



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Revival of the heart of Miskolc / Exemplary development of the once prosperous but than forgotten historical Avas hill through a broad collaboration in downtown Miskolc

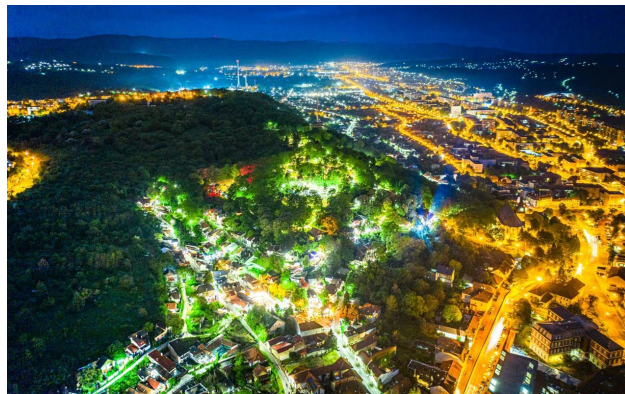
Destination, Country: Miskolc, Hungary

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In the category: Destination Management Environment & Climate Thriving Communities
 Nature & Scenery Culture & Tradition Business & Marketing

The Story in a picture:

The revived Avas hill in the heart of Miskolc



Summary:

The city of Miskolc, in addition to its many attractive districts and attractions, found itself in the situation that, despite its many values, the Avas hill rising in the city center was neglected and in a dilapidated state for decades, as a site to be avoided.

Thanks to the joint work of civil organizations, the municipality, the church and businesses, a complex development was started in order to make the location a valuable attraction of the city again. With coordinated infrastructural developments, programs and gastronomy events, they tried to integrate Avas into the circulation of the city again.





2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Decades of problems have turned one of the city's most unique attractions into a success story through infrastructural developments, continuous common thinking and community building.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Miskolc is located in the north-eastern part of Hungary, the centre and largest town in the North-Hungary region, the fourth most populous city in the country. Built at the crossroads of different landscapes along important trade routes, it was a trading town in the Middle Ages, later becoming a centre of industry. Since the end of the 20th century, tourism has become increasingly important.

Miskolc's uniqueness is due to its four distinctly atmospheric districts. The medieval castle of Diósgyőr, the spa culture of Miskolctapolca, the natural beauty of Lillafüred and the vibrant cultural life of the city centre make the city at the foot of the Bükk Mountains special.

Miskolc's internationally renowned tourist attraction is the Miskolctapolca Cave Baths, where visitors can bath in hundred thousands years old natural caves, unique in Europe.

Lillafüred is a real gem of Miskolc and a recognised climatic spa. Located in the area of the Bükk National Park, it offers many opportunities for active recreation and nature lovers.

Diósgyőri Castle in the Diósgyőr district of Miskolc is one of Hungary's most prestigious monuments. The castle played an important historical role in the 14th century.

The city centre of Miskolc is characterised by a vibrant cultural life. The city centre is also a special feature, with the Avas Lookout on the top of the Avas Hill above it, and the rows of cellars with more than 800 cellars on the side, just a few steps from the city centre, and the monumental Reformed Church, which dates back to the 16th century.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

As can be seen from the presentation of the destination, Miskolc's tourism diversity makes it an increasingly attractive destination, which is well reflected in the tourism indicators. Its many attractions, values and sights enable it to remain a sustainable, four-season tourist destination in the long term by reducing the spatial and temporal concentration. However, one of Miskolc's greatest specialties was not always a tourist attraction. The side of Avas hill, which rises in the city center, towards the city center, which we refer to as historical Avas, caused a great challenge for the city. During the history of the city, extremely popular and undeservedly neglected states alternated, the former commercial center and then the luxury district turned into a site that was to be abandoned at

the end of the 20th century with disuse, abandoned wine cellars, low public safety - a few steps from the city center.

In order to understand the problems of the historical Avas, a very brief review of its history is necessary. The history of Miskolc goes back a long time, the archaeological findings found in today's Avas prove that the area is one of the oldest inhabited places in Europe, people lived here as early as 70,000 years ago. Since the early Middle Ages, the Avas mountain has been a grape-growing area, which brought with it the prosperous of wine culture. Due to an important trade route, the cellars of Avas were not only the place to store the wines of the local wine regions, but also those of the surrounding wine regions. It is also an important sacred site, as it is home to the city's oldest building, the Avasi Gothic Reformed Church, and next to it, the city's oldest cemetery, both of which are now national monuments. The phylloxera epidemic of the 19th century brought about a significant change in the life of Avas, which destroyed most of the vineyards. Because of the trade, the wine cellars nevertheless flourished - new wine houses were built, table parties were formed, the Hungarian greats of political, scientific and artistic life regularly visited Avas in Miskolc. After the Second World War, another turning point occurred - the economy of the city shifted from agriculture and trade to industrial foundations, the wine cellars and wine houses lost their function, became neglected and forgotten. The place of the former vineyards has been replaced by large housing estates.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Miskolc was faced with the situation that, although its districts further away from the city center were an attractive travel and leisure destination, the historical Avas in the city center, despite all its uniqueness and rich past, turned into an area to be avoided, abandoned, and almost considered dangerous. The lookout point at the top of the hill did not prove to be an important enough attraction, and the staircase leading there avoided the rows of wine cellars. Local residents avoided it, and tourists did not even know this downtown location. But.. this is where Hungarian prehistory research began, here is the city's oldest church, Central Europe's largest pilgrimage route (Mária út) passes here, the winding rows of cellars still count more than 800 cellars, the lungs of the city center are the vegetation of Avas hill, so many this place is a cultural and historical monument. In poor condition - a few steps from the city center.

The task is made even more difficult by the fact that private properties, municipal properties and church properties alternately make up the area.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The path leading to the solution was long and complex, requiring not only a concept, but also time, energy and money to be invested. The joint intention and joint work of many actors was necessary to start the process, the results of which are now visible.

The values of the historical Avas were not lost, they were just temporarily relegated to the background. Civil societies were formed, which considered it important to revive the local wine culture, and to fill the wine cellars with content again. The local government wanted this important part of the city center to be re-entered into circulation, to become a favorite location for both local residents and tourists. He thought it was important to keep his values and make them visible as much as possible. For the church, the protection of the church and its surroundings and the preservation of the dignity of the sacred space are of prime importance. The demand from all three sides met at the same time, so the grassroots initiative coincided with the city manager's intentions. The complex work began about 15 years ago, which included the regular organization of wine and gastronomy Avas events and the infrastructural development, as well as the initiation of regular dialogue. After the initial steps and preparatory works, the process reached a more spectacular stage about 5 years ago, the events became more and more popular, the improvements were handed over one by one and the following ones were started, which continue to this day.

Developmental tools:

Events: Civil societies have realized that Avas will become an attractive location again if people can be attracted there. With this goal in mind, they started organizing gastronomy events. The cellar owners could get involved in the events, and they joined forces to open for a few days and offer a program to those interested. Later, more and more partners joined the small events and they attracted more and more visitors. Then more events took place, and Avas was filled with life for a few weekends. The most significant event began 11 years ago, and later others followed.

Infrastructural developments: Among the main problems of the historical Avas were the lack of public lighting, the lack of rainwater drainage, the condition of roads and stairways, and public safety problems. These were the first consciously planned developments implemented by the municipality from various tender sources within the framework of a long-term concept. These were followed by the creation of a multi-generational leisure park on the terraces above the rows of cellars, and then the renovation of the emblematic building of Avas mountain, the Avas Lookout, began, together with its surroundings. The renovation of the roof of the Reformed church was carried out, and the creation of the Israelite memorial site as a cultural and historical presentation site. A reception and event space was also created by renovating a wine house in a central location. The planning of the

complex development started before 2010, investments were made from 2010, most actively between 2019 and 2023.

Dialogue: Continuous discussions were held between the stakeholders as a basis for joint work. Working groups were formed and round table discussions were held so that the development of Avas could be implemented in all areas, involving all relevant actors. An important point in increasing the efficiency of the dialogue is the creation of the "mountain manager" position, in the framework of which he became the person responsible for the area, who connects the threads, and who, as a kind of coordinator, collects the comments of all actors, puts them into a system and channels them to the necessary place. Recognizes current problems and proposes solutions to deal with them. Effective communication between residents, civil and official organizations, municipality and church, DMO, cellar owners and event organizers was thus achieved.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

The key to success in this case is dialogue, local patriotism and cooperation. After common goals were agreed between the actors involved, the work that brings us closer to achieving the goals could begin. It is important that the recovery of Avas' old glory - or even surpassing it - was not only a task to be implemented by means of a decree, but also a bottom-up initiative. The involvement of the stakeholders in the ideation, planning and implementation tasks created harmony. However, it is important that the negotiations took place within an orderly framework.

It is also a key factor that the city directed its development plans and resources in such a way that Avas received the appropriate emphasis, so the necessary financial resources were also available for the developments realized.

Long-term and complex thinking is also the key to a change on such a scale. The historic Avas languished for decades before a slow recovery began in the 2000s. Although the spectacular developments have been realized in recent years, all of this required determination and preparatory work, small steps, through which the bigger ones could be realized. And developments are ongoing...

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The deterioration of a built environment is usually accompanied by the permanent presence of people pushed to the periphery of society. A downward spiral can develop, where self-stimulating

processes start. However, such a crisis situation can also be evaluated as an opportunity. What is important, however: problems can only be solved with a complex approach, where not only the local government must take the initiative, but also all the parties involved (local population, civil organizations, businesses, church institutions). In the case of Miskolc, the local winemakers and NGOs were the driving forces behind the development, and their activities were strengthened by the municipal developments and the financial and moral support of the cultural programs. The renovation of the wine cellars and the ever-increasing city gastronomy programs also had the power to organize the community and strengthened the local identity. It has become fashionable again among the people of Miskolc to buy and renovate a cellar and then fill the hillside with friendly meetings and regularly participate in cultural events. They understood that one of the most important elements of human relations is the personal meeting, the "slow-life". In today's fast-paced world, we need to make time for each other, it's important to talk over a glass of fine wine, and to keep not only our own home tidy, but also our wider environment. The well-being of local communities also had a positive effect on tourism. The beautiful, safe and special environment has become an attractive destination for tourists, who visit the hill's attractions in increasing numbers on weekdays and during festivals. Decades of problems have turned one of the city's most unique attractions into a success story through infrastructural developments, continuous common thinking and community building. Avas hill once again became something to look at, to look down on, and to live and have fun.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

As a result of the process outlined above, the historical Avas underwent a significant change. The rows of abandoned, dilapidated cellars were filled with life again. As a result of the events and infrastructural developments, demand for cellars increased, changes of ownership followed, and new wine houses were built one after the other. Since the start of the biggest gastronomic event in the city, i.e. in the last 10 years, about 100 cellars out of the approximately 800 cellars have changed hands. As the event became more popular and in parallel with the infrastructural developments, this process has accelerated in the last 5 years. Today, the wild, winding, cobbled streets of the cellar rows in Avas have become attractive locations for leisure, leisurely walks, and cultural exploration. The value of real estate began to increase, and slums eased. The largest gastronomy event of Avas moves nearly 30,000 people over two days, but in addition, many smaller events also fill the cellar lines from early spring to late autumn.

The terraces above the rows of cellars used to be an abandoned area to be avoided, but today the created leisure park is an attractive location for families with children, teenagers and the senior age group every day of the year. It has turned into one of the favorite parks of the people of Miskolc. The historical Avas is increasingly included in the flow of tourist visitors. The local guides are happy to show the values of Avas, the DMO boldly advertises the location among the attractions of Miskolc. While in the past it was difficult to even get into a wine house, today the local cellar owners welcome those interested with wine tastings and places to rent. The public safety of the area has also

improved significantly with the installation of public lighting to a reasonable extent and the installation of surveillance cameras, as well as the regular presence of people.

The community-building power of the historical Avás is also indisputable. In addition to joint gastronomic programs, they take care of and protect the reviving site by joint garbage collection, brainstorming together, and setting goals. Developments are currently underway, as some of the long-term ideas have been realized, and they have already brought spectacular results.

Tips for other destinations

Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions

The values of a destination must be preserved. Things that sometimes seem very challenging or almost impossible can be achieved with consistency, concept and joint work. Dialogue is important, as the work is significantly easier if the stakeholders participate in the various processes in agreement. We must be able to preserve our values in such a way that we can pass them on to local residents, tourists, and all responsible interested parties. However, for this we also need to see what is in their best interest. If we can pass on the love and knowledge of the destination to local residents and local service providers, they will convey this to tourists as well. In our tourism development strategy, we stated as a mission that we want to tell the story of Miskolc and ensure the growth of the city through the development of tourism. We stick to that, suggest to do that.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

The official tourist website of Miskolc: www.hellomiskolc.hu

The official website of the city of Miskolc: www.miskolc.hu

“Collect memories in Miskolc” image film: <https://youtu.be/QhB9WBICXo4>