

Supporting sustainable tourism

The European Commission actively supports the economic, environmental and social sustainability of European tourism. These are key factors for the competitiveness of destinations and the welfare of their populations, as well as for the creation of employment and the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural attractions.

Through the Tourism Unit, the Commission is developing dialogue with industry stakeholders and promoting a wider understanding of the role tourism plays in European life. The actions it undertakes are designed to:

- Promote the competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism
- Improve the regulatory environment for tourism
- Enhance the understanding and visibility of tourism
- Support the promotion of European destinations. ■

Find out more on the EU tourism policy at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm

You may contact us at:
ENTR-EDEN@ec.europa.eu

EDEN – European Destinations of Excellence

Discovering our hidden treasures



© European Communities, 2008
Printed in Belgium



Europe's treasures

You have surely heard a lot about Europe's great diversity, about its incredible richness and its matchless cultural heritage. What you might not have heard about are the European Destinations of Excellence. Every year, these destinations unveil new facets of Europe and emphasise new characteristics of European countries' beauty and wealth of heritage.

EDEN – the award

The idea of the European Destinations of Excellence started in 2006 when the European Commission launched a pilot project named EDEN in an effort to rediscover the unknown paradise of new emerging destinations in different parts of the continent, remarkable by their picturesque sites, protected natural areas, traditions and cultural life.

The European Destinations of Excellence are emerging European tourist destinations, often little known, which pursue the objective of economic growth in such a way as to ensure social, cultural and environmental sustainability. They are remarkable because of their great diversity and their unique national and local characteristics.

According to the tradition of the EDEN project, every year, destinations from among the 27 member countries of the European Union as well as from the candidate countries are invited to become European Destinations of Excellence. The "excellence theme" of each year's competition is chosen by the European Commission together with the national administrations in charge of tourism. So far, rural tourism, intangible heritage and protected areas have been the central motives for the European quest for excellence. ■

The winning destinations are awarded at the annual European Tourism Forum where representatives of the tourist industry get together to address sustainability-related challenges for the tourism industry.

2006-07: Rural tourism

For the very first award in 2006-2007, Europe rediscovered itself in its rural dimension. The quest was directed towards destinations which presented their support to the development of rural tourism by making the most of their heritage, offering new products and improving seasonality spread. Ten destinations of excellence were awarded the title of the "Best Emerging European Rural Destinations of Excellence": Pielachtal (Austria), Durbuy (Belgium), Sveti Martin na Muri (Croatia), Troodos (Cyprus), Florina (Greece), Órség (Hungary), Clonakilty District (Ireland), Comune di Specchia (Italy), Kuldiga (Latvia) and Nadur (Malta). The winning destinations were honoured at the European Tourism Forum in Portugal on 25-26 October 2007.

2007-08: Local intangible heritage

In 2007-2008 destinations are being awarded, not for their monuments or material manifestations, but for the traditions they have inherited and preserved through the generations. This living or 'intangible' heritage serves to bring people closer to the communities in which they live by giving them a sense of identity and continuity. It includes culinary traditions, handicrafts, local arts and rural life.

Compared with last year, this year has seen double the number of participating countries. Twenty destinations of excellence were awarded the title of the "2008 European Tourist Destination of Excellence in Intangible Heritage":

Steirisches Vulkanland (Austria), La Ville d'Ath (Belgium), Belogradchik Municipality (Bulgaria), Đurđevac, the Rooster Town (Croatia), Agros (Cyprus), Viljandi (Estonia), Wild Taiga (Finland), The Tourist Wine Route of the Jura (France), Prefecture of Grevena (Greece), Hortobágy (Hungary), Carlingford and the Cooley Peninsula (Ireland), Comune di Corinaldo (Italy), Latgalian potters, masters of clay (Latvia), Plateliai (Lithuania), La Ville d'Echternach (Luxembourg), Kercem, Hamlet of Santa Lucija (Malta), Horezu Depression (Romania), The Soča Valley (Slovenia), Sierra de la Nieves (Spain), Edirne (Turkey).

The award ceremony takes place at the European Tourism Forum in Bordeaux in France on 18-19 September 2008.

2008-09: Tourism and protected areas

The next award is to focus on the preservation of protected areas. Destinations will be chosen for their ability to use their protected areas as an asset for tourism while respecting the environment. They will be officially awarded and made known in Autumn 2009.

EDEN IN FOCUS

The EDEN project aims to draw attention to the value, diversity and shared characteristics of European tourist destinations. It strives to entice tourists and invite them to the lesser known destinations in Europe. The project wants to enhance the visibility of emerging European tourist destinations, to create a platform for the exchange of good practices at European level and to promote networking between awarded destinations which could persuade other destinations to adopt a sustainable tourism development model. ■

