



UKRAINE: CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURES IN THE DELTA OF THE DANUBE AND IN TISZA BASIN

The final end of the Danube's long journey across Europe was a place of hugely colourful and vibrant celebrations of the river, its cultures and heritage on Ukraine's Danube Day 2007.

In the Danube Delta, the town of Vylkove was the focus of the festivities, but other Odessa region towns such as Tatarbunary, Odessa, Kilia, Reni, Bolgrad and Ismail were also involved. On June 22 a convoy of cyclists and the sailing yacht "Akatsia" yacht set off from Odessa to travel to Vylkove. The yacht sailed 270 kilometres along the Black Sea coast and Danube delta, sporting a bright banner proclaiming "June 29 — International Danube Day". Both yacht crew and cyclists were dressed in Danube Day T-shirts, donated by Coca-Cola, and the cyclists handed out leaflets, newsletters and posters promoting the Danube Day celebrations in towns and villages they passed through. The cyclists and the boats arrived in Vylkove on June 29 to the greetings of nearly three thousand people and a grand orchestra, as Vylkove's celebrations got off to a fantastic start.

The day included an open-air festival in the old part of the city, with colourful exhibitions and stalls of local art and traditional crafts and embroidery, as well as souvenirs made from natural materials. The main street that runs along the Danube, and the port, where the concert will be held, was garlanded with flowers, and flags and dishes of the famous Danube herring were available for people to taste. There were boating trips on the Danube for all who wanted, with one of the boats attracting a great deal of interest since it used an ecological electric engine. The yacht "Akacia" also offered short trips. There was a fascinating exhibition of the work of local artist Alexander Sharonov, who specialises in representing local traditions and cultures, and the opening of a "Fisherman's Museum". Folk and classical music played by the national wind band from the neighbouring town of Kilia entranced everyone, and the day finished with a wonderful concert of folk bands from all the regions of the Danube.

While people enjoyed the celebrations, there was also an educational side: an associated educational campaign had been raising awareness of the ecological importance of the river and the need for conservation and environmental protection over the previous months. This campaign is aimed at the general public but especially children, and is based at the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. The doors of the visitor centre of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve were opened on the day of the festival and was visited by at least 200 people, who received informative materials such as: the latest issues of ecological newspapers, leaflets, flyers and a booklet "Danube is the River of Life". These materials were also distributed to passers by during the festival, as well as through schools, higher educational

organisations, libraries and other groups in the Odessa region, thus helping to raise awareness throughout the Danube Delta about the need to protect water resources and nature, to save the traditional cultures and ways of life of the Danube.

As well as these celebrations in the Delta, a special celebration was held for the first time in the Tisza basin, in Dilove village, Zakarpatska region, at the "Geographical Centre of Europe". Children composed songs and poems in honour of the Tisza. More than 70 drawings and works of art for the Danube Art Master were displayed and judged. On the eve of Danube Day 15 km of the river Tisza was cleared of rubbish. In total around 150 people took part in the celebration of the Danube Day at Zakarpattya. All the participants received diplomas of participation and posters and stickers about the rivers. The winners received books and other presents. The celebration was finished by fourchette with sweets and sandwiches and a special Danube basin cake for the all young participants.

The celebration was covered by local TV company "Tisza-1" (Uzhgorod). Two short reports were done in the news as well as a special 40 minute program about the Danube River Basin and the celebration of Danube Day, helping to spread the message even further in the region.

"There are no similar regions where the river unites a whole group of countries located on its banks –it is more than just a geographical notion"

Aleksandr Voloshkevych, Director of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

ORGANISERS AND PARTNERS

ODESSA - MAMA-86 (Kyive and Tatarbunary) • Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve • Odessa Ecological University • Vylkove Town Council • Ecological Club "Danube", Vylkove • Vernardskyi Youth Centre, Kilia • Environmental NGO "Zhaivoronok", Kilia • Environmental NGO "Eco-Ren", Reni • Southern Ukrainian organisation "Dobra Volia", Ismail • Worldlab (DEF) • Cola-Cola Ukraine • Zakarpattya Water Management Board • Zakarpattya Branch of the NGO "All-Ukrainian Ecological League" • Rakhiv Rayon Administration • "Aqua Euro Center" Ltd • "Aqua Dim" Ltd • "Nidan+" Ltd • Marble quarry "Tribushany" • "Energiya Karpat" Ltd. • Restaurant-museum "Centre of Europe"