



**Good Practice Story Title:
Forest to Fork: Miskolc's Bold Step
Beyond Industrial Heritage**

Destination: Miskolc

Country: Hungary

Submitting Organization: MIDMAR

Category *(check only one box):*

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing



Destination description (150-200 words)

Nestled at the foothills of the Bükk Mountains in northeastern Hungary, Miskolc is the country's fourth largest city and the cultural and economic hub of the North-Hungary region. The city lies embraced by the Bükk Mountains, which have shaped its history and traditions for centuries — through industries such as ironworking and trade, for example. The symbiosis between the forests of the Bükk and the city itself inspired the concept of 'Miskolc, the City of the Bükk', which integrates both the industrial past and the long-standing coexistence of humans and nature into the tourism offer of a metropolitan environment.

Miskolc's character is defined by four diverse districts. Diósgyőr boasts one of Hungary's most iconic medieval castles. Miskolctapolca is famous for its unique Cave Bath, where visitors bathe in thermal waters within ancient limestone caves. Lillafüred, in the heart of the Bükk National Park, captivates with its waterfalls, forest trails, and romantic architecture. The city centre pulsates with cultural life, from the Miskolc National Theatre to the wine cellars of Avas Hill and its panoramic views. Balancing heritage and innovation, Miskolc is reinventing itself as a vibrant, sustainable urban destination where natural beauty, cultural richness, and industrial legacy coexist in harmony.

Summary of Good Practice Story (150-200 words)

Miskolc, once defined by its industrial past, is undergoing a powerful transformation into a vibrant, sustainable tourism destination—thanks to the grassroots efforts of local service providers. United under the name *Bükki Kör* (Bükk Circle), a group of restaurateurs, hoteliers, winemakers, and entrepreneurs launched a bottom-up movement to reshape the city's image. Frustrated by outdated perceptions, they began building a new identity rooted in gastronomy, nature, and community values.

One of their most innovative initiatives, the *Edible Forest* program, connects forest managers with local restaurants to craft seasonal menus inspired by the Bükk Mountains' natural bounty. This not only enhances the culinary experience but fosters awareness and strengthens local value chains grounded in ecology and tradition.

In 2024, the Bükki Kör organized *GASTOUR*, Hungary's first international conference on sustainable gastronomy, reinforcing Miskolc's commitment to responsible tourism. That same year, a Bükki Kör member assumed leadership of the city's destination management organization, allowing grassroots ideas to shape official strategies.

Today, the city's tourism efforts are unified under a bold new brand—“*Miskolc, the City of the Bükk*”—which reflects a community-driven approach to economic development, sustainability, and authentic visitor experiences. Miskolc is no longer just a city, it's a movement.



Issues faced (150-200 words)

Despite its rich natural surroundings and cultural heritage, Miskolc has long struggled to overcome a deeply rooted industrial image. While the city has made significant improvements in infrastructure, green spaces, and cultural venues, public perception has lagged behind. Many still associate Miskolc with pollution, danger, and economic decline, overlooking its proximity to the Bükk Mountains, vibrant festivals, and local traditions. This outdated stigma has hindered domestic and international tourism, weakening the city's appeal as a destination.

Compounding the image problem was a lack of strategic coordination in tourism development. The sector was fragmented, with minimal collaboration among stakeholders and little connection between urban attractions and surrounding nature. Gastronomy, one of the region's strongest assets, remained disjointed—rich in raw potential but lacking a unifying narrative.

These challenges also had sustainability implications. Social cohesion was weak, environmental assets underutilized, and there was no guiding vision to transition toward a more inclusive, responsible tourism model. Crucially, the tourism sector lacked both bottom-up energy and top-down support to reimagine the city.

In this context, the emergence of the *Bükk Kör*—a grassroots alliance of committed local service providers—offered a turning point, uniting fragmented efforts and creating a foundation for transformative, sustainable tourism development.

Solution (100-150 words)

To shift the city's narrative and foster more cohesive development, a group of proactive local actors took the initiative to collaborate beyond institutional frameworks. Their shared intention was to create a new, relatable identity for Miskolc—one that celebrates its connection to nature and culinary heritage while centering local voices. By joining forces, they began building synergies between producers, hosts, and natural resource managers. One standout initiative emerged from this collaboration: a creative concept linking forest harvests with gastronomic experiences, which served as both an ecological and cultural storytelling tool. This initiative sparked broader engagement and inspired further action. Through successful funding applications and growing visibility, the group gained momentum, culminating in a city-wide conference that united stakeholders around sustainability in food and tourism. Their approach eventually gained formal recognition, opening the way for collaborative planning between grassroots actors and municipal leadership—laying the foundation for a long-term, locally anchored tourism strategy.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied (500-600 words)



During the transformation of Miskolc, local businesses united around a shared purpose to reimagine the city’s identity and tourism offer—shifting toward a destination model based on sustainability, collaboration, ecological awareness, and cultural authenticity.

Through regular professional workshops and thematic meetings, restaurateurs, winemakers, producers, foresters, and creative professionals identified resources and planned joint actions. These forums evolved beyond strategic planning into value-driven spaces for community dialogue. One of the most distinctive innovations born from this process was the “Edible Forest” concept.

Developed through a unique collaboration between local chefs and forest managers, Edible Forest program integrates seasonal wild ingredients—mushrooms, herbs, berries, and game—into the city’s gastronomy. This created a compelling narrative that elevated forest biodiversity and seasonality while offering visitors a sensory connection to place through food.

Building on this foundation, the Edible Forest program adopted a phased, ecosystem-based approach that united gastronomy, nature tourism, cultural heritage, and social inclusion. It began with mapping stakeholders already working with local and wild ingredients.

The Edible Forest concept engaged an increasing number of tourism service providers, leading to the expansion of the initiative — this marked the launch of the Taste of Bükk program. Through co-creation events, workshops, and site visits, chefs, educators, NGOs, and tourism actors collectively shaped a shared vision rooted in the Bükk landscape.

Training sessions and inspiration days focused on safe harvesting practices, biodiversity education, and cultural heritage. The historic Palotaszálló became a living lab, where forest-based, plant-forward menus were introduced in a fine-dining context. The hotel became the first hospitality provider in Hungary to obtain the **Good Travel Seal (GTS)** certification, setting a national example for sustainable hospitality.

To expand access and awareness, public events and thematic dinners were hosted across Miskolc. These showcased wild and seasonal ingredients in community-friendly formats, improving food literacy while reinforcing the Edible Forest identity. Visual tools—seasonal calendars, branded menus, and storytelling displays—helped deepen visitor engagement. A major milestone in professional outreach was the **GASTOUR conference**, which brought together national and international experts in gastronomy and sustainable tourism, positioning Miskolc as a hub for innovation in forest-based food culture.

A core pillar of success was the development of cross-sectoral partnerships. Close collaboration with the Bükk National Park Directorate enabled the inclusion of certified “**National Park Products**”—such as teas, honeys, and jams—into restaurant menus and local markets. These products now serve as edible souvenirs and event gifts, strengthening local supply chains.



Social sustainability was enhanced through partnership with the **Szimbíózis Foundation**, an organization employing nearly 300 people with disabilities. Their herbal teas and artisanal cheeses are now featured in local hotels and events, embedding inclusive value creation into the gastronomic ecosystem.

Innovative experiential formats brought the forest-to-table idea to life. The **GasztroExpressz** mini train tour combines nature interpretation with tasting stops in the Bükk, while events like **Miskolci Borangolás** and **Taste of Bükk** pair regional wines with forest ingredients, reviving the Bükk Wine Region and enhancing destination identity.

Strategically, the initiative was integrated into official tourism and branding efforts under the umbrella of “**Miskolc, the City of the Bükk.**” This ensures long-term support, funding, and promotional visibility within broader sustainability goals.

Finally, the area's recognition as part of the **Bükk UNESCO Global Geopark** opened new doors. Programs inspired by the **Szeleta culture**, a local Paleolithic legacy, are now in development—reimagining prehistoric foodways through paleo-gastronomic events and educational storytelling. By combining nature, culture, gastronomy, and inclusion, the **Edible Forest** has grown from a concept into a holistic system—a replicable model for place-based, sustainable destination development.

Achievements and Results *(250-300 words)*

The initiatives driven by the Bükki Kör have led to tangible and meaningful changes in how Miskolc is perceived, experienced, and managed as a tourism destination. One of the most significant achievements is the shift in local narrative—from an outdated industrial image to a place of natural abundance, culinary richness, and community-driven innovation. This evolving identity has started to resonate both locally and nationally, with Miskolc now increasingly featured in domestic travel publications, culinary blogs, and tourism media as a rising gastro-cultural hub.

Economically, the Edible Forest initiative and related collaborations have increased demand for local products and services. New partnerships have been formed among accommodation providers, guides, and farmers, creating integrated visitor experiences that encourage longer stays and greater visitor spending.

Socially, the program has fostered a stronger sense of ownership among stakeholders. The network now includes over 30 active members across sectors, many of whom had never previously collaborated. The success of GASTOUR—Hungary’s first international sustainable gastronomy conference—demonstrated the city’s capacity to lead on key industry topics and strengthened local pride. It also created valuable professional connections across the country, laying the groundwork for future joint projects and knowledge exchange.



Environmentally, the use of seasonal, wild-sourced ingredients has raised awareness about the ecological value of the Bükk forests. Visitors and locals alike are learning more about biodiversity, foraging ethics, and traditional ecological knowledge through gastronomy.

Most importantly, the strategic alignment between the grassroots movement and municipal tourism planning has institutionalized the new direction. With the “City of the Bükk” program integrated into city development plans, Miskolc now has a sustainable tourism roadmap that is inclusive, resilient, and scalable.

Lessons Learned and Advice (150-200 words)

Miskolc’s transformation offers actionable insights for destinations aiming to revitalize their tourism identity through sustainability and community-driven innovation.

Start with People and Place: The most powerful resource is the local community. Engaging stakeholders early and building on shared values ensures that tourism growth reflects community needs.

Align Grassroots and Governance: True impact was only possible once bottom-up energy met top-down support. Grassroots groups often bring authenticity and agility, while municipal structures offer stability and scale. Bridging the two can unlock long-term, systemic change.

Leverage Local Assets Creatively: Miskolc didn’t imitate other cities—instead, it built a unique narrative around its natural and cultural richness. The “Edible Forest” experience shows how destinations can turn overlooked assets into signature offers through storytelling and creative partnerships.

Think Small, Act Sustainably: Big budgets aren’t always necessary. Small wins, local sourcing, and place-based narratives can reshape perception over time. Food, in particular, is a powerful tool that connects economy, culture, and ecology.

Advice to others: Start where the energy is. Trust local knowledge. Build genuine partnerships. And let sustainability be not just a strategy—but the story you tell.

Recognitions and Additional References

The Bükki Kör’s work and the city’s repositioning efforts have received national and international attention, underlining the value of a locally driven yet strategically aligned tourism approach.

- GASTOUR Conference (2023) – Hungary’s first international sustainable gastronomy event was organized by the Bükki Kör with EU support, drawing professionals from across the country to discuss circular gastronomy, local food systems, and regenerative tourism. The event positioned Miskolc as a national pioneer in sustainable food tourism.
[GASTOUR official site & summary](#)
- Bükki Kör Association – A grassroots network of gastronomy and tourism professionals



committed to sustainable destination development in and around Miskolc. Their work exemplifies community-led transformation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

[Bükk Kör website](#)

Media coverage:

- <https://www.boon.hu/helyi-kozelet/2024/11/fenntarthato-turizmus-miskolc-bukki-kor> - The official launch of Miskolc's new tourism identity, focusing on its natural assets and sustainable development goals
- <https://www.vg.hu/turizmus/2024/05/miskolc-uj-atrakciok-eheto-erdo-program> - Miskolc enters the tourism market with new attractions, the Edible Forest program is already a huge success
- <https://turizmus.com/cikk/podcast/miskolc-midmar-elmanykozpontu-kinalat-digitalizacio-fenntarthatosag-kassay-tamas-podcast> - Miskolc is striving for an experience-oriented offer, with a focus on gastronomy and events – podcast
- **Green Destinations TOP 100:** Miskolc's Avas project was included in the 2023 list of sustainable tourism practices - <https://www.minap.hu/kornyezeti/2023/10/10/fenntarthato-turizmus-100-legjobb-jo-gyakorlat-kozott-miskolc>
- **Good Travel Seal:** Hotel Palota in Miskolc, a member of the Bükk Kör, was the first hotel in Hungary to obtain the GTS certification - <https://www.turizmus.com/cikk/szallashely/a-lillafuredi-palotaszallo-elsokent-szerzett-good-travel-seal-minositest-magyarorszagon>