

1/ Field trip to Great Lel Inner Island

We conducted a field trip with participants to tour one of the Danube's largest islands, Veľký Lél. Through an engaging lecture by colleagues from the NGO BROZ, we learned about its unique biota, history, and conservation-friendly management. The group also had the opportunity to take boat rides along the Danube and see firsthand the achievements of a successful project aimed at reconnecting side river arms.

After a hearty lunch, we crossed over the Gabčíkovo Dam and explored the Bodíky side-arm system, where further strategies for managing the water regime in these precious floodplain forest ecosystems were presented. Although we did not manage to complete the entire planned program due to time constraints, the excursion was greatly appreciated by participants, who left with many valuable insights and memorable experiences.





2/ Field trip to UNESCO's Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve and Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape

The excursion to Biospheric Reserve Dolní Morava was very successful, the weather was kind to us all day. The participants visited both the natural part of BR, i.e. floodplain forests and meadows at the confluence of the Morava and Dyje rivers, they were introduced to the history of the country and the current challenges that need to be addressed in the country, as well as the historical and cultural part, represented by the Lednice-Valtice area. Here they visited a unique park near the Lednice castle.



3/ Field trip to Protected Landscape Area Pálava

The excursion to the landscape protected area Pálava joined natural and cultural heritage issues of the landscape. We climbed three limestones hills – calvary above the town Mikulov, Kočičí kopec, and Děvičky with the ruins of the medieval castle. Questions of the landscape management were discussed. The sunny weather, delicious lunch, and final coffee stop in the vinery village Pavlov confirm the good mood of the participants.



Fig. 1: On the top of the Děvičky hill with the view on the alluvial plain and Nové Mlýny dam under the hill.



Fig. 2: Small way-side shrine on the way to Pavlov.

4/ Field trip to Devín and Devínska Kobyla Nature Reserve

The participants of the excursion to Devín and Devínska Kobyla were very satisfied, the weather was good for us, it was beautifully sunny and warm. They enjoyed the boat trip on the Danube, during which they asked a lot about the surrounding vegetation, the water conditions (floods on the Danube), about which Robert Kanka informed them professionally. They were satisfied with lunch and then we visited Devín Castle, where we had an expert explanation of the history, they were enthusiastic about the view from the castle of the confluence of the Morava and the Danube and of nearby Austria. The highlight was a professional field trip with an explanation by Dr. Littera from BROZ in the area of Nature Reserve Devínska Kobyla, focused on farming in this protected area, mainly the restoration of mowing and grazing on grasslands, the uprooting of non-native and invasive trees. In doing so, they cooperate with local farmers, the arboriculture department, the municipality and of course volunteers. The participants asked a lot of questions, were interested, and received really professional answers.



5/ Field trip Tracing the history of the viticulture landscape in Svätý Jur and the roots of the IALE history

The excursion went without any major problems. The weather was excellent. The participants enjoyed the tour of the vineyards in Svätý Jur the most, combined with wine tasting from the local winemaker and vineyard owner, Mr. Bažalík. The visit to the wine museum in Pezinok was not as successful due to the large number of participants and the small size of the museum. We had to be divided into two groups, which was a bit limiting. Some considered the visit to Piešťany unnecessary, but many appreciated the outdoor tour of the LINEA hotel, where IALE was founded.





6/ Field trip: Exploring the Agricultural Landscape of Slovakia **Hrubý Šúr, Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou, Smolenice**

The excursion had four stops, with the route leading from Bratislava through the Danubian Lowland and ending at the foothills of the Little Carpathians. Participants had the opportunity to explore the agricultural landscape of Slovakia—its historical development and current state. The first stop was at the innovative vegetable farm Agrokruh in Hrubý Šúr. The farm owner introduced a unique technology he personally developed for growing vegetables. This ecological circular system of soil cultivation uses a rotating arm equipped with tilling and irrigation devices. The second stop was in Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou at the cooperative farm Podielnicke družstvo Hrnčiarovce. Participants were warmly welcomed in traditional Slovak fashion—with folk costumes, bread, salt, and a shot of apricot brandy. This was followed by a presentation of the farm and a visit to the Museum of Socialist Agriculture, which briefly transported us back in time.

The lunch stop took place at Smolenice Castle, which serves as the congress center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. After lunch, we enjoyed a guided tour of the castle, including a view from the tower and a short introduction to the surrounding landscape and its unique features. The final stop was at the company Včelovina, which, in addition to producing honey and mead, also maintains a bee garden—a space dedicated to educating visitors about bees.

The excursion received positive feedback from participants. In beautiful weather, they had the chance to get to know the southwestern Slovak landscape more detailed, its characteristics, history, and future challenges. As a delightful bonus, they appreciated the tasting of traditional Slovak products.



Fig.1: Innovative Circular Soil Cultivation System at the Agrokruh Farm



Fig. 2: Traditional Slovak Welcome at the PD Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou Farm



Fig. 3: Group Photo of Excursion Participants on the Tower of Smolenice Castle



Fig. 4: Presentation of Mead Production at the Včelco Company in Smolenice

7/ Field trip: Banská Štiavnica – mining landscape

The excursion to Banská Štiavnica delighted participants from the very beginning, presenting mining as a fascinating phenomenon that has shaped both the landscape and society, with the Bartolomej mine offering vivid examples of historical techniques and their modern counterparts, highlighting the dynamics of technological and social development of the society. In the historic town center was introduced the city's cultural and intellectual evolution over several centuries alongside the transformations of the landscape shaped by mining and subsequent revitalization efforts. The guide's lively and richly informed commentary captivated the group to such an extent that they kept "bombarding" him with questions not only during the tour but even over lunch where answers seemed to whet their appetite more than the food itself, creating a cheerful and cordial atmosphere. Panoramic viewpoints from several locations offered participants the chance to "read" the landscape as an archive of human activity and natural processes, reflecting both its transformations and the efforts at revitalization. The overall mood of the excursion was relaxed, friendly, and heartfelt, with conversations naturally shifting from professional discussions to

inspiring reflections and dissemination of the personal experiences. The entire excursion was regarded as an exceptionally enriching and unforgettable experience, bringing not only immediate impressions but also inspiration and impulses for future professional work and personal growth.



Fig. 1. Participants of the Excursion No. 7 are wearied mining helmets and coats with headlamps.



Fig. 2. Participants of the Excursion No. 7 in front of the Bartolomej mine ready to enter the mine open-air museum in Banská Štiavnica



Fig.3. IALE miners in the Bartolomej mine



Fig. 4. Guided tour of the historic center of Banská Štiavnica with leading the group.



Fig. 5. View of the reconstructed Calvary in Banská Štiavnica from 1744, considered the most beautiful in Slovakia.

8/ Field trip: Changes and potentials of the urban environment

The excursion focused on a walk along the Danube embankment with a focus on the urban development of the city and the architectural characteristics of the settlement, as well as the social driving forces that had a fundamental influence on the formation of the urban space, we started from a natural science perspective, namely in the Botanical Garden of Comenius University. Pleasant sunny and warm weather allowed us to perceive the beauty of the garden not only visually, but also by smell and touch. The guide provided the participants of the excursion with many such experiences, which were commented on with juicy stories related to plants. We walked through the garden and greenhouses, smelled and touched many plants typical of Slovakia, but of course also exotic from a European perspective. The personnel composition of the excursion was excellent, because colleagues from the Asian and American parts of the world supplemented the information about the plants. It was an excellent start to the day for socialization and discussions. From the botanical garden, we walked along the Danube embankment, from the Lanfranconi Bridge to the SNP Bridge. We had several stops with expert commentary. During the walk, we were accompanied by an expert in urban development and history. The walk was therefore extremely informative. We learned many connections and reasons why and in what architectural style each part of the city changed. The information inputs about the buildings that line the Danube bank in Bratislava were very attractive.

Information about the two bridges that framed our excursion area was also important. Each of the bridges has its own story.

The final "point" of the excursion was also very successful. We took the elevator to the UHO viewpoint on the SNP Bridge. The weather was beautiful, providing the excursion participants with wonderful panoramic views of the urbanized environment. The city of Bratislava presented itself as a city full of greenery, with a cozy historical center, regenerated housing estates from the socialist era, but also as a city with modern zones with skyscrapers. We saw many attractive landmarks of the city (e.g. Bratislava Castle, Kamzík TV Tower, National Bank of Slovakia and

others), including tall buildings from the studio of the world-famous architect Zaha Hadid. The tired legs of the excursion participants finally rested in the UFO restaurant, from where we enjoyed the views of the city of Bratislava while enjoying refreshing drinks. The people, the weather and the mood were excellent. We spent a wonderful day together.



Fig. 1. Guided tour in the Botanical Garden.



Fig. 2. In the greenhouses of the Botanical Garden of Comenius University in Bratislava.



Fig.3. Participants of excursion No. 8 at the UFO observation deck "in the clouds".



Fig. 4. Greenery in Bratislava on the Danube bank from a bird's eye view



Fig. 5. View of Bratislava from the SNP Bridge



Fig.6. View of the historical centre of Bratislava.



Fig. 7. Interior of the Café at the tower of SNP Bridge

9/ Field trip to Bratislava Forest Park

Trip was focused on presenting the history of the development of the forested, submontane area in the hinterland of Bratislava. The participants were introduced to the landscape used for recreation and forestry, which has undergone various stages of development in the past – from traditional mills on the Vydrica River, devastated landscape during the period of excessive logging and industrial development, recreational spa landscape at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and militaristic history, especially during World War I. The current recreational and forestry use of the area is adapted to the requirements of nature and landscape conservation, but it still faces pressure for construction development, and ecosystems are threatened by the spread of invasive species of fauna and flora and climate change. The participants of the excursion most enjoyed the information provided by J. Kollár about forest ecosystems and the threats they face, as well as as well as his commentary on the view of Bratislava from the Kamzík television tower.

