

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, which granted them the rank as the 5th Best European Destination in 2023.

In partnership with the Veneto Region's Tourism Department and Historia Travel, Cittadella has established a model for cultural tourism that prioritises inclusivity. The entrance to monuments such as the Social Theatre and Cathedral Museum is affordable and accessibility features, including wheelchair ramps and tactile models for visually impaired visitors, are available.

Furthermore, the project aims to creating a paper guide using Augmented Alternative Communication (AAC) to make the city's history accessible to tourists with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and local students, using 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, Visit Flanders (DMO) collaborated to transform this once almost inaccessible heritage site into a fully accessible and permanently visitable cultural heritage gem.

 www.kempenslandschap.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, 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 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





- 1 Old Keel Cemetery & Church
- 2 Cathair Con Raol Promontory Fort
- 3 Caisleán na Míne Airde / Minard Castle
- 4 Droichead na Gairfeanaghe / Garfinny Bridge
- 5 Caisleán Ráthánán / Rahinnane Castle
- 6 Dún Beag / Dunbeg Fort
- 7 Clocháin / Beehive Forts, Fán
- 8 Dún an Oir, Ard na Caisne
- 9 An Riasc / Reask Monastic Settlement
- 10 Sáipéilín Ghallaras / Gallarus Oratory
- 11 Cathair Deargáin Ring Forts
- 12 Cill Mhaoldháidair / Kilmalkedar Church
- 13 Baile an bhFionnraich Fort
- 14 Loch a Dúin Fortified Island
- 15 Ruins of St Senach's Church and cross slab
- 16 Killellon Oratory

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 westernmost 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 32 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 naomhóg regattas of Ventry, Ballydavid, Brandon, Maharees and Dingle throughout the summer, Dingle Races (August), Camp Sheep Fair (September), Dingle Food Festival (October) and “the Wren” in 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 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. 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 BREEAM "Communities" 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. Fossil fuel heating and cooling have been eliminated, and 1,500 cars are kept out of the park with underground parking solutions. 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, incorporating community feedback. 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.

 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 four 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.upt.ro



Second prize

Mysteries of Submerged Villages

By Šaleška Valley Tourist Board, Slovenia



In the Mysteries of Submerged Villages product, visitors experience a train tour of The Coal Mining Museum, which showcases Šaleška Valley's authentic identity as an ancient coal mine, followed by a sailing tour on Velenje lake. During the tour, they virtually dive into the history of the villages that began to sink due to intensive ore mining in the 1950s and are now completely underwater.

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 revitalise 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. It represents a unique community for discussing and developing the cultural, economic, and political roles of the region and their impact on the globalised world.

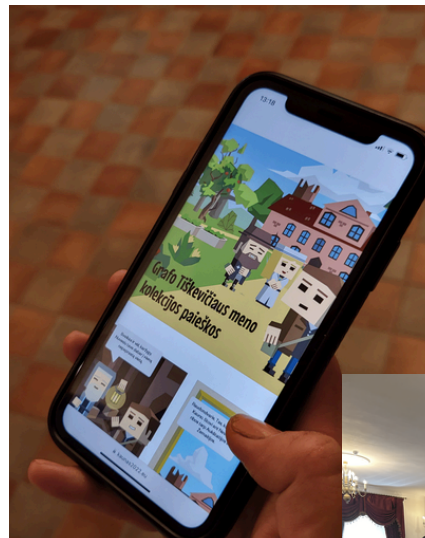


<https://www.visitsaleska.si/en/>

Third prize

Innovative Raudondvaris: Harmonizing Digital Experiences and Cultural Heritage

By Raudondvaris Manor, Lithuania



Raudondvaris Manor actively participated in the 2022 European Capital of Culture project, that inspired enhancing cultural heritage through digital innovation. Efforts included developing and promoting the New Hanseatic Route mobile game with VR narratives of sites like Raudondvaris Manor, Kaunas Castle, and Pažaislis Monastery. In 2024, another milestone was achieved with an AI-generated greeting from a historic composer born in Raudondvaris. Additionally, the Raudondvaris Chronicle on Facebook engaged the community in documenting and sharing local history, fostering inclusiveness and local pride. These initiatives collectively 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

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

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,

 <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 Just Transition principles, 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

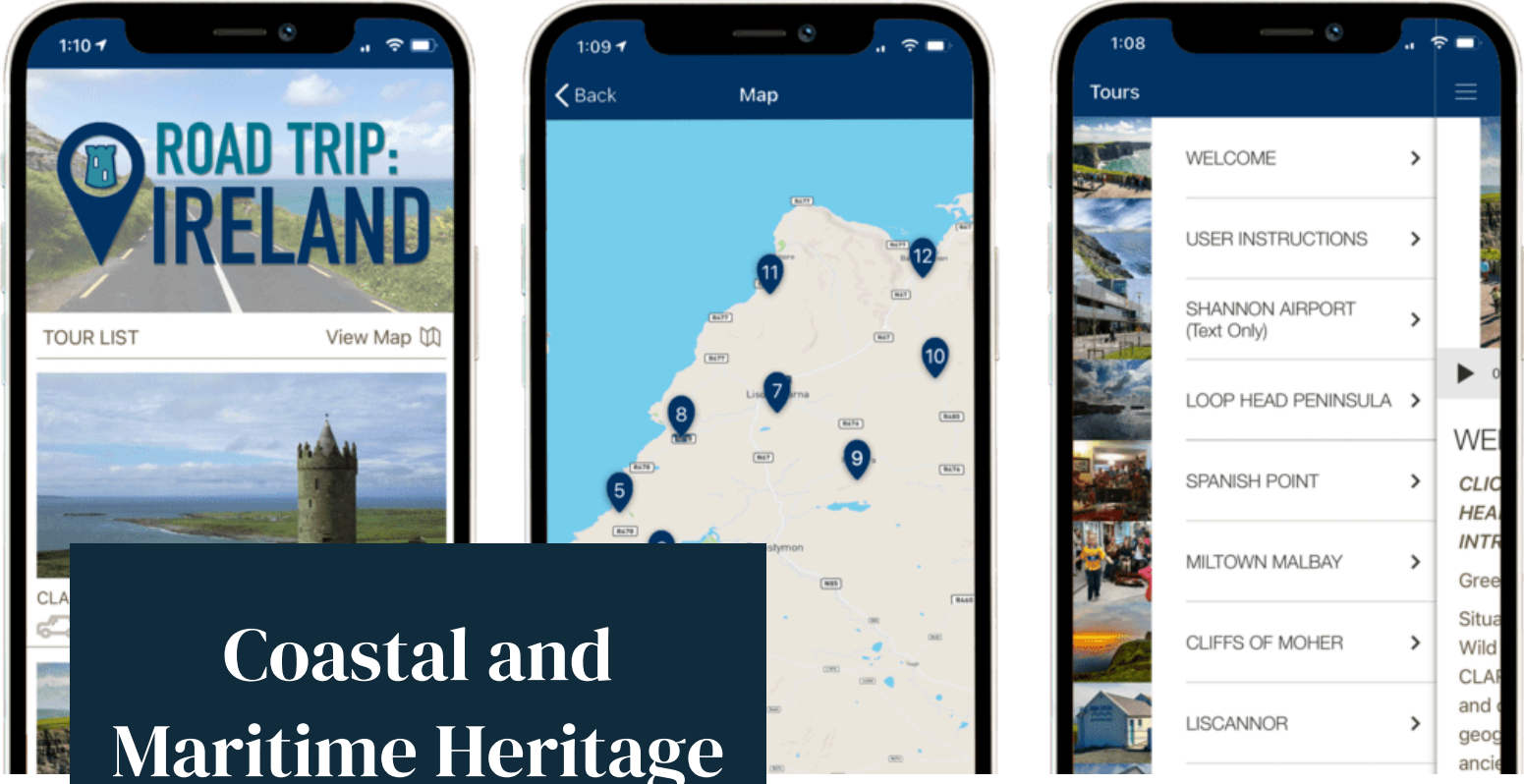
By Tourism Board of central Istria, Croatia

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. Strategic marketing is included to position Central Istria as a digital nomad destination, while promoting sustainable tourism practices that help preserve the region's 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 at West Coast of County Clare (Wild Atlantic Way)

By Cultural Roadmapp, Ireland

CLARE is an audio guide app created by Cultural Roadmapp, an Ireland-based company, that immerses road trippers in the culture and heritage of County Clare, Ireland's, West Coast.

It was designed for the County Clare's section of the Wild Atlantic Way, a 2600 km driving route tracking Ireland's west coast. Hands free and GPS enabled, the app connects to a vehicle's audio system via Bluetooth or charging cable. On approaching a town or landmark, geofencing triggers the app to play mini audio documentaries providing a rich cultural-historical context to the landscape, in real time.

What makes the product unique is that it focuses on local culture and heritage while on the road.

Unlike other road trip audio guides on the market, which feature a narrator directing listeners to “look right” or “look left,” CLARE tells stories gathered 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 commented, the experience allows listeners to “feel a part of the place they’re visiting.”

 <https://www.deborahschull.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 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 artifacts.

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

The multimedia centre "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, backed by European Union funding 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 centre also hosts workshops for children and screens promotional films on nature conservation, offering year-round free entry to enrich visitors' understanding of Lopar's rich cultural and natural heritage.

 <https://lopar.com/>

