

A window to the world

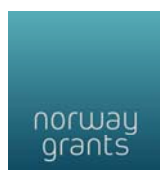
**Report from visit and workshop
Devetaki Plateau
21-25th September 2009**



In cooperation with:



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Attachment:

Project Sheet Devetaki Bulgaria

1 Facts

1.1 Participants



From Bulgaria, Association Devetaki Plateau :

- ✓ Iva Taralezhkova
- ✓ Velislava Chilingirova



From Norway, Friluftsrådenes Landsforbund (FL):

- ✓ Morten Dåsnes, FL
- ✓ Lise-Berith Lian, FL
- ✓ Tor B. Håkonsen, Polarsirkelen Friluftsråd

1.2 Destinations

1. Letnitsa: Workshop
2. The village of Krushuna: The Krushuna waterfalls
3. The village of Krushuna: Maarata, Krushuna Villa – accommodation
4. The village of Karpachevo: Viewpoint and canyon
5. The village of Karpachevo: Cave
6. The village of Gorsko Slivovo: Deep cave
7. The village of Karmolin: Ruins and viewpoint
8. The village of Agatovo: Hunting lodge
9. The village of Brestovo: Highest point
10. The village of Kakrina: Kakrina Inn (museum)
11. The village of Devetai: “Devetashkata peshtera” Cave

Map and photos on next page.

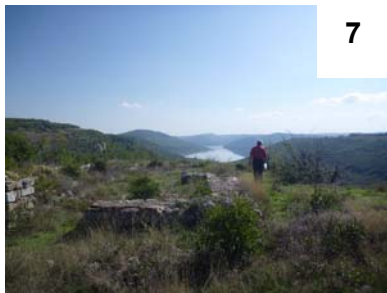
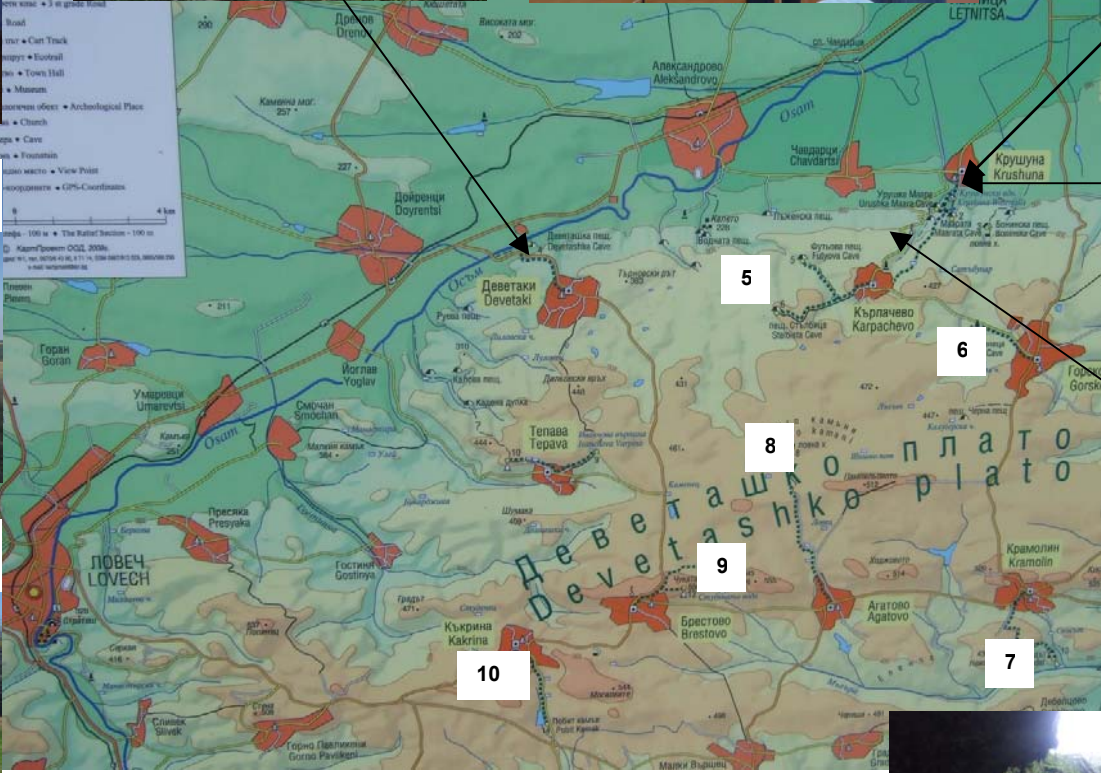
2 Destination visits

We had a trip around the plateau Monday 21st- Tuesday 22nd. The goal of the destination visit was to get to know Devetaki Plateau, the villages participating, and most of the destinations that are planned to be facilitated. It was an opportunity to meet some of the resource persons from the villages and get to know their plans. At the same time we could discuss opportunities and solutions together with representatives from each of the villages.

For each destination we have given some proposals and ideas. Common to all destinations it is important to emphasize that one must have a plan for how the destinations and facilities shall be maintained, both in light of the security of a facilitator and affiliations in terms of the aesthetic. This work must be connected to a person who has responsibility for following up the work with the maintenance.

It is also an idea to present the destination jointly in a booklet. Visitors to the region can buy the booklet, read about the destinations and stamp or note a special code when they visit the destination. When they have visited all the destinations they can get a premium or souvenir.

In a long-term perspective, it is interesting to think ahead towards a network of foot, horse and bicycle trails connecting destinations together. Although this is not feasible at this stage, it will be relevant in a future project to further develop the region.



2.1 The village of Krushuna



The Maarata nature area is located at the south part of the village of Krushuna (7 km from Letnitsa). We stayed at Krushuna villa (12 beds and all services) which is located near by the Krushuna waterfalls.

We visited Krushuna waterfalls which was facilitated for visitors five years ago with paths, bridges, stairs, benches, shelters, fireplaces and dustbins. It costs 1 lev to get into the area. The incomes are used for maintenance of the area. We were told that the area in the summer had many visitors.

The area is all ready facilitated for use. If something more want to be done to this area, we recommend that the area can be “polished” and adapted to accommodate more people.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make the waterfalls more visible by taking away some dead vegetation.
- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, map and information – also in English and check whether the signs are satisfactory from the village
- ✓ Make more attractions in same area:
 - Make a track to the top and back again
 - Make tracks to other nice places in the area



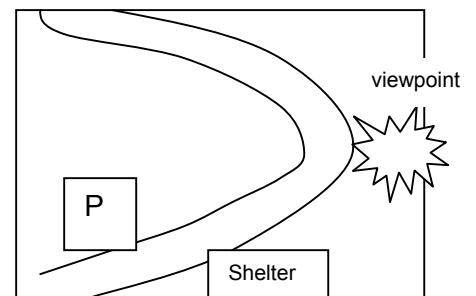
2.2 The village of Karpachevo: Viewpoint

We visited a good viewpoint along the road on the way up to the plateau. From the viewpoint you can see huge areas of flat landscape north to Romania and also down in a spectacular and fertile valley or canyon.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make a small parking lot
- ✓ Make a shelter in some distance from the steep cliff
- ✓ Take away some of the vegetation, soil and loose stones to make it easier and safer to walk from the shelter to the viewpoints along the steep cliff
- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, map and information – also in English



2.3 The village of Karpachevo: The cave

We visited a cave that was facilitated about 30 years ago. The track from the road and to the cave can be used for biking. The cave was located in an open area with view to the Balkan mountain and the highest top in Bulgaria.

The cave was little visible in the terrain and was surrounded of an old fence. The stair down in the cave was monumental, but some of the steps was destroyed. The concrete stair down in the cave was good and the floor in the cave was covered with a nice green carpet of mosses.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Simple upgrade and leveling of the road by using mass located at the site
- ✓ Make a small path from the biking track to the cave by placing some small poles or cairns and clearing vegetation
- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs and information – also in English
- ✓ Upgrade the fence, think of who it is made for and make it suitable; for animals and people
- ✓ Upgrade the iron stair
- ✓ Take away some vegetation around the entrance of the cave
- ✓ Benches; outside with shelter or inside, attached to the ground



2.4 The village of Gorsko Slivovo

We visited the deep cave and the recreation area northwest of Gorsko Slivovo. The area has recently been facilitated and is a good base for recreation, picnic and other experiences; hiking, other caves, playing and games. The area has a deep cave facilitated for visitors, barbecue house, benches with shelters, small shelter huts, toilet and a house/ café.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, map and information – also in English
- ✓ Make an definite/ defined parking lot, to make the rest of the area more suitable for activities.



2.5 The village of Karmolin

We looked at the information boards which are placed in every village, representing Devetaki Plateau, the villages and some destinations.

We visited the ruins at Gradat which consist of ruins from a church and a small fortress with a fantastic view to Bulgaria's biggest artificial lake. This season the grass was cut to make a track to the ruins. On the way up it was set up a shelter.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, map and information – also in English
- ✓ Make the history available; at the village-office and at a sign at the site.
- ✓ Make a track back to the village which is signed by small poles or cairns, then it is possible to make a tour from the village to the ruins and viewpoint and back to the village.

2.6 The village of Agatovo

We went by car to the hunting lodge. The road can be used for biking/ walking. The area has a lodge and table and benches, clean water and a lot of trees good for climbing and other tree activities. The lodge is at the moment being restored. We looked at the tree house and the pond.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, map and information
- ✓ Make a toilet
- ✓ Planning activities in the area: Accommodation in “tree house” to look at animals coming for water, tree activities, harvesting mushrooms, berries etc and make local food
- ✓ Have a specialist to check the cave, make signs, take away soil and vegetation and make a ladder to make it safe and easy to come into the cave



2.7 The village of Brestova

We visited the highest point of the Devetaki Plateau, 556 m. The area was facilitated with a bench and table, but no shelter.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make a small parking lot near by the road.
- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs and information – also in English
- ✓ Make a small path from the parking lots and the village to the cave by place some small poles or cairns
- ✓ Make a place to sit down among the bushes north of the top (se the photo)



2.8 The village of Krakina

We visited the museum in the village, Kakrina Inn, and the museum host told us the history of Vasil Levski. This is a destination different from the others, not based on the nature. It is therefore outside our competence to provide suggestions for how this place can be facilitated to a greater extent.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Locate small destination inside and outside the village which can be visited with the museum as the starting point.

2.9 The village of Devetaki

We visited the huge cave, Devetaki Cave, which is under the protection of UNESCO. The cave was earlier used for ammunition storage and is facilitated in different ways. The cave has visit restrictions because of bats in the summer. Two trails to the cave are marked.



Proposals and ideas:

- ✓ Make the area more visible by signs, maps and information – also in English
- ✓ Invite to a meeting (government, municipal, conservation interest etc.) to see what can be done with the cave and the area near by. There is a need for a plan with the clarification of the various interests (biological, tourism and more).

3 Workshop

The workshop was arranged in Letnitsa Wednesday 23rd and Thursday 24th. The participants came from the villages and from the cities, Letnitsa and Lovech. There were about 35-40 participants.

3.1 Presentation

Every one got the opportunity to say their name and where they came from when we met each other in an association around the plateau, symbolized by a rope.



3.2 About Friluftsrådenes Landsforbund (FL) (The Association of Intermunicipal Outdoor Recreation Boards) and our work

By Morten Dåsnes

We started with the question; Why is outdoor recreation important ?

- ✓ Satisfaction and joy
- ✓ Public health
- ✓ Environmental understanding
- ✓ Sustainable way of living
- ✓ Outdoor learning
- ✓ Attractive place for living and Tourism
- ✓ Cultural heritage

FL is a nationwide collaborative body for intermunicipal outdoor recreation boards. The main task is to work for the strengthening of the general outdoor life through own initiatives and by

- ✓ Supporting the work of affiliated friluftsråd.
- ✓ Affect outdoor policies, laws and regulations, economic framework conditions
- ✓ Give service to our members (Friluftsråd)
- ✓ Contact with authorities and organizations

Important tasks for FL in 2009 was presented, and briefly presentation of the 20 Intermunicipal Outdoor Recreation Boards (Friluftsråd) in Norway; - organization, way of working and main tasks. Main tasks for Friluftsråd in Norway:

- ✓ Areas for outdoor recreation
- ✓ Give opinions to all kinds of plans and projects
- ✓ Important areas are bought for outdoor recreation
- ✓ Prepare areas for outdoor recreation (foot-paths and other objects)
- ✓ Look after areas for outdoor recreation
- ✓ Information: Maps, folders, web-site, books, information-boards ...
- ✓ Activities
- ✓ Outdoor learning and activities for kindergarten and schools
- ✓ Guided tours
- ✓ Holiday activities for children and youth
- ✓ Activities for people with special needs (handicapped)

All friluftsråd cannot do everything, - each friluftsråd decide what to do and how to work.

We discussed similarities between our two organizations.

3.3 Planning routes for walking (and cycling and riding)

By Morten Dåsnes

We started with some general advices for sustainable tourism:

- ✓ Take care of nature attractions and cultural heritage
- ✓ Small is good
- ✓ Adapt necessary objects to nature
- ✓ Concentrate the objects at a few places

We went through the start with a rough plan, necessary permissions and considerations and the work with a detailed plan.



In the project the first task will be to find routes from the villages or parking lots to the attractions, and most places there is one obvious route. A later step can be to makes routes for walking/riding/cycling between the attractions on the Devetaki plateau, and then it will be necessary with more comprehensive planning.

3.4 Making footpaths and objects along them

By Morten Dåsnes

Trails and roads are the main measure to facilitate the development of outdoor recreation and sustainable, small-scale tourism. There are many types of paths and roads. You must decide what is needed at each location. The path or road should have the same standard the whole way.

To take care of nature a lot of the work must be done by hand and small machines. We showed examples from work with footpaths in Norway by cutting vegetation, passing rivers and streams or fences, and ropes or stairs for climbing steep slopes. We presented small roads for walking, riding and cycling, and we discussed possibilities to make some routes available for persons in wheelchairs, - or with baby carriages.

Examples on facilities along the route or at starting-point or attraction was presented:

- ✓ Toilets
- ✓ Resting places
- ✓ Playground for children

Information and marking the routes was an important theme. For attractions which is interesting for foreign tourists information and signs in English is necessary. At starting point it should be a board for information. The project has already made information boards for the whole plateau which we found very good with map, text and photos. We recommend one type of signs for all routes in the project and use of the logo for the project. Between the signs the routes can be marked with the Bulgarian standard-painting with white-red-white when it is necessary or desirable to make it easy to find the way.

At our website there are many examples on objects.: www.friluftsråd.no see "tilrettelegging - ideer" - and take contact if translating is necessary.

Management is very important. At many of the attractions which we visited it has been done facilitations many years ago, but they were not maintained. It is very important in the project to clarify the responsibility for management of the trails, marking and facilities. Tourists are concerned that places for eating and toilets are clean. There are special challenges associated with safety in caves with stairs and ladders.

3.5 Outdoor learning

By Lise-Berith Lian

Friluftsråd collaborate in Outdoor Learning to contribute to more and better outdoor activity in kindergarten and school. With "more" means that there is more time spent on outdoor activities, while "better" means that kindergartens and schools has a well-rooted pedagogical content when they are outdoor, and that outdoor activities are related to the national curriculum for kindergarten and school.



We believe that Outdoor Learning contributes to an active process where children and young people learn about the reality in reality as well as the social relationships between children and between children and adults improve. Children are more physically active, they have more natural contact and get a better understanding of the interplay between nature and humanity.

We showed how our work is based on four pedagogical dimensions and how our members work:

- ✓ Training for employees
- ✓ Activity days and class guidance

- ✓ Learning Networks
- ✓ Equipment lending and leasing
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Guidance and advise

A summary in Bulgarian was given to all the participants.

3.6 Leisure activities

By Lise-Berith Lian and Tor B Håkonsen

We presented some examples of leisure activities for children and youth in vacations and holidays arranged by our members:

- ✓ Bredek (the name of an old farm) – one week tradition farming for youth
- ✓ Robinson – one day at an island for smaller children (6-10 years)
- ✓ Summer week in South-Norway – trying a lot of outdoor activities in one week
- ✓ A day along the coastal path (6-8 years)

3.7 Visit to the deep cave north west of Gorsko Slivovo

Facilitation and information

By Morten Dåsnes

We visited the cave to discuss facilitations there in relation to the theoretic review the day before, and to discuss which of these facilitations who are relevant at the other attractions in the project.

We looked at and discussed signs from the main road, information, parking lot, toilet, resting places, possibilities for children to play, the stairs down in the cave and security and possibilities to connect this cave to other attractions by routes for walking, riding or cycling.

Activities

By Tor B. Håkonsen and Lise-Berith Lian

We talked about our project "Bridge of ropes" and how we use this to encourage more physical activity in kindergartens and schools. We taught how to set up bridges of ropes and use this in an effort to teach children and young people to use ropes and learn knots. Two backpacks with equipment for bridges of ropes were given to the association to symbolize the start of the activity equipment bank for children and youth they want to establish in the association.

We introduced the booklet of 11 ideas to activities in nature for children and young people that is translated from FL's book "Barn i friluft" (Children in open air) from Norwegian to Bulgarian. We tried "Nimbi" and eventually we impulsively started an interesting exchange of traditional games from Bulgaria and Norway.



3.8 System for security

By Lise-Berith Lian

We presented our seven step secure system:

1. An analysis of the risks and vulnerability
2. Damage form
3. Deviation
4. Control of equipment
5. Action when damage is discovered
6. Role clarification
7. Handling accidents

A summary and to forms in Bulgarian was given to all the participants.



3.9 Information

By Morten Dåsnes, Lise-Berith Lian and Tor B. Håkonsen

We presented some examples (in Norwegian) of maps, brochures and books. We also showed two Internet sites:

- ✓ www.godtur.no : A nationwide site for presenting routes and destinations
- ✓ www.turbok.org : A local site for presenting routes and destinations

3.10 Conclusions

By Morten Dåsnes

It is important for us to repeat that we think Devetaki Plateau is a beautiful region with a lot of interesting attractions and history. It is the "Cave-land". As I said yesterday, you have many diamonds that you have to take care of, polish and then show to tourists. And you must know them yourself and be proud of them. You, the people living here, are a very important resource for developing and marked the region with its attractions.

You are now going from the phase with ideas and dreams to the phase of decisions and realizations. Choose projects which is small, - or big, enough for your money in the project, and choose projects which is visible and useful. Realize out of door projects, - use them yourselves and make information so it is possible for tourists to use them too.

Remember your dreams, - let them be inspiration in the work with the smaller and trivial tasks, - and later you can make new projects from your dreams.

Do not forget maintenance.

Thank you for showing us some of your nature, cultural heritage and history. Thank you for your hospitality. We wish you good luck with further work with the project, and look forward to come back next spring.



The Norwegian Cooperation programme with Bulgaria Individual Project

A window to the world – introduce ICT for the sustainable development of nine villages in the Devetaki Plateau	
Bulgaria	
Project Promoter:	Partner (main):
Devetaki Plateau Association	The Association of Intermunicipal Outdoor Recreation Boards (FL)
Type of Applicant:	Type of partner:
NGO	NGO
	Other partners: Municipalities of Letnitsa, Lovech and Sevlievo
Grant amount awarded:	Total eligible project cost:
EUR 121 000	EUR 137 019
Grant rate:	Case no:
88%	2008/115266
Planned project duration: 5/2009 – 8/2010	Project web-site: www.devetakiplateau.org www.friluftsrad.no

Short project description:

The project aims through the establishment of information and service centres and organising a relevant training on ICT issues in the villages from Devetaki Plateau region to improve access to public services and build up a local capacity. The project envisages also training on sustainable tourism development that will contribute to the increased knowledge of local people on ecology and environment protection as well as will lead to ideas and practical cases to be implemented in the frame of the project.

The 3 municipalities, with a total population of 108 600 citizen will work together in the project to promote these activities and to work out a common tourist product.

Expected results:

- The project will contribute to the joint efforts of the municipalities from Devetaki Plateau, to work out a common tourist product for the region. Nine information and service centres established and equipped giving opportunity of people from the 9 villages to have access to public services and information
- One training on ICT issues (basic computers skills, using Internet, basic communication skills) organised. 90 people trained.
- One training on sustainable tourism development organised, 40 people trained on innovative approaches in the respective field. ,
- Nine practical activities/showcases developed, related to the promotion of "eco-tourism". Through Norwegian partner access to long-time experience and modern practise in promoting small scale tourism