

Towards Loess (Geo) Tourism

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Loess represents aeolian deposit covering mostly lowland areas of the mid-latitudes during glacial and postglacial times and covers 10 % of Earth's land surface. Loess-palaeosol sequences represent important palaeoclimatic and palaeoenvironmental archives on land. Furthermore, loess deposits in the Vojvodina region (North Serbia) can be regarded as one of the most important European terrestrial records of climatic and environmental changes during the last million years which makes them valuable scientific resource. Unfortunately, these sites are endangered by numerous, mostly human, factors and could be degraded permanently.

Taking into account the presence of the scientifically attractive and significant landscapes of the loess region of Vojvodina, the National Board for geological heritage, in collaboration with Nature Protection Institute and Chair of Physical Geography of Department for Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management from Novi Sad, has been dealing with many proposals of potential geotourism and geoconservation development of loess sections. Due to their multidisciplinary values, these geosites could be presented and interpreted (geotourism) to much wider audience as relative monotonous loess landscapes just camouflage fascinating geological, archaeological and historical records preserved at the loess-palaeosol sequences.

Although the loess profile in Stari Slankamen gorge was pronounced for a Monument of Nature in 1975 as the only protected loess profile in ex-Yugoslavia, it was not until Loess Research Group started thorough investigations in late 90s, did any other loess conservation or promotion had been planned or put in practice. The first idea for the loess geotourism destination in the Vojvodina region suggests Titel loess plateau as geotourism destination and only a part of much wider area - Loess Geopark in Vojvodina. However, the first practical step towards implication of loess geoconservation and geotourism in Vojvodina was made by the Municipality of Indija which recognised values of loess profile in Stari Slankamen and initiated the project entitled "Loessland". This project includes building an attractive modern multifunctional thematic combined visitor and research centre at the mere loess cliff in Stari Slankamen. The construction would be made of glass, with sever-

al levels leaning on the loess profiles, which should allow visitors ready and safe access to loess stratums piled up in different periods of creating Earth's crust.

The aim of this paper is to overview major problems and threats, and also demonstrates all values (aesthetical, scientific, educational, economic, etc.) of loess-palaeosol sequences in Vojvodina with both theoretical and practical proposals of geotourism development at these sites.

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