



Success Stories
#ChangingCities 

Nordic Walking, Skiing, Sailing, Biking and More: Khmilnyk Revamps Its Tourism Appeal

Khmilnyk is one of Ukraine's most popular health resorts. Tens of thousands of people come here every year for the unique healing mineral water and peat mud, as well as to enjoy refreshing strolls through the woods and along the boardwalk of the Pivdennyi Buh River. Yet despite the constant flow of vacationers coming to local spas and resorts, Khmilnyk's tourism industry needed to be fundamentally revamped and revitalized: tourist services offered by small- and medium-sized businesses were unsystematized, lacked proper advertising, and did not generate adequate revenue. In 2018, the city began to cooperate actively with the International Technical Assistance Project "Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance (PLEDDG)" aimed at comprehensive revitalization and continued development of the tourism industry in Khmilnyk.

First things first: the [Khmilnyk Resort Development Strategy to 2027](#) was developed. This was followed by several initiatives implemented in collaboration with the Tourism and Recreation Ukraine NGO and the Pravo NGO, which put the local tourism industry on a completely new growth trajectory.

“Even though Khmilnyk has been a resort town for almost 10 years now, nobody has been developing the local tourist industry meaningfully. There was no clearly defined strategy for attracting tourists. After all, the big local resorts are somewhat 'relaxing': people come here one way or another and are provided with all the essential amenities on resort premises: accommodation, meals, and entertainment. The initiatives implemented in Khmilnyk, with PLEDDG support, laid a sound foundation for the revamping and growth of the city's tourism industry. As part of these initiatives, we have at long last separated the concept of "tourists" from "resort guests", systematized information about existing and potential tourist attractions in Khmilnyk, began developing tourism destinations, and creating new tourist products. Without a doubt, big changes take time. So, we look forward to long-term fruitful cooperation with our colleagues and supporters, local business owners and government officials," says **Vitaliy Dorokh, Director of Pravo NGO**.

In early October 2020, a tourist information centre, funded by PLEDDG, opened in Khmilnyk. It offers city visitors detailed information on the most interesting locations and latest developments in the community. A website has been launched as a handy source of online information about the city's entire tourist infrastructure and accompanying services. The Tourism and Recreational Ukraine NGO has also launched new unique tourist routes in the city: a riverine route, a bicycle route, and a pedestrian route for Nordic walking enthusiasts. 5 electric scooters, 2 electric bikes, 7 bicycles, and 10 sets of skiing gear were purchased courtesy of PLEDDG for tourists' enjoyment. Two catamarans were also bought, and a catamaran rental office was fitted out. City guests now have a completely new selection of pastime opportunities from which to choose.

The newly created tourist centre will also launch its own small-scale production of handmade gifts in the immediate future. All items will be made by local residents who are learning to make artisanal gifts and to operate specialized equipment purchased with the financial backing of PLEDDG.

“All residents of Khmilnyk are welcome to attend out master classes free of charge. The training is primarily offered to retirees, women on maternity leave, and unemployed and otherwise underprivileged individuals looking to acquire new skills. We will get these people involved in cooperation with the tourist centre. We will be selling gifts made by them on the centre premises and at a dedicated store nearby. We have also made arrangements with the city authorities to install a vending booth with our gifts in the city park. The new equipment will make it possible to offer a highly diversified selection of gifts. For example, we will use the UV printer to print images on wood and ceramics in addition to paper or fabrics. We will use the laser engraver to make inscriptions and logos on glass, leather, acrylic, and stone surfaces. The embroidery machine allows applying stylish designs to t-shirts, caps, or face masks made of fabric,” says **Yakiv Nastasiuk, Director of Tourism and Recreation Ukraine (NGO)**.

The first training activities for city residents were master classes in making handmade dolls and beads. A local artisan delivered a four-day training course that enabled the participants to not only discover new creative horizons, but also find prospects for continued growth and development.

“I had never pursued handicrafts professionally, but I really like embroidery and folk motifs in creative arts. So, when I saw the advertisement for master classes on social media, I decided to use the opportunity to learn something new. Even more so because such events are a rare occurrence in our city. I really enjoyed the handmade doll-making classes and later even learned to operate the embroidery machine. It was very interesting. At each session we made ever more complex products and mastered various techniques and finer points of this art. For example, we started off by making single-row beads but finished beading using the so-called Shambhala technique. I find it particularly rewarding that I did not study this just for myself, as I plan to cooperate with the tourist centre, making custom handmade gifts,” says **Natalia Movchan, a native of Khmilnyk**.

Once the gift making operation is up and running, Tourism and Recreation Ukraine plan to get local business owners involved in the tourism cluster. The first steps towards its establishment were trainings designed to explain the benefits of cluster initiatives, which drew representatives of local resorts, hoteliers, restaurateurs, and other tourist industry business owners. The initiators are certain that such pooling of resources and efforts will gradually take tangible shape in Khmilnyk, and local businesses will appreciate the benefits of effectively structured cooperation.

In other words, systemic support from PLEDDG not only served as a powerful impetus for unlocking the tourism potential of Khmilnyk, but also created the necessary preconditions for the city’s economic revival, in addition to highly effective cooperation among local business owners, the authorities, and the community. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic remains the biggest obstacle for the development of tourism, the community of Khmilnyk is gradually bringing to life ideas for exciting pastimes for future visitors and reinventing the resort region.



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The series of success stories #ChangingCities demonstrate successful examples and innovative approaches to democratic governance and local economic development in Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts in Ukraine, that have resulted from the efforts of the international technical assistance project “Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance” (PLEDDG) which is being implemented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by Global Affairs Canada.

