

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS BETTER PROTECTED



Seven Central and Eastern European countries have recently adopted the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, aimed to protect and manage better the Carpathian Mountain range.

The Carpathian Convention was formed in 2003 by the seven European countries that share the striking Carpathian Mountain range. Ministers representing Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine decided to join forces to guarantee sustainable development of tourism in this unique area, while also protecting its ecosystem.

Tourism is a key industry for the region and coordinated action aimed to improve management of such a natural treasure will benefit all parties.

The Carpathians feature striking sceneries and are favored by white-water enthusiasts. Local ecosystem needs to be conserved as the mountains are home to some large mammals such as brown bear, wolf, and lynx. Also, European bison, moose, wildcat are frequent there and birdwatchers may find golden eagles, eagle owl or black grouse. Many rare species of insects live there too.

As Slovakia took over presidency of the Carpathian Convention at the recent meeting in Bratislava, the seven countries adopted the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, initially drafted by UNWTO and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

As an international convention, its initiative aims to improve international cooperation and establish a common strategy which will have positive long-term impact on the Carpathian ecosystem, its biodiversity as well as local tourism.

Slovakia will continue to preside over the convention until 2014. Until then, the policy will hopefully be followed and as some countries are members of the EU, they will have an opportunity to find funding for individual sustainability projects from which the entire Carpathian range will profit.

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