

Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism Awards 2024

Winners



**EUROPEAN
TRAVEL
COMMISSION**



NECSTour
European Regions for
Competitive and Sustainable Tourism



Accessibility to Heritage


Cittadella Visitor Accessibility

By Historia Travel for Cittadella City Council, Italy

Cittadella, a medieval town in northern Italy founded in 1220, is notable for its unique elliptical, fully accessible to all visitors medieval walkway. In 2023 Cittadella was ranked the 5th Best European Destination.

In partnership with the Veneto Region's Tourism Department and Historia Travel, Cittadella has established a model for cultural tourism that prioritises inclusivity. All the sites are accessible to visitors with reduced mobility or in wheelchairs, and two 3D tactile models with the names of the towers and monuments written in Braille, are available inside the Tower of Malta for visually impaired visitors.

Furthermore, Cittadella has been included in the regional project for the design and printing of a paper guide using Augmented Alternative Communication (AAC). This project aimed to make the city's history accessible to tourists with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and local students, by means of Widgit Literacy Symbols, pictograms, and easy-to-read texts.

 <https://muradicittadella.it/>

First prize ex-aequo

Wow - Wonderful Wintergarden

By Kempens Landschap, Belgium

Tucked away in the Mechelen region in Flanders, Belgium, is the Winter Garden of the Ursuline sisters, an unparalleled gem of *Art Nouveau*.

In its heyday, this international boarding school for girls had a very strong reputation for its '*art à l'école style*' – a unique learning environment that familiarised the students with masterpieces of art.

Today, much of the listed school buildings are still in use as a secondary school, but the former '*hospitality*' wing, once serving as a high-end lounge for the families of the students, has become a heritage attraction.

Kempens Landschap (foundation), VZW Wintertuin (association/NGO), the Municipalities of Sint-Katelijne-Waver and Mechelen, the Flanders Heritage Agency and Visit Flanders (DMO) collaborated to transform this once almost inaccessible heritage site into a fully accessible and permanently visitable cultural heritage gem.

 <https://www.visitwintertuin.be/>

Second prize

Modernism Architecture: The Optimistic Narrative of Kaunas

By Visit Kaunas, Kaunas IN, Lithuania

The project is a collection of different actions united by one subject: the modernist architecture of Kaunas, which encapsulates the spirit of the first independent Republic of Lithuania.

The architecture is a testament to a significant period in the development of a modern state during the interwar period and reflects the city's contemporary psyche, including advancements in higher education, sports, culture, and other aspects of society.

The way this heritage is preserved and celebrated in contemporary Kaunas serves as a remarkable model of a city embracing and enabling its history.

Examples of this approach include the UNESCO Award, the project's inclusion in the European Capital of Culture Programme in 2022, the great success of experiential tours in meticulously recreated interiors, and a successful restoration scheme that includes adaptations for people with disabilities.

 visit.kaunas.lt



Third prize

From the Middle Ages to the Future: an Accessible Montagnana for All

By Municipality of Montagnana, Italy

The medieval walled city of Montagnana, located in the region of Veneto, has been working for years to make its landmarks accessible to as many visitors as possible, with a focus on fostering inclusion for people with various disabilities, both physical and cognitive.

Among the various solutions adopted, Montagnana has created a printed guidebook about the city in AAC, installed Braille models at the Tourist Information Office and in main attractions, added ramps and a lift for wheelchair users, and organised tours in Italian Sign Language (SL) for deaf and hearing-impaired visitors.

Additionally, a new project has begun to produce five promotional videos of the city in Italian SL to be published online, designed to meet the needs of people with different disabilities.

All these initiatives have been carried out with the support and financial resources of the local municipality, the cultural association Murabilia, and various public calls for bids and projects financed by the Veneto region.

 www.visitmontagnana.com





Intangible Heritage, Including Festivals

First prize

Ireland's Dingle Peninsula Cultural Calendar of Events

By Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance,
Ireland

The Dingle Peninsula (*Corca Dhuibhne*), a picturesque Irish-speaking region in County Kerry, extends 30 miles into the Atlantic as Ireland's most westerly point. It comprises one town and 19 villages, each unique in character and unified in their effort to preserve rich cultural traditions through various annual festivals enjoyed by both locals and visitors. The Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance (CTCD/DPTA) champions sustainable and regenerative tourism through a volunteer-driven, part-time operated structure.

Representing primarily family-run businesses and community groups, CTCD/DPTA is committed to embedding sustainable practices across tourism activities while fostering community well-being and cultural engagement.

Their efforts are showcased in the past 32 years commitment organizing community-driven festivals celebrating the Irish language, folklore, and local crafts that capture the essence of

life deeply connected to both land and sea.

Among some of the annual community events those that stand out are *Féile Bheag Filíochta* (February), the award-winning community arts festival *Féile Na Bealtaine* (May), traditional Regatta of *Fionn Trá of Ventry, Ballydavid, Brandon, Maharees* and *Dingle* throughout the summer, *Dingle Races* (August), *Camp Sheep Fair* (September), *Dingle Food Festival* (October) and the *Wren* (December).

These festivals not only bolster the local economy but also extend the tourism season, contributing to the sustainability of local businesses and promoting the Dingle Peninsula as a model for responsible tourism.

 <https://www.dingle-peninsula.ie/>



Second prize

Liget Budapest in the City Park of Budapest

By Városliget Corp, Visitor and Event Management Group, Hungary



The Liget Budapest Project is currently Europe's largest-scale and most complex cultural urban, leisure and tourism development project.

It consists of a cultural quarter and destination being built in the 150-year-old City Park of Budapest. The redevelopment of the World Heritage Site Heroes' Square and its 100-hectare park aims to renew and extend the park's green areas, recreation functions, and centuries-old institutions.

Thanks to the developments completed in the project's first ten years, the City Park, with its museums, exhibition venues, zoo, thermal bath, ice rink, circus, sports grounds, and playgrounds, it offers numerous recreational activities for visitors.

The Liget Budapest project is the first in Hungary to achieve the "Communities" level of BREEAM certification, focusing on sustainability across its entire development.

The project utilises geothermal energy and innovative cooling systems, such as repurposing the ice rink's system for the House of Music. An important step towards improving the environmental sustainability of the park was the elimination of surface car parking. Visitors can use the Museum's underground car park, built as part of the project.

Over 250.000 square metres of green space have been restored, and energy-efficient, smart management systems further reduce the park's ecological footprint.

Inclusive planning included consultations with 118 organisations, institutions and communities.

Additionally, the project promotes social responsibility through disability-friendly initiatives, educational programmes, and charitable partnerships with local organisations.

 <https://ligetbudapest.hu/>

Third prize

The International Youth Art Festival “Kaleidoscope”

By City of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina



The International Youth Art Festival “Kaleidoscope” was established in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2009 as part of the “Culture II” Project, implemented by the City of Bologna, University of Bologna, and the City of Tuzla.

The Festival has been held annually, except during 2020-2021 due to COVID restrictions.

Its mission is to create harmony in diversity, reconcile contrasts, and foster dialogue among people from different backgrounds. It brings together young people from various countries to promote cultural tourism and network the creative and artistic potential of youth.

In terms of tourism sustainability and the social and environmental impact of the Festival, the workshops hosted during the event often address topics of environmental protection and raise awareness of responsible attitudes towards nature, often using street art as a medium.

With each year the Festival organizers have been involving more and more NGO’s that gather young people and offered them the opportunity to both be part of the organizing committee but also to actively participate in workshops, lectures and other activities.

 www.tztz.ba

Special mention

The International Classical Music Festival VinOpera

By Constantin Mimi Foundation,
Moldova

The International Classical Music Festival VinOpera showcases extraordinary talents and cultural richness. In 2023, it held a remarkable concert in two villages, providing free access to all.

Another captivating performance took place at the historic Mimi Castle, blending masterful music with architectural splendour.

These enchanting events embody the VinOpera Project’s commitment to inclusivity and community engagement, fostering unity through the universal language of music.

Through diverse performances and venues, the festival inspires audiences worldwide with the timeless beauty of classical music, leaving an indelible mark on hearts. VinOpera stands as a beacon of artistic excellence, illuminating the world with the transformative power of music.

 <https://constantinmimi.md/>





Digitalisation Advances in Smart and Sustainable Cultural Tourism

First prize

Digital Spotlight Heritage Timișoara By Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania

Digital Spotlight Heritage Timișoara is part of a digital cultural initiative by the Politehnica University of Timișoara, through its Digital Education Department and Multimedia Centre, in partnership with the National Museum of Banat. This project is also part of the Timișoara European Capital of Culture 2023 Cultural Programme.

Over 50 partners, including universities, high schools, museums, galleries, libraries, cultural foundations and centres, Romanian embassies, the Romanian Cultural Institute, student theatre, and DanceSport organisations from 11 countries, have contributed to its success.

The project focuses on the heritage of the five historical neighbourhoods of cosmopolitan Timișoara, highlighting its history, culture, architecture, and, most importantly, the digitally told stories of its inhabitants in their everyday—past or present—lives.

The itineraries of 110 points of interest from the neighbourhoods reveal their stories through a wide variety

of mediums, such as museum exhibitions, street exhibitions, an online website, a mobile app, AR and VR applications, NFTs, happenings, dance performances, and more—blending heritage in both digital and physical formats.

 www.spotlight-timisoara.eu www.upt.ro



Second prize

Mysteries of Submerged Villages

By Šaleška Valley Tourist Board, Slovenia



In the Secrets of the Sunken Villages product, visitors experience a virtual dive on Lake Velenje and see a digitized presentation of the surface subsidence and the formation of the lakes.

A key experience is the the tour of The Coal Mining Museum, 160 meters underground, where the guests are greeted by a grandson from on of Velenje’s miners.

Guided tour past the Škale lake and unique garden part of Velenje, ends at the final destination of Velenje lake.

This project, which involved several partners (Arctur, AV Studio and Alpe Adria Vita, Gorenje Gostinstvo, Slovenia Coal Mining Museum, Velenje Coal Mine, Velenje Water Sports Club and Velenje Museum), is a great example of the way tourism can be used to gently revitalize the industrial landscape and give it a higher added value.

Their efforts won them the BIGSEE TOURISM DESIGN award in 2022. BIG SEE is the newest and most exciting platform that systematically researches, evaluates and promotes creative projects in South-Eastern Europe.



<https://www.visitsaleska.si/en/>

Third prize

Innovative Raudondvaris: Harmonizing Digital Experiences and Cultural Heritage

By Raudondvaris Manor, Lithuania

Raudondvaris Manor harnesses digital innovation to bring history to life.

In 2024, a milestone was achieved with an AI-generated greeting from Juozas Naujalis, a historic composer born in Raudondvaris, honoring the Songs Festival centenary and bridging past and present.

Additionally, the Raudondvaris Chronicle on Facebook engaged the community in documenting and sharing local history, fostering inclusiveness and local pride. These initiatives highlight Raudondvaris Manor’s dedication to integrating digital technology with cultural heritage, creating immersive and engaging experiences for the public



www.raudondvarioldvaras.lt





Transnational Thematic Tourism Products, on Culture and Heritage

First prize

Camino Portugues Coastal Hiking Route

By Follow the Camino, Porto, Braga, Viana do Castelo (Portugal) and Galicia (Spain)

The Camino Portuguese Coastal route is an adaptation of the traditional pilgrimage ‘The Portuguese Way’ of St James to the city of Santiago de Compostela. This route runs from Porto along the Atlantic coastline to Santiago, passing through the Galicia–North Portugal Euroregion, a historic area of northern Portugal and western Spain that share numerous social, cultural, and economic ties.

A significant number of partners, including First Climate, the UN Global Compact, Agir pour un Tourisme Responsable, Galicia Destino Sostenible, and B Lab Global, contributed to creating a ‘slow’ and ‘leave no trace’ travel experience that embraces local heritage. This initiative has become a major source of economic support for local communities, which

are the direct beneficiaries of partnerships made with accommodation providers, restaurants, event operators, tour guides, taxi companies, and other local businesses.

 <https://followthecamino.com/en/>



Second prize

A Transient Legacy - Digitalization of the Silesian Regional Mining Heritage


By Coal Mining Museum in Zabrze, Poland, with ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage) Anchor Point

The Coal Mining Museum in Zabrze is one of the largest and most frequently visited tourist facilities related to industrial heritage in Poland, and a leader in coal mining heritage tourism throughout Europe.

By showcasing the history of Silesian mining, it highlights the significant impact that heavy industry has had on the development of cities, entire regions, and cultural heritage.

Today, in alignment with the regional Just Transition policies, and as part of a pioneering effort to blend technology with cultural preservation and accessibility, the Museum has launched an ambitious project to digitise all mining industry sites in the Silesia region.

To achieve this, a diverse group of stakeholders—including academic institutions, technology companies, cultural organisations, and local communities—collaborated to collect extensive documentation on the history of mining, as well as to conduct interviews with people connected to the industry, capturing the site’s human element.

 www.muzeumgornictwa.pl



Third prize

Digital Nomads in Central Istria

By Tourism Board of central Istria, Croatia

The “Digital Nomads in Central Istria” project promotes sustainable cultural tourism by integrating digital nomadism with the region’s cultural heritage, in line with the European Cultural Tourism Network’s principles. By collaborating with local stakeholders, the project aims to create social, environmental, and economic benefits for both digital nomads and the local community. The initiative seeks to extend the tourism season by attracting long-term digital nomads, offering coworking spaces, cultural immersion, and networking opportunities. The project includes a comprehensive marketing strategy aimed at raising awareness about Central Istria as a digital nomad-friendly destination while promoting sustainable tourism practices that help preserve the regions heritage and environment.

 <https://central-istria.com/en>





Coastal and Maritime Heritage for Sustainable Cultural Tourism

First prize

CLARE: A Coast | A Car | An Audio Guide On the West Coast of County Clare (Wild Atlantic Way)

By Cultural Roadmapp, Ireland

“CLARE” is a multi-award-winning audio guide app that immerses road trippers in the cultural heritage of West Clare, on Ireland’s 2600 km Wild Atlantic Way driving route. Its hands-free geofencing technology triggers mini documentaries to play over a vehicle’s audio system, offering a rich cultural-historical context to scenery, landmarks, and towns ahead. Simply connect the app via Bluetooth or charging cable, and drive. CLARE is unique in focusing on culture and heritage.

While other road trip audio guides feature narrators directing listeners to “look right” or “look left,” CLARE tells stories culled from interviews with cultural experts and ‘local heroes,’ complemented by archival and performed music, poetry, drama, and narration by acclaimed Irish actors. The content is authentic, unvarnished, and welcoming; as one reviewer noted, the experience makes you “feel a part of the place you’re visiting.”

CLARE is the first tour in “Road Trip: IRELAND,” a 4-part Wild Atlantic Way series.



<https://www.roadtripirelandapp.com>



Second prize

Community Involvement and Visitors' Experiences at the "Skiathos Maritime and Cultural Tradition Museum"

By Skiathos Maritime and Culture Tradition Museum, Skiathos Island, Northern Sporades, Greece

Wishing to keep the memory of the nautical and shipbuilding traditions of Skiathos island alive to preserve it for future generations, several retired seamen, together with the local community, founded the "Skiathos Maritime and Cultural Tradition Museum" in the Cultural Community Centre of "Bourtzi" in 2015. The museum chronicles the Island's long-standing maritime and shipbuilding heritage, tracing its history in over 600 exhibits, including ship-building tools, blueprints, and historical artefacts.

It also serves as a cultural hub, actively involving the community through volunteer programs, educational outreach, and cultural events, enhancing visitor experiences with interactive exhibits and guided tours that highlight Skiathos's rich maritime legacy.

The museum is a result of voluntary efforts by the local community and the younger generation, through social innovation, for sustainable cultural tourism development.

 <https://iloveskiathos.gr/maritime-and-culture-museum/>



Third prize

Multimedial/Interpretation Center "Man and the Sea"

By Lopar Tourist Board, Island of Rab-Lopar, Croatia

The Multimedia Center "Man and the sea" represents a true treasure of the fishing and maritime heritage of the wonderful area in which it is located, contributing to the preservation, protection and evaluation of Lopar's cultural and natural heritage.

This project, co-financed by the European Union through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, features several themed rooms including "History" "Vessels, Tools, and Techniques" "Man and the Sea" which explores the historical relationship between residents and the maritime environment, and a "Traditional Kitchen" highlighting local culinary practices through multimedia displays.

The Center also hosts workshops for children and screens promotional films on nature conservation, offering year-round free entry to boost visitors' understanding of Lopar's rich cultural and natural heritage.

 <https://lopar.com/>

