



## **CUSTODES: pilot actions in Municipality of Velenje**

Municipality of Velenje is implementing two different pilot actions within the CUSTODES project. First pilot action is exploitation of “valley of castles” and the second one is exploitation of archaeological site – castle ruins.

### **Šaleška dolina valley – The valley of castles**

The city Velenje lies in the heart of Šaleška dolina valley. Local people often describe the region as a valley of castles. There were near 20 castles and manors existing on very small geographical area (less than 100 km<sup>2</sup>) in the last 700 years. To this number we have to add numerous historical villas from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today one can visit three different castles which are in the walking distance from the Velenje city centre – Velenje Castle, Šalek Castle and the ruins of the castle Ekenštajn. The oldest castle in the area is the Šalek castle, which originates in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the name of the valley actually comes from the name of this castle.

The pilot action will re-establish the “trademark” valley of castles” for Šaleška dolina valley and Velenje as its centre. The pilot action will include two separate measures:

- informatization of selected castles and establishment of so called castle route
- implementation of geocaching activities on the castle route and lakes of Velenje



## Exploitation of the “valley of castles”

### **Background and target groups**

Velenje has well developed cultural infrastructure, high talent pool from Velenje and surrounding reg. Festival Velenje organizes a lot of festivals, local production and a lot of other events each year. Cultural beat and offer in Velenje is increasing as we are nearing the year 2012, when Velenje will be one of European Capitals of culture.

The structure of visitors in Velenje reflects the offer. Most of visitors are staying in Velenje for one day – visiting one of the cultural, youth or sports events. The tourism challenge in Velenje is to keep the visitors in for more than one day. For that goal we have to enhance the use of existing natural and cultural endowments. The “valley of castles” initiative - creation of the castle route and installation of information infrastructure is one of the activities in this direction. A lot of energy is invested in the creation and improvement of conditions for developing tourism infrastructure in the vicinity of lakes of Šaleška dolina valley.

With our model of exploitation, we put the castle in a position of a junction for different target groups:

- **young families, kids and youth**
- **castle tourists**
- **outdoor activities enthusiasts - geocachers**
- **castle tourists.**

Tourist offer in Velenje and surrounding area in the near past could be described as fragmented and without visible concept. For the purpose of conceptualising and rounding up of natural and cultural tourist endowments in Velenje and Šaleška dolina valley an artificial legend of Pozoj – the lake dragon was born.

### **Pozoj – the lake dragon “legend”**



*Thousands and thousands of years ago, a small and clean lake, exuberant of life and natural beauty, existed in Šaleška dolina valley. This lake has been home to a friendly lake dragon Pozoj, who swam to the surface at nights, eating the fern and never harming anyone. And then the lake began to dry up. The home of Pozoj became endangered and suddenly he had no place to live in. Pozoj thought, that the lake is disappearing because of people living and farming in the vicinity of the lake. He got more and more violent and started to attack farmers who found refuge in surrounding hills. People lived there in simple farmhouses such as Kavčnikova domačija in place called Zavodnje, which is the only intact farmhouse left from that period and it is nowadays altered to a museum.*

*As said before, Pozoj had no problems with destroying simple farmhouses. After destroying them all, Pozoj unleashed his fury against fortified mansions and castles, owned by rich aristocracy. Pozoj managed to ruin many of the castles in Šaleška dolina valley, once known as the valley of castles. Fortunately, the Velenje castle was too well fortified and it could not be destroyed by Pozoj. Massive building of Velenje castle is still watching over the valley.*

*The lake dried out completely and living in the valley became unbearable for Pozoj for his skin hardened to a stone. He escaped to the hills and had slipped through a crack in Smrekovec mountain undergrounds. Pozoj settled down in a vast underground lake. But the water was too cold for him there so he started to gather coal under the Šaleška dolina valley and burn it to heat up the water. Hot water*



*came to the surface in a place called Topolšica and a thermal spa resort had been built on that spot. Pozoj remained underground for centuries and he slowly got forgotten by the local people.*

*At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a strange looking and fragile black stone was discovered by the peasants in Velenje. Scholars explained to the locals that this black matter is actually a coal. Then the coalmining industry begun in Velenje. Miners had built a vertical shaft to the coal deposits. One night Pozoj found that shaft and escaped through it to the surface. After he came up to the surface he found out, that the environment was totally polluted by the mining industry. Frustrated about the situation, Pozoj went back underground. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century miners woke up Pozoj once again. He came up to the surface and he was positively surprised about the clean and friendly environment that awaited him. Pozoj joyfully plunged into the lake where he lives toda, peaceful again in company of carps, bleaks and other fish.*

*(Written by Dr. Emil Šterbenk, translated by Marko Govek)*

**This legend and its elements will be included to corporate identity of promotional materials of local tourist products.** The Pozoj story was very well accepted in local community and tourist service providers, who are already providing services connected to the story – for example the Pozoj cake from a local restaurant:



## Castle route informatization

Defined target groups will be reached and addresses by following means:

- Information materials on spot: on the selected castles information tables will be set up, providing brief history and description of the castle  
**(Forseen date of implementation: March 2011)**
- Interactive map with GPS and multimedia support:  
This interactive map will be accessible on the web page and customised version of this web site will be provided for the use with smart phones. The functionality of the portal will be:
  - GPS guidance on the castle route
  - Presentation of castle history and properties with multimedia contents on the smart phone**(Forseen date of implementation: May 2011)**
- Implementation of Geocaching outdoor activity game:  
Geocaching will be organised and implemented as a treasure hunt on the castle route or trail of Pozoj dragon. Custom made Geocoins (with image of Pozoj and CUSTODES logo) will be provided as collectible objects for the geo-hunters as well as "travel bugs", which objective will be to visit all other geocaching locations established within the CUSTODES project.  
**(Forseen time of implementation: Spring 2011)**
- Web portal:  
Web portal will cover all the multimedia contents of the CUSTODES pilot action in Velenje: GPS repository of all developed contents, instructions and web links for the geocachers, and GPS interactive map users.  
**(Forseen date of implementation: May 2011)**

### Exploitation of archaeological site

At the castle Šalek site archaeological excavations were already performed years ago. During the CUSTODES project we have obtained a lot of photo and textual materials about artefacts from our Museum. National Institute for the Protection of Monumental heritage is preparing the feasibility study about the potential excavation on the Ekenštajn ruins which is located right next to the Šalek castle.

In our model of exploitation of the artefacts found in the Šalek castle we will provide digital – web presentation of all findings with their descriptions and references of their use and functions. The most interesting findings could be replicated and sold as a souvenirs from the valley of castles. The idea was already presented to local handcraft producers.



(One of the most interesting artefact found on the site of archaeological excavations in Šalek castle - "medieval pocket multifunction solar watch")



A few interesting graphic materials were also discovered about the Ekenštajn castle which is now in ruins. This material will be used as a guideline to implement a contest of young multimedia artists who are creating in the Kunigunda – regional multimedia centre. With this competition we plan to get as many as possible of digital visualization of the possible looks of Ekenštajn castle. After conclusion of the contest an exhibition of contest results will be implemented.

**(Forseen time of implementation: November 2010)**