

Danube Day 2014 in Serbia



Danube Day campaign for flood victims

Following catastrophic flooding in May 2014, Danube Day in Serbia offered a reduced programme, with the Republic Directorate for Water focussing on a flood relief campaign. Modest festivals took place along the length of the Danube from Banoštor to Negotin to mark 20 years of international river cooperation.

The **Danube Day flood relief campaign** was targeted at Belgrade citizens to raise funds in support of families still affected by the flooding. Billboards across the capital publicised an SMS 1003 donation number. Practical support also came to western Serbia in July, with a volunteer programme in Krupanj to assist those rebuilding their community.

The Directorate announced the creation of **7 educational Danube Eco Parks for 7 cities** by 2020; in Sombor, Novi Sad, Zrenjanin, Belgrade, Pancevo, Smederevo and Pozarevac. A pilot study began in Obrenovac, SW of Belgrade, the region most affected by flooding. The project arises from a partnership between the Water Directorate, Coca-Cola and others. It aims to provide a lasting legacy for communities; highlighting Serbia's commitment to water stewardship and celebrating achievements.

Belgrade, Novi Sad and Sombor greeted the **WWF Caravan for a Living Danube** this year. In this new initiative, WWF and Coca-Cola have teamed up to highlight the world's most international river and its floodplains; part of a 7-year project to re-naturalise rivers. Starting in Serbia, the Caravan will travel through 6 Basin countries providing educational workshops. Visit the tour at 18 other locations in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Romania until the end of summer 2015.

"If the floodplains regained their natural role and capacity to retain water, the result would be benefits for nature and people: water treatment and flood mitigation, ecotourism and biodiversity protection." Dusko Dimović, Director of WWF's programme in Serbia

The Danube Competence Centre's **Blue Danube Week** returned to Serbia, alongside events in Bulgaria and Romania. Working with local partners, the annual 3-country festival celebrates the Danube through music, carnival, theatre, sport and exhibitions. For cycling fans, the cross-border **Bike Fest and camp** rolled into Kladovo on Danube Day. Begun on the 28th June at Drobeta-Turnu Severin in Romania, the tour crossed into Serbia for a mass ride in Kladovo followed by a Cyclo Party featuring games, bike tours, live music and DJs. Amongst the highlights were slow bike challenges, cyclo-limbo, bicycle polo and bike street ball. The day finished with the floating of candle-lit lanterns onto the river - a Blue Danube Week tradition. In the run-up to the festival, **weekly river clean-ups** were also organised throughout June.

The following weekend saw the **11th Belgrade Boat carnival** with traditional parade of decorated boats, riverside concert, craft fair, eco activities and children's workshops. Visitors also enjoyed a guided boat trip round Great War Island and the lighting of candle-lit lanterns in the trees: symbolizing concern for the environment.

Other events were organised by local administrations, agencies and NGOs. **Zemun** hosted a wine festival and charity flood relief auction. To the north, in **Bezdan**, it was all aboard boats, kayaks and canoes, followed by music, volleyball and football on the beach. Near Novi Sad, athletes, sailors, artists, cooks, hunters, anglers and nature lovers came together in **Banoštor**. Children learned about water's properties; football fans competed in an inter-village tournament; 40 teams of cooks attempted to make the best fish soup; and 80 boats formed a Danube Day flotilla. Music brought everyone together for evening relaxation. SE of Belgrade, a flotilla of sailing boats met at **Smederevo**, alongside Danube exhibitions in the town. At **Negotin's** festival, children congregated in the city park to paint the Danube, accompanied by Johann Strauss. Youth and adult fishing, fish soup, canoeing and jazz into the evening made for a perfect summer's festival.

The search to find the country's young **Danube Art Master** of 2014 was organised by the Young Researchers of Serbia. Tasked with making a piece of 3D art from materials found by their river, winning 5th-formers from Vera Miscevic School used river mud to reconstruct their town of Belegis as a pre-historic mud village. They went on to the international GWP/ICPDR final in Vienna. To view the wealth of creativity inspired by rivers across the Danube Basin, see Facebook and Flickr!

Danube Day Partners

Ministry of Agriculture & Environment's Republic Directorate for Water; Coca-Cola HBC Serbia; WWF; Danube Competence Centre; Cyclomaniacs Turnu Severin; cities & municipalities of Belgrade, Zemun, Kladovo; Bezdan, Banoštor, Smederevo, Negotin & Turnu Severin, Romania; Association of Serbian Wine; Tourist Organization of Belgrade; Belgrade Public Utility Companies; Serbia Sommelier Association; Association of Winemakers & Winegrowers; Belgrade Chamber of Commerce; Belgrade Economy Secretariat; 'Weekend' Tourism Association; Negotin Tourism Association; citizens associations; Timok sport fishing club & Mihajlovac Association of Nautical Tourism.

Danube Day 2014: Get active for a living Danube!

For general information about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view www.danubeday.org or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR): benedikt.mandl@unvienna.org.