

Integration of UNESCO mercury heritage into Geopark Idrija

BOJAN REŽUN¹, MOJCA GORJUP KAVČIČ¹, SANJA MARIJA PELLIS¹, MARTINA PELJHAN², AND MARTINA STUPAR³ - 1. *Idrija Heritage Centre – Geopark Idrija Ulica, IX. korpusa 17, 5280 Idrija <bojan.rezun@gmail.com>* ¶ 2. *Idrija Mercury Mine, Bazoviška 2, 5280 Idrija* ¶ 3. *The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Nova Gorica regional unit, Delpinova 16, 5000 Nova Gorica*

During its five-centuries-long mining history Idrija was always a top player in mining technology development. The process of enlisting mercury-mining heritage on UNESCO started in 2006 and was completed in 2012 with the successful nomination of Spain and Slovenia with 'Heritage of mercury, Almadén and Idrija'. Enlisted heritage sites in Idrija comprise the town centre with the entire mine complex, the mercury ore deposit, underground galleries and shafts, the water channel Rake with the Kamšt water pump system, the smelting plant and four preserved water barriers Klavže which bear evidence of immensely sophisticated technology of timber supply for the mine.

No more than one year later, in 2007, the striving for protection of the geological and other natural and cultural heritage in Idrija Municipality within Geopark Idrija began. We firmly believed that beside the technical heritage, the natural endowment that enabled such large-scale expansion of mining and the intangible heritage are essential, too. Geopark Idrija was established in 2010. It encompasses the entire municipality territory. We strived for a complementary content of both nominations running simultaneously.

Geopark Idrija successfully joined the EGN and the GGN in 2013. The parallel combination of UNESCO heritage title and the geopark status offers an incredible opportunity to participate in preservation, protection, presentation and promotion of cultural, natural and intangible heritage. All managers and caretakers of UNESCO sites are also Geopark Idrija partners. Slowly Idrija's recognition being a UNESCO destination increases and simultaneously it expands its offer to the countryside together with other Geopark Idrija partners, emphasising protection of nature combined with sustainable development. All of this also provides progress to the countryside as such and to the offer of Geopark Idrija.

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