



Photo: Martin Sopinec

Camp at the Little Carpathians, Slovakia

August 2024 / Restoration Academy





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Nature Restoration in Slovakia



- **Focus Areas**

- Reversing impacts of land abandonment, invasive species, and habitat degradation
- Target habitats: traditional meadows, dry grasslands, wetlands, forest edges

- **Typical Volunteer Activities**

- Removing invasive shrubs and trees
- Mowing and raking biomass in dry or semi-dry meadows
- Clearing forest edges for butterflies
- Building enclosures to enable the return of traditional grazing
- Restoring wetlands or watercourses by hand

- **Key Actors and Funding**

- Environmental NGOs, local municipalities, State Nature Protection Agency (ŠOP SR)
- Funded often by EU LIFE Programme, Operational Programme Quality of Environment, and other grants

- **Recent Efforts**

- NGOs like BROZ, Strom života, SOS/BirdLife Slovakia have engaged hundreds of volunteers
- Camps organized in unique habitats: Little Carpathians, Danube river islands, Eastern wetlands, rocky steppes in the White Carpathians



Photo: Frankie Turk

About the Camp



- **Objective**

- Practical demonstrations of nature restoration at **Smolenice – Molpír site**
- Location had been used for livestock grazing for centuries, resulting in the formation of a meadow ecosystem with rare orchids and the Clouded Apollo butterfly (*Parnassius mnemosyne*).
- In recent decades, however, grazing ceased, and invasive shrubs and trees gradually overtook more than half of the area. Among the rare species inhabiting the site are the Purple Orchid (*Orchis purpurea*), the Red Steppe Spider (*Eresus kollari*), and several butterfly species, including the Old-World Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*).

- **Restoration Actions for Volunteers**

- Removing invasive plants and trees
- Mowing, clearing, building enclosures to reintroduce goat grazing in the area
- Thinning and clearing forest edges adjacent to the meadow to support butterfly populations

- **Project Details**

- Restoration work carried out in cooperation with the municipality by the civic association BROZ and supervised by the State Nature Protection Agency
- Funded by **LIFE Programme (LIFE23 NAT/SK/101148306)**, implementation **June 2024 – Sept 2031**



Photo: Frankie Turk



About the Camp

- **Logistics and Facilities**
 - Bus transport Bratislava ↔ Smolenice
 - Mobile toilets rented
 - Free facilities: cottage and tent site at a local farm, showers at a nearby football stadium
- **Slovakian Youth Event Regulations:** Applies to events with **>5 participants under 18**
 - Camp was limited to **4 days** to avoid stricter health authority requirements
 - Isolation area had to be secured for sick individuals (we rented a guesthouse room)
 - Qualified healthcare professional on site were required
 - Hygiene compliance:
 - No cooking at camp
 - Lunches and dinners at local restaurant
 - Breakfast delivered daily from a local store (fresh food)
 - Regulations vary across EU – check early when planning





Camp Program Summary (4 Days)

Monday

Departure from Bratislava → Smolenice

Tent setup and lunch at Smolenice Castle

Ice-breaker games

Presentation of the restoration area by State Nature Protection Agency

Dinner at the castle and free time

Tuesday

Breakfast

Restoration work (morning and afternoon)

Lunch and dinner at the castle

Shower, evening games and free time

Wednesday

Breakfast

Restoration work (morning and afternoon)

Lunch and dinner at the castle

Hike to Záruby peak (optional)

Shower, evening games and free time

Thursday

Breakfast

Packing and tent dismantling

Lunch at the castle

Departure to Bratislava





Key Resources for the Camp

Organizing Team

- 2 camp coordinators
- 1 healthcare professional
- 2 restoration specialists (BROZ) – present full camp
- 2 restoration specialists (State Nature Protection Agency) – only on the first day

Material Provision

- Groceries, basic kitchen equipment for breakfast: electric kettle, coffee machine, generator (also for phone charging), waste bags, etc.
- Well with drinking water (tested)
- Lockable cottage for storage and rain shelter
- 2 mobile toilets, hygiene supplies (soap, toilet paper), showers
- Restaurant bookings for lunches and dinners
- Tents
- Hand tools for restoration work

Intellectual and Other Resources

- Restoration plan for priority grassland habitats (for rare orchids, butterflies, pollinators)
- Camp coordinators' preparation and implementation worktime
- Outreaching several youth organizations and some in-person visits to recruit volunteers to the camp





Camp Preparation Timeline

Month	Key Tasks
May	Approval of the camp date, contacting entities for site selection, site selection and informing partners, creating invitation and registration, agreement on personnel arrangements
June	Communication campaign for recruitment starts, site visit for work, tents, showers, contacting restaurants for vegetarian offers, selecting restaurant and finalizing menu, coordinating registration and dietary preferences starts, booking group transport, ordering mobile toilets
July	Planning breakfast and contacting food supplier, preparing materials, tools, and equipment, compiling final information for participants
August	Camp realization
September	Feedback and evaluation





Camp Budget Summary

Category	Amount (€)	Details
Travel	658	Bus (€600), petrol for car (€58)
Food	5,150	Groceries (€449), restaurant meals (€2,587)
Accommodation	165	Tenting at a local farm site
Camp Coordinators	4,895	Two persons from May to August preparing and implementing
Expert Fees and Tools	1,000	Restoration guidance and hand tools
Healthcare	450	Qualified professional
Other Costs	372	Mobile toilets, basic hygiene supplies
Total	12,690	<i>(34 participants; excludes international travel costs)</i>

