



Explore, Experience and Enjoy: Learning Tours in the Black Sea Basin Region



The benefits of exchange visits and learning tours are numerous, far more than just acquiring information. An intellectual and physical journey creates common understanding, relationships forged in the fun and hardships of shared experience, commitments to new approaches, and friendships as foundation for future networking. Such visits enable travelers and hosts to focus time and attention on a topic, learn deeply, share ideas, and assess the relevance of new approaches.

In the framework of the Promoting Innovative Rural Tourism (PIRT) Project co-funded by the European Union four learning tours were organized in partner countries: Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkey.

These tours were organized to enable tourism service providers and representatives of travel agencies to come together, explore the specifics of rural tourism of partner countries and share their best practice.

The learning tour to Armenia enabled the participants to discover

the beauty of Armenia, the potential for further development of rural tourism in the country. The regional group visited touristic attractions of Armenia such as Khor Virap, Ukhtasar, Jermuk, Lake Sevan etc.

In Bulgaria the participants visited Nature park of Golden Sands, Baba Radka's rural guesthouse, a bee farm in the village of Kosharitsa, Aladja mediaeval Orthodox Christian cave monastery, Botanic garden in Balchik, ceramic art shop near Albena resort and Nessebar - a UNESCO heritage site.

The Georgian tour gave an opportunity to visit Mtsketa), Bodbe, pheasant Tear's wine cellar in Signaghi, Simonay Zaoty (a small rural complex where the visitors have the opportunity to try traditional Georgian food and get acquainted with the specifics of Georgian culture from inside), Nunu's farm house (amazing combination of winery, museum and restaurant) in Velistsikhe, 16th century Gremi monastery, medieval cave city of Vardzia, Gvirabi wine cellar in Kvareli, Twins Wine

Cellar in Napareuli, Prometheus cave in Kutaisi, eco-cottages in Borjomi. The group also had an amazing opportunity to participate in experiential learning on Georgian suluguni cheese in mini-factories in Tsalka and Poka.

In Turkey the regional group of tourism service providers and representatives of travel agencies visited Karaca cave in Gumushane, Aydintepe Underground City in Bayburt, Baksi museum, Bayburt Castle, Uzungol lake in the south of Trabzon, Ozcay tea Factory in Trabzon, Historical Bridges Along Firtina Valley, Gelintulu Waterfall and Ayder Plateau, Sumela Monastery.

These exchange visits provided wonderful opportunity to travel agents and tourism sector service providers from Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Bulgaria to get involved in the regional network of tourism sector service providers and discuss opportunities of future cooperation within and beyond the frameworks of the project.

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