

Research in Graubünden

mira!cultura - A focus on culture

Guided tours stimulate cultural tourism in Surselva

Local guided tours are considered a “perennial favorite” among tourist offers, but often suffer from a somewhat dusty image. At the initiative of the two museums Regional Surselva and Waltensburger Meister, mira!cultura was launched in 2015. The aim was and still is to convey regional culture to visitors in a lively way with the help of local guides. The term “mira!cultura” is derived from Rhaeto-Romanic and can be understood as follows: “Look here - this is where culture takes place”. In 2017, mira!cultura commissioned the research group “Tourism and Sustainable Development” of the ZHAW outpost at the Center da Capricorns/Wergenstein to develop a simple tool that would help guides to check and adjust the quality of their guided tours on their own.



Insight into the sacral art and cultural history of Brigels. Image: A. Aregger

Stefan Forster, head of the research group and responsible for the project, explains the approach: “Cultural outreach in the form of local guided tours is an important offering. However, there are only few data that give us information about the quality of the guided tours. That’s why we visited local tours, interpreted guest surveys and researched literature on the topic of cultural outreach in order to be able to answer the following questions: What do participants expect? How do you write a good script? The entire service chain,

from the initial information, to the booking, to the actual guided tour, can be compared to a film, in which every scene should be well thought out and coherent. Guests want “stories from the valley” and contact with local culture, among other things, from a local tour.”

Until the end of 2020, the research group of the ZHAW has supported mira!cultura in establishing and implementing the quality management. The guides in the Surselva carry out their work with joy and commitment. In the last few years, three training courses were held in which they were able to develop their own 90-minute guided tour with their own content under the guidance of experts. Since then mira!cultura has become firmly anchored in the varied tourist offers of the Surselva. Surselva Tourismus AG, as a partner of mira!cultura, sees cultural tourism as an important strategic pillar: “This is groundbreaking, because elsewhere cultural content is still sometimes treated with neglect”, adds Forster.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a temporary negative impact on local tours in the Surselva. Nevertheless, the topic of near-travel combined with cultural experiences has since gained in importance in Switzerland. Forster is therefore convinced that the local guided tours can benefit from this trend in the future. At the beginning of 2021, the association AMAS (Associazion diils museums ed archivs culturals Surselva), newly founded in 2020, took over the management of mira!cultura. AMAS is responsible for the development of new offers, education and training of the guides, quality control, and the handling of group bookings. Find out more about the mira!cultura program and get to know the guides in Surselva: www.miracultura.ch.

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Since 2007, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW has maintained a branch office in the Viamala region. The ten-member research team at the Center da Capricorns (www.capricorns.ch) in Wergenstein specializes in research and services in the fields of sustainability, tourism and regional development.

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Stefan Forster. Image: O. Item/Somedia