the festivals is very important as they successfully fulfill the mission of preserving ancient monuments (castles, etc.) from oblivion, popularize ancient history and culture, preserve the memory of our proud ancestors - Thacians, fearless Romans and mysterious Goths and Celts, who lived along Danube in ancient times. The festivals are attractive events for lovers of history, culture, ancient crafts, adventures, antique culinary recipes, weapons, disappeared languages and tribes and curious facts and an excellent opportunity to strengthen and promote cultural tourism.

The festivals, dedicated to the Roman legacy, where gladiator battles and civil life are demonstrated and scenes are played are becoming more and more popular on the Limes Romanus territory. One of them, Bulgarian "Historia Vivens", held in Svishtov is included in the European History Record of Historical Restorations. The event has an international character and attracts participants from various Danube countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Italy, etc. It includes a rich program for kids as well.





Fig. 4. "Historia Vivens", held in Svishtov is included in the European History Record of Historical Restorations (Source: CHI)



Fig. 5. Tomis Ancient Festival – Constanta, Romania
(Source: <http://danubelimes-robgeu/images/caten.pdf>)



Fig. 6. Roman Festival – Römerfest in Carnuntum, Austria
(Source: <https://www.carnuntum.at/de/roemerfest>)



Fig. 7. Savaria Historical Carnival in Szombathely
(Source: <https://xpatloop.com/channels/2019/08/hungarian-town-szombathely-to-host-savaria-historical-carnival.html>)

2.5 Gastronomy, wine

Like other aspects of the Danube life, gastronomy is also a good example of mixing and sharing different cultures: many food specialities in more than one country, while a common approach to gastronomy is characteristic of neighbouring regions.

Gastronomy of the Danube region is, above all, defined by the wines made and served here. The vine-growing tradition of Roman origin, common to the former provinces of the Danube. Austria's most famous wine regions overlook the Danube River, from the westernmost slopes of the Wachau and Kremstal to the metropolis vineyard hills above Vienna, the Capital. Organized viticulture in the lands that became Hungary dates back more than two thousand years.

For example: The Hungarian tribes responsible for developing the local wine culture were deeply influenced by traditions brought from Central Asia, Roman practices, and advanced methods from Western Europe. Ancient cultivars from the East that adapted best to the region's diverse, often volcanic soils are partly why Hungarian wines are so distinctive. By the 16th

century, Hungarian wines were the toast of Europe and the favourites of royal courts. The grape cultivation in Croatia pre-dated the Romans by several hundred years, and grew more substantial and organized under the Roman Empire. Vineyards and winemaking survived invasions by marauding tribes and the anti-alcohol policies of the reaches of the Ottoman Empire.



Fig. 8. Tutrakan fish and culinary festival (Source: Tutrakan Tourism Association)

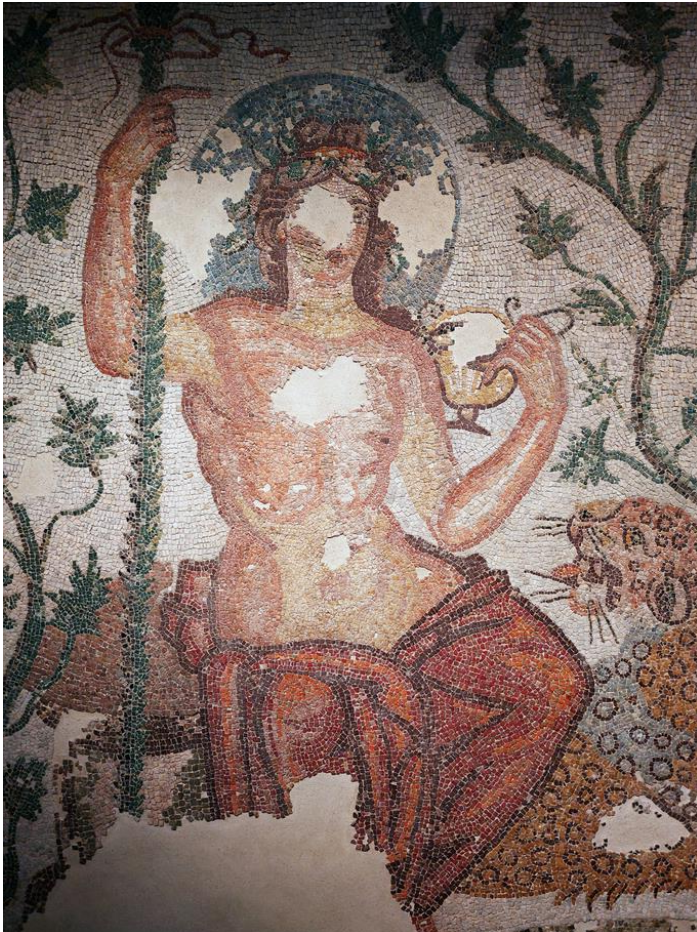


Fig. 9. Roman mosaic depicting Dionysus sitting on the back of a leopard (3rd-4th century AD). Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route - Serbia (Source: Zaječar National Museum Serbia.)

Traditions in culinary and gastronomy could be a great contributor to promotion of heritage along Danube and to present the interrelations between the culinary heritage and the cultural and natural heritage, it allows establishment of Creative practices.

Increasingly, regional attractiveness is being measured by travelers' culinary experiences. As the most visible connection between cultural and natural heritage, local food and gastronomy are gaining better space in tourism industry, pulling ahead artisan businesses (decoration, souvenirs, etc.). This tendency should be captured by rural communities, many of which struggle with urbanization and suffer from shifts in traditional economies. Home food and gastronomy can be employed as a driver for business innovation and a learning competitive impulse to capture this tendency.

2.6 Bicycle tourism

Cyclists consider exploring and active recreation as their holiday destinations. They plan their routes to visit different places and get to as many monuments as possible. A Western European survey has shown that cyclists spend 15% more days than average tourists because they pay more for local services and products because they are only able to carry a limited amount of luggage. The sections of the Danube cycle routes in the nation states are among the most expensive and most of them are part of the European cycle route Eurovelo6 with a total length of 3,652 kilometers.



Fig. 10. The velo tour “Gladiators on bike” of Dunav Ultra (Source: Dunav Ultra)



Fig. 11. Deutsche Limes Strasse - German Limes Cycle Path

(Source: <https://www.limesstrasse.de/fileadmin/limesstrasse/images2019/home/radweg.jpg>)

Cycling is a fast-growing segment of sustainable tourism and is gaining more and more supporters. For example, in Bulgaria: An innovative itinerary and a good practice in sustainable tourism in Bulgaria are the activities of the NGO ‘Dunav Ultra’,⁷ which organizes thematic routes along the 740 km Danube river banks of Bulgaria to the Black sea. The tours of Dunav Ultra are based on local history, culture and nature. Its enthusiastic members also execute valorisation of specific elements of heritage and actively communicate and publicize their activities to boost sustainable tourism. One of their tours, organized in 2017, was “The gladiators on bikes”

2.7 Hiking, nature spotting, sailing, fishing on Danube

The Danube region is very diverse and rich in natural habitats, especially the remnants of floodplain forests with distinctive fauna and flora typical of river, lake and wetland environments. There are also very good conditions for specific sports - sport fishing, hunting, horseback riding and hiking, as well as the development of various forms of rural tourism, such as agrotourism. The Danube region is characterized mainly by its nature, which offers water sports such as canoeing on the Danube River, water tourism and fishing.

⁷ <https://dunavultra.com/?lang=en>

The Danube Valley is rich in natural resources, hiking ranges from day trips to guided cross-border tours and can be combined with other activities such as cycling or bird watching. The forest forests of the Black Forest, the Alpine foothills and the Pannonian Basin, the rocky canyon of the Iron Gate and the Danubian Lowland create various hiking trails for various trips.



Fig. 12. The Fiery Danube Festival, Tutrakan;
(Source: Tutrakan Tourism Development Association,
<http://tutrakan-tourism.eu/en/home.html>)

2.8 International Living Danube Limes network

2.8.1 Potential cultural routes

The Council of Europe's Cultural Route, sometimes referred to as the European Cultural Route, is a title awarded to cultural routes which, according to the Council of Europe, are recognized as important routes throughout Europe by promoting a common culture, history, memory and European integration. The Council of Europe's cultural route is not necessarily a physical path that can be traversed and may consist of cultural actors, such as museums, municipalities or local authorities, grouped under one umbrella association. The award of the title of Cultural Council of the Council of Europe paves the way for greater visibility, a network of cultural actors, or even funding

The Danube region, which connects several countries across Europe, has a high natural and historical potential for creating cultural routes. The Roman heritage of Limes Romanus is

partly covered by the existing Cultural Route - Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, which runs through Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria.

One of the goals of Living Danube Limes project is development of future Cultural Route in the Danube Region and Enhancing the visibility of the Roman heritage in the Danube Region. That is why it is necessary to establish a basic modules for future Danube Limes Cultural Route ready for implementation in a new project any time after the end of the Living Danube Limes project to link all the Danube countries in a Cultural Route. Special focus should be laid on Bulgaria and Moldova as PPs hitherto not well presented in the already existing cultural routes. The modules combine architecture, arts, history and movement of people (historic and modern) in one Cultural Route approach, based on the connecting power of the Limes Romanus with its shared common history for all Danube Region countries, including the Danube fluvial heritage as integral part of the Limes Romanus and already stressed in the Living Danube Limes project.

2.8.2 Cooperation between historical sites, parks and museums for diverting pressure away from mainstream tourism destinations

The cooperation between archaeological and historical sites, parks and museums will allow Limes Romanus locations to become destinations for non-invasive tourism. Parks and museums can valorise the natural and the cultural heritage and promote locations as the unique tourism destinations featuring itineraries overlooked by mainstream tourism.

Examples of regional cooperation and successful communication strategies for diverting pressure away from mainstream touristic destinations are the EU funded projects Sagittarius (Balkan-Mediterranean), Innovimentor (Balkan-Mediterranean), Letohrad (Slovakia), Tourist Passport, (Poland), etc. The mentioned projects organise targeted campaigns for revealing of unknown tourism locations. They enhance the visibility of cultural heritage through cooperation between historical sites, parks and museums and establish sources for policy and decision makers as well as stakeholders for development of innovative local itineraries and branding for tourism development.

3. Recommendations and new challenge

3.1 Infrastructure for sustainable tourism

The increased competitiveness of sustainable tourism with vis-à-vis other segments of the travel industry means coping with the seasonality. The best results are achieved when stakeholders work together for identifying new products and businesses opportunities, improving the accessibility infrastructure and targeted marketing.

Where there is no yet a modern transport infrastructure, a new life to old transport infrastructure (old trains, carriages, driven by horses and mules, etc.) and other opportunities to bring tourists from one place to another can be re-designed. In this way, tourism can become very inspirational for new audiences in the less developed locations along Danube.

3.2 Is sustainable tourism compatible with COVID?

The regional sustainable tourism strategies can be revised to comply with the COVID realities. The adaptive measures could be:

- Storytelling - for increasing the attractiveness of the localities as safe destinations;
- Enhanced promotion of the hidden cultural assets;
- Marketing of locally produced products;
- Partnership with local food providers.

Tourism statistics show, that in the pandemic times the small B&B's and hotels that have a sustainability focus achieved good results in the past tourism seasons, which is a testimony for compatibility of sustainable tourism with the pandemia conditions.

3.3 European support for sustainable tourism to be considered by the Limes Romanus sites

In the coming EU funding period (2021-2027) sustainable tourism will not have a dedicated EU budget line. Nevertheless, being a cross-cutting subject related to thematic

objectives of regional development and cohesion policy, it will be supported by European structural and investment funds (e.g. European Regional Development Fund, ERDF and the European Social Fund, ESF). Support from the LIFE Program and the Connecting Europe Facility, CEF will be available as well for sustainable tourism parameters of projects.

The European Tourism Convention in 2020 confirmed the EU commitment to assist tourism to recover. The consideration was that the pandemic provides opportunities for sustainable tourism so that the tourism sector can be managed by using advantages of the green and digital transformations pursued by the European Green Deal.

The next EU territorial cooperation gives considerable opportunities by offering the possibility to learn about and adopt good practices for sustainable tourism.

The territorial cooperation provides for:

- Creation of innovative sustainable itineraries
- Identification of elements of heritage that can help to jointly initiate creative cultural experiences;
- Cooperation for successful implementation of new models and practices;
- Creative communication of the less known features of heritage using quality interpretation;
- Dynamic valorization of cultural and natural heritage routes, driven by new demands. Responsibility for the sustainable tourism accessibility infrastructure (digitalization, transport, food, shops, lodging, entertainment, etc.);
- Development of time-bounded strategies for management of joint tourism offers;
- Peer reviews and training for quality tourism reception and hospitality;

3.4 Smart instruments for sustainability of tourism

One of the smart instruments for sustainability of tourism is storytelling and quality interpretation. The rich legacy of the Limes Romanus allows to make the most of its past for the destination and tourism development of the Danube region. The Living Danube Limes culture and history are the factors that shape the destination's identity and enhance the tourism experience. Tourism establishments can derive inspiration from the destination's history and

culture for introduction of new tourism products, especially for the sites which do not have a lot of tourism, yet.

Next to the thematic events and festivals, where historical reenactment would be the most spectacular performance for the viewers, some other ground-breaking experiences could become part of the local tourism offer, e.g. Roman leisure and recreational practices, for example. Past memories and pleasures can be re-established in modernity to remote parts, involving local citizens alongside the professionals. The Living Danube Limes sites need not only to impress the local audience, but also to enchant the international ones.

Implementation of sustainable tourism concepts for distinguishing the Living Danube Limes requires significant uptake of knowledge by local actors – public and private (tourism and culture operators). With trainings in personal, non-personal and live interpretation, individual Living Danube Limes sites along the Danube will be offered the art of nurturing art. Guidance in quality experiences' creation needs to be also offered to the sites. In this way, sustainability of tourism concepts will be guaranteed. And, the attendees at events and festivals will be never bored.

3.5 Motivation for sustainability engagements and how to support tourism operators and stakeholders in establishment of sustainable tourism practices

Sustainable tourism is a creative tourism. We explored the effectiveness of sustainability learning tools on the uptake of sustainability practices among tourism businesses and cultural heritage operators. The findings confirmed the importance of networking and roving schooling for specific thematic learning. There is a need for actions to be taken by governments, public bodies, etc., to stimulate businesses to adopt sustainable operational practices. Businesses, though, should not wait for such actions to materialize.

The tourism sector is involving mostly small operators. Centre for Heritage Interpretation (CHI) researched the small tourism enterprises and concluded that, so far, the governmental measures for assisting sustainable tourism are mostly focused on the environment. The effective

measures towards sustainability are specific for each tourism or cultural operator. Learning by doing proved to be one of the winning formats for achieving sustainability.

Customised advisory on the spot by experts proved to be also very efficient with a long term behavioral effect for establishing creative tourism experiences and transmitting good entrepreneurial models and practices. One of the conclusions logically falls in the domain of policy and decision makers, who are responsible for the future of the tourism sector. Small tourism operators are usually neglected in the governmental policies, as they are considered too small. Likewise, these operators think the impact of sustainability measures will be insignificant for them. Having in mind that the small tourism and cultural heritage operators represent around 90% of all tourism businesses, their sustainability behavior is crucial to the whole industry.

Central policies should inspire tourism operators to take sustainability seriously. And, planners are to focus on upgrading the capacity of human factors, which is crucial in motivating companies to engage in long-term sustainability.

Peers' business exchange and network learning, envisaged by the Living Danube Limes is crucial for the motivation for long-term tourism sustainability of cultural operators. Networking brings learning by doing at a priority level for tourism establishments, as learning in the area of sustainability is a process rather than an one-step action.

Well known instruments for sustainability learning are various certification systems, for example::

- EMAS Eco-management and Audit Scheme certification of the EU
(<https://wegate.eu/start/market-access-operations/emas-eco-management-and-audit-scheme-certification/>)
- Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) of UN
(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=1495>)
- Sustainable Tourism Certification for Businesses
(<https://greensteptourism.com/tourism-businesses/business-certification/>)
- Green Tourism (<https://www.green-tourism.com/about-us>)
- ECEAT - European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism
(<http://www.eceat.org/>)
- etc.

The mentioned systems are applied when tourism actors recognize that the sustainability factor is important for their activity. These systems offer knowledge assuming it will lead to increased sustainability engagement, but this doesn't automatically happen.

4. Best-practise examples on sustainable tourism

In the following part of the study, we offer you some good examples of implementing measures or organizing events that contribute to sustainable tourism. For the tourism industry, these visions are described in terms of three areas of activity – technology, regionality and identity culture – and with regard to effective visitorhost relations. They describe aspirational conditions that are not to be achieved without effort, and whose *objectives are to be pursued as a priority*.⁸

We could divide visions of sustainable tourism into several groups:

- Technology Vision
- Regionality and Identity Culture Vision
- Vision for effective visitorhost relations

Gasztrohős app: your guide to all things sustainable, Budapest – Technology Vision

Use of new communication technologies for the benefit of sustainable tourism. An example of a mobile application used in Budapest for all tourists as well as city residents. Download the app to find all local markets, organic stores, community gardens, sustainable gastro places, and much more. The focus is sustainable food, but you can find other valuable information too. Advertising text from the website offers:” The coolest thing about sustainable tourism? It connects you to locals who share your values and outlook on life. Enjoy the new connections, and take home a piece of green Budapest with you! Gólya and Auróra, the two Budapest social hubs that carry a bunch of the coolest sustainable events, will be the topic of a new post soon. Check them out for the ultimate local experience with a commitment for social change!“

Villa Vita Pannonia, Pamhagen , Austria - Technology Vision

The history of VILA VITA Hotels dates back to 1980, the year the first teams of ‘Deutsche Vermögensberatung’ began to travel to Austria. Dr Reinfried Pohl, with his wife Anneliese and

⁸ Sustainability in tourism. A position paper and basis for discussions From the Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO), 2012

their two sons, regularly took teams of financial advisors and their families to Pannonia in the Austrian Burgenland. Pannonia thus represents the cradle of this exquisite, small hotel group that today includes five hotels and a vineyard. In 2009, the hotel was awarded the national prize for tourism for its “Eco-Tourist Centre for Renewable Energies” project. In the “Eco-Tourist Centre”, visitors can learn about sourcing alternative energy, visit the biomass heating plant and get information about photovoltaic systems and solar collectors.⁹



Fig. 13. Vila Vita Pannonia Hotel in Pamhagen, Austria
(Source: http://www.vilavitahotels.com/rw_vv/main.asp?WebID=vv_pannonia3)

⁹ http://www.vilavitahotels.com/rw_vv/main.asp?WebID=vv_pannonia3

Roman Games in Gerulata, Slovakia - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

The Roman military camp in Rusovce, the Gerulata Castellum, is a national cultural monument. In the first centuries AD, the camp was part of the northern border of the Roman Empire, the so-called Limes Romanus.

Roman games on the grounds of the Rusovce Manor Park and the Gerulata Castellum in Rusovce bring a glimpse into the history of ancient Rome. The ancient history is revived. Visitors will get a first-hand experience of the way people enjoyed life in the ancient Rome - it was not only about the fights of gladiators, but also about fashion, delicious meals, and drinks, exuberant entertainment and extensive philosophizing too.



Fig. 14. Limes Day, Roman games in Gerulata 2011 (Source: TASR)

Savaria Historical Carnival, Hungary - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

Szombathely is one of the oldest settlements in Hungary founded by Emperor Claudius around 50 A.D. Then known as Savaria, it is the only settlement in the Carpathian Basin which has been continually inhabited ever since its Roman foundation.

Evoking the spirit of Pannonia's ancient past, the Savaria historical carnival with 30 free Carnival venues and nearly 350 programmes is a bright spot in the wide range of summer festivals. Here, visitors are more than spectators, they're invited to participate by traveling

backwards in time to a grand, bygone era and slip into costumes to join the colourful carnival whirl. An unmatched range of unique cultural, musical and authentic traditional events await the visitors.



Fig. 15. Savaria Historical Carnival, Szombathely, Hungary
(Source: <https://www.festivalfinder.eu/festivals/savaria-historical-carnival>)

Historia Vivens in Svishtov, Bulgaria - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

For several years already in the ancient fortress Novae in Svishtov a Festival of Ancient Heritage is organized. It was included in the European History Record of Historical Restorations, "Historia Vivens". During the festival, gladiator battles and demonstrations of Roman artillery are performed. Scenes from Roman and Greek authors are played.

Traditionally, there are participants from Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Russia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and others.





Fig. 16. "Historia Vivens", held in Svishtov is included in the European History Record of Historical Restorations (Source: Center for Heritage Interpretation)

The festival successfully fulfills the mission of preserving Novae from oblivion, popularizing ancient history and culture, preserving the memory of our proud ancestors, the Thracians, fearless Romans and mysterious Goths, living on the Lower Danube Bulgarian lands. The festival is an attractive event for lovers of history, culture, ancient crafts, adventures, antique culinary recipes, antiquity weapons, disappeared languages and tribes and curious facts. The program of the festival includes famous past events such as the great battle between Romans and barbarians, antique dances, virtuoso horse riding demonstrations, a parade on the streets of Svishtov, etc.



Fig. 17. "Historia Vivens", held in Svishtov is included in the European History Record of Historical Restorations (Source: Center for Heritage Interpretation)

During the festival prizes are awarded for "Contribution to the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage" and "Contribution to the promotion of the cultural and historical heritage". Among the winners are cultural actors, archaeologists, ambassadors and others. The festival becomes a major international event designed to promote antiquity history from the time of Ancient Rome and Ancient Thracian through historical reenactments, archaeological forums, and cultural tourism.

The Ancient Roman and Thracian heritage festival attracts participation of more than 300 reenactors from Italy, France, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. One of them, the most numerous group of foreign reenactors is the world famous Gruppo Storico Romano from Rome, Italy. Folklore groups perform, accompanied by applause of the people.

The River on Fire (The Flaming Danube) Festival , Bulgaria - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

One of the most attractive summer events along Lower Danube, which takes place in Tutrakan at the end of July/early August, in the riverside park, is "The River on Fire Festival".



Fig. 18. "The River on Fire", festival held in Tutrakan.

(Source: Center for Heritage Interpretation)

Celebrations include a variety of cultural and sporting events, e.g. fishing boats' racing, swimming across Danube, culinary competitions, (with a separate competition for most delicious fish soup), competition for boza drinkers (boza is a Turkish/oriental drink, inherited from Ottomans), open-air exhibitions, plenty of performances of folk dance and music, etc. Every year,

new entertainments are added. In 2017, these were scooter rides, paragliding, an organized cruise ship between Tutrakan and Romanian Oltenitsa, etc.

A significant cultural achievement of the festival is the open-air opera performance, which creates a very special perception and feeling for listeners and viewers.

Later at the evening, the event continues with rock concerts on the pier, and when it becomes completely dark, the light and fire show on the river starts, ending with an impressive firework over the darkened Danube.

In 2017, popular singers and musicians from Bulgaria and abroad, left over 3000 visitors fully exhausted! Folk ensembles from Argentina, Guam Island, Dervishi from Turkey and Bulgarian Dobrudjan folklore groups presented, with a lot of great mood and emotion, the authentic color of their songs and dances, too.

Tomis ancient festival, Constanta, Romania - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

The festival aims at promoting the ancient lifestyle as well as the Roman cultural and historical heritage of the area and the ancient city of Tomis.

Visitors can partake in diverse activities related to ancient arts and crafts, pottery-making workshops, metal-working and can also get acquainted with ancient textiles and clothing, gastronomy, military equipment, leather. The program includes music and dance performances as well as cultural excursions to the historic part of Constanta.



Fig. 19. Tomis Ancient Festival – Constanta, Romania
(Source: <http://danubelimes-robg.eu/images/caten.pdf>)

Roman City of Carnuntum – Roman Festival - Regionality and Identity Culture Vision

From the 1st to the 4th century AD, Carnuntum was a significant Roman metropolis on the border of the Roman Empire. Carnuntum became the capital of the province of Pannonia Superior with about 50,000 inhabitants because of its militarily vital location for securing the border and its proximity to key trade routes. Goal is to vividly present the history and basic scientific research associated with the Roman City of Carnuntum. Antiquity comes alive again in the Roman city quarter with its reconstructed ancient buildings as well as in the amphitheaters and Museum Carnuntinum, the city's treasure chamber.¹⁰

The Roman Festival in Carnuntum is the historical .Roman life at its best awaits visitors, with no wish left unfulfilled even for loyal regular visitors. An extensive programme is offered in the Roman quarter, so that visitor can immerse himself in a world of legions, barbarians and gladiators.



¹⁰ <https://www.carnuntum.at/en/roman-city-of-carnuntum>

Fig. 20. Roman Festival in Carnuntum, Austria. (Source: <https://www.carnuntum.at>)

Tour International Danubien, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria - Vision for effective visitorhost relations

Tour takes place on the river Danube. The current route starts off since 1968 on the second last weekend of June in Ingolstadt, from where it leads through the co-organising countries Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. It terminates in the first week of September after 2516 kilometers in SF Gheorge at the Black Sea.

The political importance of the TID is immense. Its main target, set from the beginning, was to bring together people from diverse cultures with all their political, religious and ideological differences. Furthermore, friendships should be built, the solidarity among all sportsmen and people of other countries should be strengthened, and amisty and peace of people, especially the Danube countries, should be promoted.



Fig. 21. Tour International Danubien. Crossing Serbia. (Source: Bärbel Lehmann)

Deutsche Limes Strasse, Germany - Vision for effective visitorhost relations

At its foundation in 1995 the aim of the German Limes Road association was to create a touristic route for motorists. Meanwhile more than 90 towns and boroughs are members of the association chaired by the Lord Mayor of Aalen as well as numerous districts and tourism

alliances. It manages not only the German Limes Road but also the later on created German Limes Cycle Path.

On the German Limes Road as well as on the 900 kms-long Cycle Path the travellers cross a variety of different natural landscapes and will meet, besides the Roman monuments, many sights dating back to different epochs. Special signposts and information signs will lead them to particular monuments and information points.

Furthermore the association provides support for its members and the museums along the Limes in event management and public relations. Meanwhile it has taken the responsibility for the long-standing Limes Hiking Trail, which was maintained by hiking associations before. By advertising and supporting the maintenance of this path, the association now promotes also the discovery tour along the Limes on foot.



Fig. 22. Deutsche Limes Strasse - German Limes Cycle Path

(Source: <https://www.limesstrasse.de/fileadmin/limesstrasse/images2019/home/radweg.jpg>)

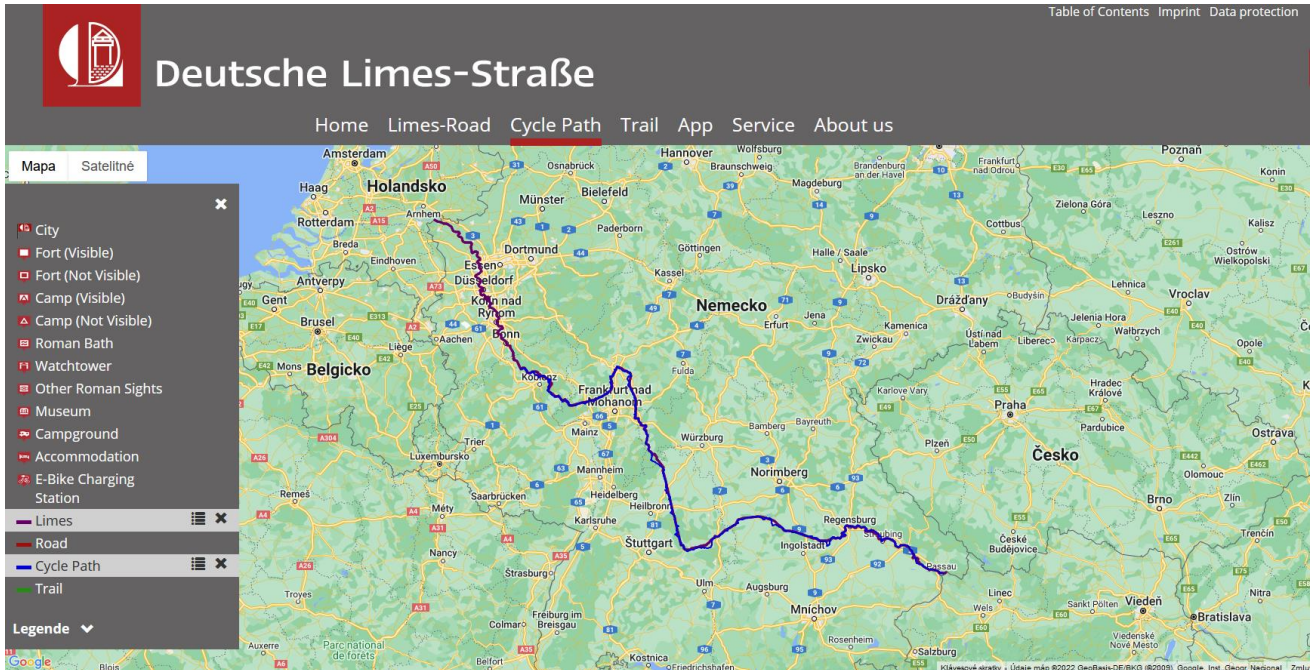


Fig. 23. Deutsche Limes Strasse - German Limes Cycle Path – webpage.

(Source: <https://www.limesstrasse.de/en/deutsche-limes-strasse/cycle-path>)

Conclusion

The sites of the Roman heritage of Limes Romanus on the Danube River are certainly not among the most visited tourist destinations - compared to the world's famous tourist attractions. Nevertheless, building tourism on the principles of sustainable tourism is very important and prudent. Sustainable tourist concepts bring not only the obvious protection of natural and cultural heritage, but also, in addition to building a quality socio-cultural level of society, an increase in the economic level and self-sufficiency of the region. The recent inscription of Limes Romanus as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO) and its possible expansion in the future increases the tourist potential of Roman sites, but also brings with it threats and problems for which it is good to be prepared.

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