

A Landscape Full of Churches: The Gothic Trail as an Example of a Cross-Border Cultural Tourism Project

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Medieval buildings and their artistic furnishings in the rural landscape of the border region between southern Bohemia and Upper Austria are often considered outstanding examples of European Gothic art. In terms of Late Gothic architecture, on the Czech side these include the churches in Kájov, Dolní Dvořiště, and Zátoň, and on the Austrian side, those in Königswiesen and Freistadt. The church in Kefermarkt houses a uniquely well-preserved late-Gothic winged altar, a fine example of masterful woodcarving; the artists who created it also left their mark on the Czech side. On the Czech side in particular, a number of buildings are closed for security and staffing reasons, and access for the general public is very limited. The project Gothic Trail (Mühlviertel/AT–South Bohemia/CZ) focuses on making Gothic cultural heritage and Gothic art accessible to and promoting them among the general public. The project builds on the existing Gothic Trail concept developed in Upper Austria 25 years ago and aims both to revitalize this trail and to extend it into South Bohemia. The main objective of the project is to make Gothic cultural heritage accessible across borders with an emphasis on digitization and modern technologies. The project is innovative in that it combines expertise in art history, contemporary digital technologies and technology-based marketing tools into a single tourism product aimed primarily at promoting religious sites in the rural landscape as tourist destinations. The project will contribute to the preservation and promotion of Gothic cultural heritage and to the development of tourism in the Czech-Austrian border region struggling with high unemployment. The proposed presentation will introduce the outcomes of the project and, above all, provide insight into the process of achieving its objectives, which are to be met by the end of 2027.

