

## Danube Day 2008 in Slovakia

### Inspiring children to look after their Danube

It was "Ships Ahoi" in Slovakia with boating adventures, scientific excursions and white-water rafting for Danube Day 2008. A day of water fun took place in Čunovo and Gabčíkovo; Slovak children joined the Danube Challenge river voyage (See Austria) and events were also held in Komarno and Liptovsky Mikulas.

Čunovo and Gabčíkovo were the venues for a host of water related activities on and beside the Danube, organised by the Ministry of Environment with support from Coca-Cola. The day began with boat trips from Bratislava to the Danube Day festivities. As well as enjoying the beautiful scenery, school children, students and adults learned about the Danube's history and wildlife and also the actions being undertaken to look after the river and its inhabitants. Arriving at Gabčíkovo, 500 primary school pupils and others had the chance to learn about the workings of the dam and carry out exercises on the water gauge station and mobile hydrometric unit, measuring river discharge and water quality. Danube competitions and fun lectures also provided an insight into the history of the Danube River for the children and their parents.

For those looking for adventure, there was free entry to the Čunovo Wild Water Facility. While, for those who preferred to stay dry, entry to the Gabčíkovo Information Centre was also free. The event had something for everyone, with a spectacular diving show; displays by the River Police and Red Cross; opportunities to learn about the work of the Hydro-meteorological Institute; and the chance to get your hands dirty in a river clean-up operation. As in previous years, children created 'Danube Greetings', messages of international solidarity, to send out to everyone in the Basin celebrating Danube Day.

The event also saw the culmination of the search for Slovakia's young Danube Art Masters of 2008. Organised by Daphne, Institute of Applied Ecology, pupils were invited to let their creativity run wild and make a piece of art inspired by their river. Martin Kratochvil and Tomas Spusta from Malacky town, Zahorie region, were crowned Art Masters at a ceremony at the Čunovo celebration. Their beautiful sculpture of a duck sitting near the water was made from driftwood, reeds, mud and grass found near the Morava.

Along with the Danube Challenge (where Slovak and Austrian children competed in water competitions on-board a Danube ship, involving both the Austrian and Slovak Environment Ministries) and additional events in Komarno and Liptovsky Mikulas, Slovakia's Danube Day both inspired and stimulated. It encouraged everyone, young and old, to protect their rivers and consider the multitude of different peoples who, like them, rely on the Danube waters.

## **Danube Day Partners**

Ministry of the Environment • A-agency • Sub organisations of the Environment Ministry • Government institutions • Danube Environmental Forum Slovakia • Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology (Bratislava) • Slovak Hydro-meteorological Institute • Global Water Partnership Slovakia (GWP) • Coca-Cola Slovensko, s.r.o. • Other non-governmental organisations • Gabčíkovo Dam Facility • Ministry of Education • Schools (including the Grammar School for the Environment) • Slovak Television • Radio Slovakia International • Other media organisations.

## **The Danube rivers: let's use them – not abuse them!**

For general information about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org) or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).