



Success Stories #ChangingCities

Yaremcha Develops Its Tourist Industry Using a Strategic Approach, Systemic Training, and Promotion

The Yaremcha region is the most popular tourist destination of the Ukrainian Carpathians. More than 250 hotels and 700 rural tourism retreats receive close to 2 million guests annually. As history would have it, all population centres in the territory of Yaremcha City Hall are resort destinations, meaning that the region's economic development directly depends on attracting tourist flow and providing a high-quality offering of tourist products and services. For several years now, systemic development of the Yaremcha region has been further developing in close cooperation with the international technical assistance project Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance (PLEDDG).

Among other things, the [Tourism Development Strategy to 2027](#) and its [Implementation Plan](#) (and eventually the [Yaremcha Marketing Strategy](#)) were developed under the auspices of PLEDDG. The [Association of Hoteliers and Retreat Owners of Yaremcha Region](#) was created to stimulate the development of the hospitality business in the region. The Association is presently one of the key partners in the implementation of key activities. Looking to build the competencies of business owners and share experience effectively on an industry-wide scale, the Association held 4 large conferences for hotel and restaurant proprietors.

Throughout 2020 (which became a tough challenge for all tourism industry representatives), two comprehensive initiatives were implemented in the Yaremcha region with a view to supporting and developing small- and medium-sized enterprises in the tourist sector. Both initiatives were made possible thanks to PLEDDG. The [Social and Business Initiatives Centre](#), an NGO, successfully implemented the Professional Development and Marketing Agency project, which involved 3 professional training courses for 70 people: SMM for the tourist sector, courses for baristas and tour guides.

“In recent decades, green tourism has been actively developing in and around Yaremcha. As the tourist flow intensified, new resorts, retreats, and cottages began mushrooming all over the place. Small tourist businesses in Yaremcha are typically family businesses, and the business owners are not always aware how they can market their services effectively. And yet they cannot afford to hire an external expert to this end. Meanwhile, a simple rule is at work in tourism: a better salesperson has more guests. So, as part of the Professional Development and Marketing Agency, we taught local business owners how to effectively market and sell their services online,” says **Volodymyr Karpyn, Director of the Professional Development and Marketing Agency project.**

Bohdana Fashtryha, Director of the [Museum of Ethnography and Ecology of the Carpathian Land](#), was among those taking the courses. She joined the training initiatives as a trainee taking the SMS, but also worked as an instructor for travel guides.

“In June, when Yaremcha experienced an unprecedented low season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I saw the ad for the courses and thought to myself: “What a wonderful opportunity to learn something new!” I used to manage the museum's profiles on social media without possessing the appropriate competency. The course instructor provided a professional explanation of how we can promote certain goods or services in a competent and effective manner. Along with the other participants, we mastered the fundamentals of social media marketing, which will definitely come in handy both for better promotion of hotels and retreats and for advertising purposes, such as ads for artistic events. I started putting the newly acquired knowledge to practical use and I can already say that the audience reach and activity have increased. After some time, I became an instructor teaching the tour guide course. I found this experience even more interesting because we assembled a wonderful group of people who have been working in the tourism sector for a long time. We had both classroom lessons and practical lessons where everybody could try their hand at being a tour guide. We met many great people and became friends, and our meetings invariably featured a lively discussion and sharing of thoughts and experience. Two weeks flew by as if it were single day! Such activities are extremely important: by enhancing the competency of tour guides, we are reinforcing the positive image of our city. After all, a tourist's impression of a city is often shaped by their communication with the tour guide,” says **Bohdana Fashtryha.**

The project authors decided to inform the public at large about how local business owners study, improve their services, and actively participate in the development of the local community. To this end, they arranged a press tour for journalists, thereby making their own contribution to the collective effort of enhancing the favourable image of the Yaremcha region as a destination where preparations are underway to welcome visitors despite the ongoing crisis.

“Fifteen media representatives joined the final press tour. Experience shows that staging promotional events for journalists can produce a truly tangible effect when it comes to popularizing a particular kind of recreation, tourist infrastructure facilities, and the city in general. Over several days, press tour participants, along with the members of our team, visited establishments that employ (or are owned by) graduates of the Professional Development and Marketing Agency courses. Talking to the business owners directly, the journalists received reliable information firsthand about the reasons to pursue training, how the newly acquired knowledge is used in practice, and the first achievements and results of every business,” **Volodymyr Karpyn** adds.

Concurrently, the Yaremcha Region Development Institute (NGO) (in partnership with the Association of Hoteliers and Retreat Owners of Yaremche Region and PLEDDG) implemented another integrated initiative titled: “The Carpathian Gem”. As part of this initiative, the sociology agency Fama conducted an in-depth survey of the region’s tourist appeal, and its findings helped gain a better understanding of the needs of vacationers and became a starting point for the development of subsequent Yaremcha promotional activities. An essential element of the project involved introducing local business owners to the advantages of tourist business clusters.

“We held separate workshops for restaurateurs, travel agencies, and tour guides, explaining the advantages and prospects of business clusters. We talked about how such associations will help to attract more customers to every individual business, while offering business owners the capabilities that they lack on their own. We answered the key questions of participants: who needs this, why it is easier to work together, and what tasks can be accomplished collectively. Sectoral associations within the tourist industry are needed because the interests of restaurateurs and tour guides are completely different, to put it mildly. And yet the same tourist is the target audience for both,” says **Andriy Dzvinchuk, Director of The Carpathian Gem project and Chair of the Yaremcha Region Development Institute.**

Myroslava Churevych (owner of the Grazhda retreat in Yaremcha) attended the workshop with a great deal of enthusiasm. She has been working in the local tourism industry for only a year and a half, so she wanted to use the opportunity to better get to know local hotel and restaurant owners.

“The meeting was very interesting and informative. Invited speaker Tetiana Honcharenko discussed the successful performance of the association of tourist sector business owners in Lviv. Such examples are worth following. We discussed the kinds of experiences from which we can learn and borrow. Since I first came to work at the retreat, I have been observing the active growth of the tourist industry in and around Yaremcha, and I know from the example of my own establishment that the flow of guests is growing with each passing year. It is important to continue creating new tourist products and services to give vacationers a wide selection of pastimes. We have to unite and help one another for the industry to flourish and to give guests a comfortable and interesting experience,” says **Myroslava Churevych.**

To promote the Yaremcha region, several products and materials have been created. They use various formats to tell potential guests about the tourist appeal of the region. Tourists can now use them to easily find out about the most interesting natural locations and services of local business owners. For example, a website has been launched, presenting the tourist industry of Yaremcha in Ukrainian, Russian, and English: Every visitor can find complete information about the best places to overnight, have a meal, or have fun.

“Apart from the site, we have created an electronic navigation map implemented via a Telegram chat bot. Users can connect to it by scanning a special QR code to be posted at reception desks of local hotels, in restaurants, and at tourist landmarks. The chat bot is full of information that will come in handy for tourists: famous landmarks, tours, monuments of sacral architecture, food service establishments, meadows, off-road vehicles, ATV and horseback tours, spa centres, hot tubs, and sports gear rental offices. We have also created a convenient hard copy map. But this is not all: in late October we staged a promo tour of the Yaremcha region for over 30 Ukrainian bloggers, which lasted several days. Because of this collaboration, we managed to reach a vast audience of readers and tell them about our region in media space where we normally make little noise,” says **Andriy Dzvinchuk.**

Through a collective effort, local business owners and dedicated organizations are reinventing the Yaremcha region and shaping the image of the region as a destination for healthy recreation and a centre for business tourism and recreational activities in the Ukrainian Carpathians. All strategic documents were developed with the help of local government representatives, business owners, and NGOs, with PLEDDG support. They are fostering the systemic development of the local tourist industry, even in these trying times.



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.

