

„Green tourism:  
fact or fad?”

# Festivals and conferences in Hungary



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21-25. November 2010.

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## 1. Introduction

A team of 10 class students of Tinodi Grammar School, Sárvár has decided to enter the competition entitled Green tourism: Fact or Fad? announced by the Education Development Foundation in line with the Global Travel and Tourism Partnership (GTTP) Research Award.

The term eco-friendly tourism has several interpretations. It has been defined both by the public and the experts in a different way. As a matter of fact, green tourism can be approached from the consumer as well as from the services sides. According to one definition “Ecotourism (also known as ecological tourism) is responsible travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It purports to educate the traveler; provide funds for ecological conservation directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and foster respect for different cultures and for human rights. Ecotourism is held as important by those who participate in it so that future generations may experience aspects of the environment relatively untouched by human intervention” or Ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." By The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)

Today, tourist service companies also try to operate in a more environmentally-friendly way for example there are those hotels which advertize themselves as “green” hotels and place great focus on environmental protection. It involves the hotel conference rooms lit by natural light, the use of recycled paper, energy efficiency, and of course selective garbage collection, which is a basic criterion.

In our essay we concentrate on the service industry, more specifically we will analyze the interesting segments of soft tourism, events and conferences in terms of the green tourism and eco- tourism developments. In our talk we will touch upon large pop festivals in Hungary, including the European famous Island Festival, make an interview with the organizers of the festival, demonstrate how school “Students’ Day” can go greener and finally present the work and results of the “mini-conference” taken place at our grammar school. Our paper is even more current because the Hungarian Tourism Plc announced 2010 “The Year of Festivals” as the theme of the year. Consequently, green festivals are expected to have a greater focus in their marketing.

## **2. Green Festivals**

### **2.1. ‘The Ten Commandments’ of a Green Festival**

Should program series wish to give home to a green festival they will have to meet a certain system of requirements. In Hungary today more and more festivals are going green, and thanks to organizers they largely promote the eco-friendly behavior of the people positively. In our paper we will focus on these requirements.

#### **Restore the original state of the environment**

The organizers of the event together with the owner of the site will preliminarily survey the state of environment in and around the event. After carrying out the sustainability study the organizers are under obligation to rehabilitate the area and restore the original conditions.

#### **Utilize Selective Recovery Stations**

At the festival, from beginning to end, at least 20% of garbage has to be collected selectively and recyclable items have to be reused.

#### **Organized public transport**

The festival team will encourage visitors to get to the site by public transport or bike and they promote “full car” option.

#### **Shaping views – Green promotion**

‘Green Festival’ classification is to be publicized by the festival organizers and information is to be provided about the requirements undertaken on which the classification is based and the eco-friendly behavior expected from visitors at the festival. Additionally, Green Tents are to be put up and Green Guidelines are to be displayed.

#### **Eco-friendly purchasing**

The festival team agrees to prepare green guidelines for the suppliers and they enforce the eco-friendly regulations in sponsorship contracts.

#### **Decreased dust pollution**

The organizers oblige themselves to lay temporary, mobile cover on routes, walking paths in order to decrease dust pollution and to protect the conditions of the lawn.

### **Avoid waste production**

The festival team agrees to utilize reusable glasses, plates and cutlery which can be returned for refunds during the festival.

### **Partial compensation for the exploitation of the environment**

The organizers will make sure that carbon dioxide stemming from electric energy consumption can be compensated for (e.g. planting trees, buying CER quota or any other alternative ways).

### **Light technology and sound system**

The event is to apply energy efficient light technology besides LED technology light equipment and conventional spotlights.

### **Shortest distance**

The festival is to market locally produced food and other products, to commission local suppliers and to apply biodegradable packaging. Caterers should attempt to use locally grown food and to collect used oil separately and to prefer bulk package food, which is documented precisely.

### **Water efficiency**

At the festival special taps with quantity control valves or URIMAT urinals not using flush water must be applied. The organizers agree to fit restrooms with water efficient taps, taps with airing heads, water efficient shower nozzles and double-controlled quantity lock toilet tanks where automatic switches monitor water consumption.

### **“Green” project manager**

The festival team will appoint a green project manager who is responsible for planning and documenting sustainability programs. She/he will also handle the possible environmental problems occurred during the event and investigate environmental hazards might be caused by small entrepreneurs. ([www.kvvm.hu](http://www.kvvm.hu))

If a firm, an organization or a group is able to meet these requirements then the event can be awarded the green festival title if it applies for it, which will add to the prestige of the program. The Island Festival has already won the green award title in Hungary, after it has met the sustainability requirements of festivals and events. ([www.ktm.hu](http://www.ktm.hu))

## **2.2 Facts and details about the Festival and Budapest**

The Island Festival has developed into one of the largest festivals in Hungary where popular music is played. The very first event was held in 1993. At the beginning it had an “intimate” atmosphere with only 43,000 visitors but nowadays the number has increased to 390,000 people. Undoubtedly, the figures have changed a lot as well. Over the last year the organizers invested 2, 7 thousand million Hungarian Forints (10 million Euros) into it. Should anyone feel like joining this enormous party he/she has to pay 10,000 Forints (38 Euros). The location of this fascinating event is our capital city Budapest. As far as we know, 82% of foreign tourists have come to our country especially because of the Island Festival. The success is due to the colorful programs on Óbuda Island. One could find rock, electrical or jazz music and moreover world-famous pop music. 40% of foreigner visitors will stay in Hungary after the festival. In most cases they visit Budapest. In fact, Hungary is a very small country but visitors can enjoy the wonderful sights of the capital, relax on one of the numerous beaches of Lake Balaton, go and see pretty Hungarian villages where traditions of folk art are still preserved.

## **2.3 Budapest, our capital city**

To introduce Budapest to a tourist from abroad I would tell him/her some historical and geographical data about the Hungarian capital city. The Romans called the settlement Aquincum 2000 years ago which meant the “city of waters” because there used to be and still there are a large number of hot water springs and medicinal baths in the region. The Royal Castle was built under the rule of Sigismund of Luxemburg on the Buda Hills in the 15th century. Later, in the 19th century the commercial centre Pest which is lying on the other side of the River Danube flourished. Today Budapest is a busy metropolis with a population of 2 million people. The city is extremely rich in historical and cultural monuments, works of art and natural beauties.

## **2.4 An interview with the organizers Norbert Lobenwein festival manager and Daniel Benis technical manager**

We came into contact with Norbert Lobenwein, the festival manager, who was asked about the Island Festival, held in Budapest. He said that the Balaton Sound Festival which had also been organized by them, had already won the Green Festival award in 2009, and he was certain that the Sopron Volt Festival would obtain the environmentally-conscious award in 2010.

In addition, we put a couple of questions in connection with the festival itself. We were curious to know what kind of conscious measures had been taken during the organization in the interest of environmental protection, how the participants' environmentally-friendly entertainment can be experienced, how much the environmentally-conscious program organization had affected the budget, and finally why they aimed to turn their festivals green, was it just a marketing trick or a new approach?

### **Festival organization**

According to festival organizers it is necessary to split the protection of the environment into three stages while organizing an event, preparation and setting up, operation and removal, and recultivation. At the preparation stage the competent authorities will define the system of conditions, on which the program is based. Furthermore, they will attempt to set up the festival with the smallest possible exploitation to the environment even while planning it. At the operation stage the most noticeable environmental hazard is obviously the garbage, however several other aspects need to be considered. Besides classical communal waste collection, selective waste collection is underway, but biodegradable waste produced by catering services is also collected separately. All the applied technologies, chemicals, procedures are the most up-to-date ones available and affordable without exception. However, there are more spectacular areas of environment protection for example temporary surface on the lawn tries to protect lawn from treading. The most important stage is the period after the festival since the site needs to be “returned” free from all kind of harm. Cleaning, horticultural works will last for weeks following the program series so that the site will be ready for the next year event completely clean and renewed.

### **Environmentally-conscious entertainment**

It could have been experienced over the past few years, that the better system of conditions has been created for visitors, the happier they will behave environmentally-conscious or at least environmentally-friendly. The more trashes are placed the cleaner the festival site is and the guests will pay more attention to cleanliness. Even if it is not environmental-consciousness yet but it is definitely welcome since this type of behavioral patterns will lead to the development of the environmentally-conscious customers.

## **Budget**

According to Daniel Benis the technical leader of the Island Festival, environmental-consciousness is a disadvantage in terms of the festival budget, since acquiring the necessary equipment and recruiting the staff carrying out the work will result in considerable expenses. Selective garbage collection will also mean extra cost however, the collected garbage can be marketed and a self-financing system is starting to shape form in Hungary similarly to Western Europe in the long run, no matter how much the economic crisis affected the prices involved.

## **“Fact or Fad?”**

We were curious to hear the answer to the question given by Norbert Lobenwein and his colleague which could be summed up as why they had decided to apply for the green festival title. Nowadays, we would think that even the answer might only be a marketing trick but instead we were provided with an honest, detailed explanation and clear reasoning. They emphasized that there should be two possible reasons why an eco-friendly festival was organized, conscious protection against global problems or a trendy new fad, which would increase the reputation and income of the firms and organizations. Both reasons could be rather significant. The most serious concern is that just few people feel their own responsibilities, when it comes to environmental pollution. Few believe that it really matters what individuals do. However, in our days there is no enterprise “proud of itself” which does not regard the the cause of environmental consciousness as vital. The fact that it has become “fashionable” is both exceptionally positive and essential.

According to Daniel Benis eco-friendly program organization is not a fashion, but meeting long-awaited social expectations. The special focus on the topic is due to the negative image of environmental protection in Hungary since most people have formulated extreme views on it. If we do not fall into extremes it does not mean an extra burden in the life of an enterprise, but complying with healthy norms which can be reached only by making sacrifices then we can enjoy the reward of our efforts.

## **Future plans**

Recycling increasing amount of communal waste turns out to be a great concern for the festival team. Catering services will be gradually involved in the process. Future plans include among others for example applying reusable glasses, additionally the organizers hope to be able to have the chance to introduce the use of grey water in 2010 that is to flush toilets



with used water from showers, which will result in considerable savings of drinking water. It will not only be useful but profitable at the same time.

### **3. GREEN CONFERENCES**

#### **3.1 Global overview of the requirement system to be met by green conferences and events**

The first step to be taken is to locate the site of the event. The organizers are advised to choose a place, where they can meet “green” requirements as fully as possible, where more aspects can be approached. A well-chosen spot can contribute to the success of the event. Then, the date must be appointed. It’s highly important to consult the weather forecast statistics, since it is just natural that people prefer going out in pleasant weather. It is equally important that the program should not interfere with other local or regional events. Marketing is an essential part of the organization, which should include the local media. While preparing promotional material we should take raw materials into consideration for instance it is recommended to use recycled paper and ink made of plants when designing a poster. Guests are to be informed electronically and should be asked to use public transport or to walk to the spot of the event. The disposal of selective rubbish bins is a must, as well as natural light which should be used, but if it is not possible, then energy-efficient light bulbs are recommended. Program brochures should contain all prospective environmentally-friendly possibilities for example which materials can be recycled, where the trashes have been placed. Nowadays the use of plastic cutlery is to be minimized at a conference whereas using glasses and traditional, washable chinaware may increase the standard of a conference. Food and PR cakes are preferably served on napkins since cleaning them is a more eco-friendly solution than throwing paper serviettes into a trash.

### **4. First attempt**

#### **4.1 Organization of a green conference**

One of the tasks of the project was to organize a green conference. It turned out to be rather complicated for us, because being 10 class students we had not had any information on the topic. None of us had had any experience in program organization so we enquired our consultant about the main aspects and then we set to work curiously but frightened.

First, we appointed the date and judged the possibilities concerning the venue of the conference. Finally, the “mini conference” was held on 12th April in the school library. The

desks had been arranged in an oval shape in order to encourage open conversation and expression of opinions about what had been said after the presentations. We tried to use as many environmentally-friendly methods as possible while organizing the event. Since we wished the conference to be organized under the aegis of green framework we should have paid attention to details for example drawing the curtains to emphasize saving energy as well as putting selective garbage bins in the library. Notepaper and program brochures had been made of recycled paper. The conference participants were welcome with small, eco-friendly PR gifts. Invitations to the conference were sent electronically and we asked participants to confirm attendance via e-mail too. In addition, we had forwarded the presentations via e-mail to avoid having to print them out on paper, which would ultimately end up in the trash anyway. Of course, the technology had also played an important role in the event, because the projector and the screen proved to be useful tools in demonstrating our digital presentations, the summaries. Unfortunately, it reduced the amount of energy saved by letting natural sunlight in, but we firmly believe that today, visual presentation must be an integral part of high-standard presentations as either pictures or moving pictures can transfer a lot of information to the audience.

The program started exactly at 8.20. First, we received the guests and asked them to fill in the registration form, which was printed on recycled paper. The conference was opened by our consultant Viktor Vigh, it was followed by three presenters Enikő Dobos, teacher of protocol studies, Andrea Bertha school leaver and the member of Travel and Tourism Special Class and the final talk was given by us. Ms Dobos presented her university essay, in which she focused on green hotels. We had been provided with a lot of useful information together with protocol class students, who had also been invited to participate in the conference. Then Andrea introduced us a green hotel in Austria in details the unique feature of which is the love of golf. A lot of exciting data were mentioned about the construction of the building which contributed to energy efficiency and also about the grounds surrounding the hotel which were turned into a golf paradise. Finally we thanked both the presenters for their contributions and the participants for their kind attention. We pointed out the exact reason and purpose of the conference, and then we gave a summary of our essay. On completing the event, the participants were invited to a short debate session. Lastly, we enquired the teachers who were present and the older students, what their opinion had been about the mini conference what should have been done differently or more precisely. All in all, they were satisfied with the program mainly because it had been the first time they had the chance to participate in a green conference.

## **4.2 Paint it green, Students' Day**

Our other task was to turn 1<sup>st</sup> April Student's Day "greener". The aim of our grammar school was to make students' lives more exciting with the program series. On this day students symbolically possess the school keys. Teachers arrange various activities, and the classes compete with one another. The winner is awarded with the school trophy handed over by the last year's winner and will take a one day trip. One week before Students' Day we had made a recording which could be heard every day on the School Radio, where we tried to draw attention to eco-friendly traffic methods. Our teachers and students were called on to come to school either by public transport or by bike if possible. After having examined the effectiveness of our appeal we were surprised at the positive change. Before Students' Day 63 teachers and students arrived at school by car, 6 of them by motorbike but on 1st April only 37 people chose this alternative however, the number of motorcyclists did not change. Consequently, the number of cyclists largely increased in number. Unfortunately, many approached school by car the following days again. Furthermore, we tried to make the teacher-organized programs more environmentally-conscious. One of the tasks the classes had to complete was to build a barge. Students had to manufacture a "vehicle" by which they were able to sail across a given part of the Brook Gyöngyös in a way that the captain would remain dry until the end of the voyage. There were no rules on how and what materials the barges were to be built but we encouraged the classes to use eco-friendly, preferably reusable materials. We also put forward our proposals in favour of making greener program arrangements.

The main programs were held in the school Assembly Hall where we suggested drawing the curtains instead of turning on the lights. We made attempts to economize on energy consumption of the grammar school with natural light. Unfortunately, we could not manage to change the rest of the programs. The Students' Day events went smoothly, everybody enjoyed all the programs and the film shot by the teaching staff was a big hit. We are certain that we have completed the tasks more or less successfully and hope that students have been motivated towards a future eco-conscious lifestyle.

## 5. Conclusion

After having completed our paper we would say that we have obtained a lot of knowledge. We have become familiar with the basics of festival organization with the help of the interview made with the festival organizers. The organization process in the interview has raised our interest and we are planning to visit the site of the festival in summer where we can meet the organizers in person and ask the visitors on the topic. Secondly, we have had the taste of the steps of an amateur conference organization when we have been supported by our consultant. Having known the title of the application announced we have realized that green tourism has not paid enough attention in Hungary, people's behavior does not reflect environmentally-conscious lifestyle, as a result they consider this topic as a passing fad. While working on the paper, through our practical work and making the interview with Daniel Benis technical leader it has become obvious for us that eco-tourism is starting to shape into fact in Hungary. It requires generations when eco-conscious behavior will become widespread. If a child is brought up in an environmentally-friendly way from the beginning the biosphere will compensate us for it. It is our duty to teach the children this way, because as an ancient Indian proverb says:

*“We did not inherit the Earth from our grandfathers, but we borrowed it from our grandchildren.”*

6. Supplements



Hungary





The opening ceremony of our Green Conference



'Green Tourism: Fact or Fad?' Our team



Our Green Conference



„How many cars are there?”



„Please not to come to school by motorcycle tomorrow!”



The selective dustbins in our school



## 7. Bibliography

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## 8. Supports

