

MINIMAL-WASTE HOSTEL GUIDELINES AND THE CONDITIONS OF ESTABLISHING GREEN TOURISM AND GREEN JOBS

Idrija Youth Centre Associations

Project Reduce!

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“ON THE PATH OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

In October 2019, the Idrija Youth Centre Associations entered into a 2-year project Reduce! in which it collaborated with Komunala d. o. o. (a local waste management company) and radio Primorski val (Radio Cerkno d. o. o.). The goal of the project was to analyse data and organise interactive workshops, lectures, courses, and larger events to raise awareness among young people about the zero-waste concept and to encourage the local community to upgrade mere separation of waste into a minimal production of waste. The Youth Centre believes that **the actions of every individual lead to larger positive changes in the society**. We wish to show the younger generation and others good examples proving that small changes in our everyday lives can make a big step towards cleaner environment and a healthier lifestyle, while also develop critical thinking regarding this topic – which also leads to a generally raised awareness in the future.

People are directly connected to nature but unfortunately sacrifice it all too often in our desire to acquire more and more capital and live a luxurious life. The society of today forces us to consume more and more. Yet our planet has a limited capability of producing raw materials needed for everyday life. Idrija has shown that local communities can achieve great things. **By raising awareness of the inhabitants and co-creating in the local community, we can make our town friendlier to the people and the environment. However, we must remain persistent and consistent as change will not happen overnight.**

In 2018, the Idrija Youth Centre Associations were joined by the Idrija Hostel that works in the same building. Tourism is one of the most important industries which has been rapidly developing and growing, especially in the recent years. Travel is more accessible than a few decades ago, which also invites many young tourists. However, tourism is directly connected to environment. That is why it must take care of the footprints it leaves behind with its activities.

Hostel, an opportunity for green jobs

When thinking of hostels, we often imagine rooms providing more or less cheap accommodation to various types of travellers – mostly youngsters but also older adventurers exploring new places. However, hostel is more than that: it is a flow of different people with unique stories, ideas, interests, experience, motivation, and plans for the future. A hostel offers its visitors an escape from reality and the fast lifestyles (even though it is only for a few days) and in that moment provides infinite possibilities for tomorrow. This is also why hostels are an important part of green tourism and a venue that can promote awareness about it. Everyone who has travelled at least once can say that they have brought back innumerable new experiences that affect their future life.

Therefore, a hostel can also be defined as a conglomerate of new acquaintances, ideas, good practices, skills, culinary exchanges, the support of local community, the contribution to local development, etc.

In the framework of the project Reduce!, our goal was to acquire basic guidelines on planning the activities of a minimal-waste hostel and on establishing green tourism and green jobs. Primarily, tourism does not act environmentally friendly. Quite the opposite, it often contributes to heavy volumes of traffic, pollution, etc. It is, however, not impossible to be sustainably oriented and minimise the harmful effects on the environment. This enables mobility, connectivity, employment, building preservation, reuse, etc. (Umanotera, 2014).

Green jobs in tourism (Umanotera, 2014) can be found in tourism providers which:

- Have progressive, green technology
- Offer green tourist products that decrease their negative effect on the environment
- Manage natural resources (forests, parks, lakes, rivers, etc.)
- Provide jobs that encourage green tourism offers: cycling, hiking, volunteering, self-sufficiency (communal garden, reuse, composting, rainwater collection, etc.)
- Organise the promotion of environmental protection

When planning for a hostel that wishes to achieve sustainable goals, you can focus on:

1. **Designing accommodations** that strive for green tourism and on
2. **Sustainable travelling** to your youth hostel that you can encourage you're your offer.

I, TOURIST

How can you contribute to sustainable tourism as a tourist (PZS, n.d., Kastelic, n.d.)?

- Group tourism
- Backpacking
- Shopping at local providers (if possible, with your own bag and packaging)
- Staying in eco-oriented accommodations (eco farms, zero-waste hostels, etc.),
- Using public transport (bus, train, carsharing, hitchhiking, etc.)
- Spending free time in nature (hiking, cycling, etc.)
- Volunteering
- Staying in accommodations that strive to leave a minimal environmental footprint (saving water and electricity, reuse, recycle, etc.)
- Engaging in travelogue lectures
- Traveling with reusable items (cutlery, cup/plate, water bottle)



WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GREEN TOURISM?

There are many definitions for both sustainability and green tourism – so much so that an individual might find themselves burdened by a flood of information. One of the official definitions Umanotera (Plan B, b. d.) takes after the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) describes sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is important to start gradually and with small steps, seeing things from the perspective of your team's strengths and the infrastructure available to you. We divided the hostel's activities into three parts that can help you begin establishing sustainable practices.

ACCOMMODATION

Try and follow the principles of reuse when you are designing/renovating the hostel: refurbish old things that can serve as new furnishings of rooms or common spaces. See what you already have; organise a “market”; or issue a public call for collecting specific things; contact the collection centres or reuse centres in the vicinity.

Make sure you have enough recycling bins: provide separate waste bins in the corridors to reduce mixed waste in rooms.

Establish a corner for exchanging second-hand (but still useful) clothes, shoes, and accessories. The visitors can leave things that they do not need any longer, while others can take these and/or exchange them for something else.

Signs and posters advising to save water and electricity.

Encourage reuse: offer to borrow reusable bags for shopping.

Encourage using water bottles and drinkable tap water.

Communal garden with herbs and vegetables.





FOOD

Compost organic waste.

Collaborate with local food providers – eco farms, local caterers.

Label leftover food with dates (when it was opened or prepared, etc.) and notes that anyone can take it (establish a food-sharing corner).



MOBILITY

Rent-a-bike (e-bicycles, mountain bikes).

Promote hiking routes in the vicinity and other green (recreational) areas: lakes, parks, rivers, natural swimming pools, etc.

Promote local markets, shops with local products and second-hand items, and shops selling products in bulk.

Provide information on public transport: bus timetables, info on carsharing groups, etc.

COMMUNICATION/PROMOTION

Make sure that your posts on webpages and social networks clearly express your goals and promote your sustainable practices.

Through regular posts on your webpage and through posters, communicate to your visitors how they can contribute to sustainability.

While promoting your offer, include the data on sustainable measures and good practices. Have clear communication with the public about your vision and goals and invite the public to help write your story.

Inform the visitors about the hostel's sustainable activities through posters explaining the meaning of sustainable tourism and why its principles are important.

MAINTENANCE

Increase energy efficiency through automated lights; choose energy-saving light bulbs, only heat the spaces in use; invest in a battery charger; choose energy-efficient devices – think about buying new appliances (refrigerators, washing machines, etc.); regularly clean lights; make sure heaters are not covered or blocked; do not heat the room while airing it.

Refill the cleaners' and disinfectants' packaging from larger packaging.

Make home cleaners (eco detergent, eco dishwasher tablets) and accessories (eco sponges and dishcloths from used cloth).

Install and use a rainwater collector.



LOCAL COMMUNITY

Collaborate with the local waste-management company to ensure separate waste collection (acquire an EEE (electronic and electric equipment) bin, organise separate waste collection).

Contact with the local community:

- Collect second-hand items (cups, plates, cupboards, cabinets, chairs, etc.)
- Organise events for visitors and the local community (travelogue lectures, reuse workshops, clean-up actions, cooking workshops, etc.)
- Non-profit renting of spaces for the activities of various interest groups, which encourages space sharing.



EMPLOYEES

Organise a team-building meeting with the employees where you can research the existing good practices and find space for improvement.

Establish an encouraging work environment with internal training in environment protection and with participation in external workshops. Broadening the knowledge and experience will increase motivation and productivity.



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PHOTOS: Idrija Youth Centre