

SUCCESS STORY

MOLDOVAN ENTREPRENEURS ATTRACT TOURISTS WITH AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

USAID and Sweden support rural SMEs to exploit market for authentic tourism with accommodation upgrades and diversified activity offer.

The warm chatter of tourists reverberates around the courtyard of Hanul lui Hanganu, mingling with the steam from a delicious bean stew being cooked in the open-air kitchen. On this cold and sunny morning, the smile on the visitors' faces says it all - simple food, fresh air and warm hospitality are the key ingredients of an unforgettable experience.



Photo credit: MCP
Photo caption: Sergiu and Emilia Hanganu, owners of the Hanul lui Hanganu rural B&B welcoming guests with bread, salt and wine, according to Moldovan

From least visited destination to top 10 recommended

Moldova is one of the least visited destinations in the world according to the Lonely Planet but its undiscovered potential makes it the perfect destination for a new type of tourist, in search of innovative, personal and authentic experiences.

Sergiu and Emilia Hanganu, the owners of the 'Hanul lui Hanganu' Bed and Breakfast on the banks of the Nistru river, have tailored their business to target this growing segment of the tourism industry. The small guesthouse, located in the village of Lalova, houses seven bedrooms decorated in a traditional style, and offers a range of traditional experiences to attract guests for 365 days of the year. From outdoor cooking and boat trips on the Nistru in summer, to horse drawn sleigh rides in winter, and even a conference room, there is something for everyone.

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Tourists search for authentic attractions and rural slow life experiences

Properly organized and supported, the tourism sector in Moldova could grow 10-fold in the next 10 years and contribute up to 3% in GDP growth by stimulating business development, job creation and attracting foreign tourist dollars. However, at present only about 10 out of the 26 rural guesthouses registered in Moldova offer accommodation in line with Western standards. USAID and Sweden support rural tourism SMEs to upgrade their accommodation and diversify their activity offer, attracting high-spending tourists interested in authentic and immersive rural experiences.

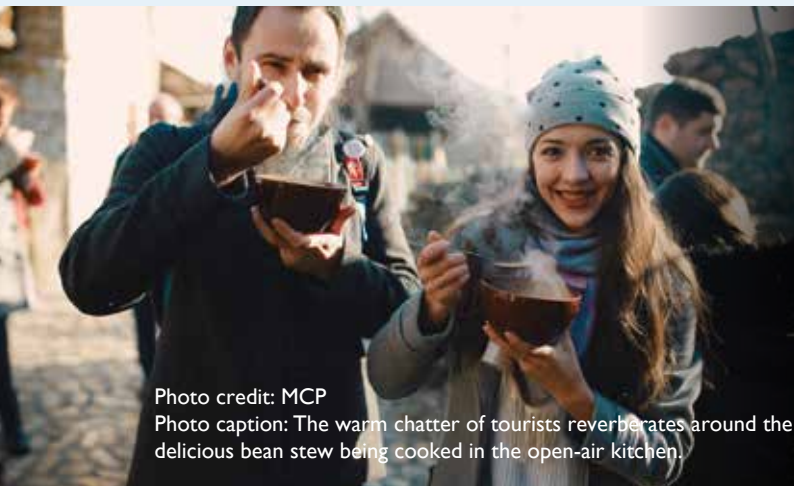


Photo credit: MCP

Photo caption: The warm chatter of tourists reverberates around the courtyard of Hanul lui Hanganu, mingling with the steam from a delicious bean stew being cooked in the open-air kitchen.



Through its Hospitality+ program, the Moldova Competitiveness Project invested \$20,000 USD in Hanul lui Hanganu’s to upgrade its tourism facilities, from accommodation to dining areas and outdoor recreation. The Hanganu family invested \$32,000 USD of their own money into the improvements, demonstrating their confidence in the potential of the business to provide for the next generation. “It’s a family business that we [run] with our son and two daughters”, says Sergiu.

Investing in rural development

The business now has a Booking.com rating of 9.5, and the Hanganus are branching out into value-added food production, registering products with the internationally recognized “Protected Designation of Origin” mark. This provides the opportunity for extra sales to tourists in-situ, and also leveraging income from interested consumers far away.

The Moldova Competitiveness Project, funded by USAID and the Swedish Government, has been supporting Moldova’s tourism industry since 2013 stimulating economic growth in even the most rural regions, stimulating the emergence of tourism entrepreneurs, and contributing to a reduction in poverty and migration. The Hospitality + Moldova program will continue until 2020, providing investments in rural guesthouses for infrastructure upgrades and promotion, developing capacity within the tourism industry.

“We have been working since 2006, but we have only now realized the grand plans that we’ve been dreaming of for many years, thanks to financial support from USAID and Sweden”

**Sergiu Hanganu,
Owner of “Hanul lui Hanganu”**



Photo credit: MCP

Photo caption: Traditionally decorated room in the Hanul lui Hanganu guesthouse