

REPORT

*This report is to provide all information about the two week experience of Ksenia Koc due to scholarship program, funded by **Forum Synergies**, implemented at **Farm 3B** and hostess from **Albanian Alps Alliance**.*

PRESENTATION OF THE NGO “ALBANIAN ALPS ALLIANCE” AND “FARM 3B”

- **ALBANIAN ALPS ALLIANCE**

Albanian Alps Alliance represents a union of 7 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in North Albania, active in the field of biodiversity protection, mountain sustainable development, community mobilization, etc. The Alliance advocates for the beneficial interaction between the Northern Alps community with the local natural-cultural assets of the area. Through years, the Alliance and its members have gathered around themselves professionals, entrepreneurs, volunteers and donors who are keen on fostering rural and mountainous development by better managing its resources in a sustainable way. The Alliance strongly works with local potentials, by designing interventions that initiate people to people activities, people to land planning's, people to social status improvements. The Alliance members continuously contribute by implementing projects of great sensitivity, such as Sustainable management of local assets, Good governance, Community Networking, Capacity building, Culture & Nature promoting, Awareness campaigning in local feasts etc. The vision of the Alliance is to mitigate the transformation impact of the Albanian Alps into "Smart Alps".

- **FARM 3B**

Beach, nature, cycling, birdwatching, guesthouse, food? Everything? But where? All these are accessible and quite easy through Farm 3B, the most interesting and innovative package in one of the most prominent tourist area in Northern Albania, Velipoja. Farm 3B includes Bed - Breakfast - Birdwatching and is a very interesting interweaving between nature, forest, sea and mountain through several tourism forms. The Farm has 3 rooms: main room with a large library, 2 sleeping rooms (one double and one shared room with 3 single beds). Through the Farm you have the opportunity for accommodation and deeper exploration of the area. This opportunity is not exclusive as it has thought of all nature-lovers, providing space and camping. Currently, at Guesthouse - our farm, we offer accommodation services and light meals with local products. An important element that we promote in Farm 3B is Birdwatching, where Buna river passing nearby is a world corridor of migratory species. Velipoja, in addition to sea tourism, also has protected areas that offer scenic views, one of which is the Reserve, which can be considered both a challenge and an adventure, the exploration of which requires some specifics and appropriate safety measures found in the Farm 3B. We enable them, such as: backpacks with the necessary materials during a trip to the forest, a suit suitable for cycling as well as technological devices such as cameras, etc., to best reflect the experience and share with others. Farm 3B has

the ideology of a multi-space guesthouse, which in the long run, will be used as an exhibition / ecological environment, open to visitors.

PRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE

Introduction

This opportunity of a two-week scholarship program was realized at Farm 3B Guesthouse located in Velipoja. This report outlines experiences, learning outcomes, and observations during the host stay.

Accommodation and Facilities

Farm 3B Guesthouse provides comfortable and welcoming accommodation throughout stay. The rooms are well-maintained, and the facilities, including communal areas and Wi-Fi access, big garden, meet all practical needs for studying and relaxation. The peaceful environment of Velipoja contributes significantly to the focus and engagement with the scholarship program. House is located in a very calm area, near the beach, forest and it offers great condition to feel comfortable to realize a various of activities.

Educational Activities

The scholarship program included a diverse range of educational activities aimed at enriching our knowledge and skills in sustainable rural development. Farm 3B is the perfect place to implement this kind of program because you can mix both theory and practice activities and information. During this time, Kseniia, had the opportunity to visit the sea, watch how different activities change the vibes of a hole community, because during summer Velipoja has a different activity rather than in winter. In Velipoja there is also a protected area, named “Rezervat”, which is a forest, where inside you can find the watch tower. We use bicycles to make this visit and from there you can see different species, where some of them are classified as rare species. We also visited the avenue of Velipoja, which has been builded lately and you can visit almost the whole area of beach. We also dedicated some days to visit Shkodra, the city, the three most populated avenues of Shkodra, the Cathedral, the Municipality, the Mosque and the oldest neighborhood of Shkodra. A special day was dedicated to Shkodra Castle, which has a very unique history and for the most touristic area of our city called Shiroka. Buna river, Drin river, Taraboshi mountain and Lake of Shkodra are very close to each other, where from Buna Bridge you can see all of these. Kseniia was very impressed by nature potential and how in this small city you can find treasures like that. We visited also the office of NGO, and share with Ksennia a lot of information about it. The NGO is focused on rural development and environment protection, so this was a great combination of scholarship goal and implemented program. Birdwatching is a activity that we do with all our guest and tourist, where we use telescope to realize it. Kseniia had the chance to try it and she used to like it a lot.

Cultural Exchange and Networking

This opportunity was a great chance for us and for Kseniia to have a wonderful cultural exchange, because from situation in Ukraine, she here found something totally different. She felt very comfortable and explore a lot by herself after we use to go together before she went alone. She didn't hear for Albania before and also was her first time travelling for so far and she got adopted very well.

Personal Growth and Reflection

Beyond academic and professional development, the scholarship experience at Farm 3B Guesthouse contributes significantly to a personal growth. As long as it was a new and a different experience of what she was used you, I do believe that it challenged her to step out of comfort zone, adapt to new environments, and develop independence and resilience. Reflecting on time at Velipoja, I think she feel more confident in her abilities and inspired to pursue further opportunities in rural development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this two-week scholarship experience at Farm 3B Guesthouse in Velipoja was both rewarding and enriching. We are grateful for the great collaboration and we do also welcome in further experiences. The knowledge gained, friendships forged, and memories created will undoubtedly influence her academic and professional journey moving forward.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Forum Synergies for making this scholarship opportunity possible.

Recommendations

Based on this experience, we would highly recommend Farm 3B Guesthouse as a venue for future scholarship programs. The serene environment, educational resources, and supportive community create an ideal setting for academic and personal growth.

Albanian Alps Alliance and Farm 3B

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