

SUCCESS STORY

MOLDOVAN YOUTH PROMOTE COUNTRY'S TOURISM POTENTIAL

“Moldova is a country that not only deserves attention, but really must be seen in person” says Moldovan teenager Pavel Bas. He is only 17 years old, but after a 530-mile road trip around the country, armed with nothing but a video camera, he is now an authority on what his country has to offer a visitor.

Moldova Competitiveness Project (MCP) invested in a multi-channel digital marketing campaign, #BeOurGuest, focused on attracting visitors to Moldova's rural areas. More visitors result in more jobs in hospitality, providing a valuable alternative to migration for the thousands of rural women who leave the country each year.

Tourism is a \$3 trillion industry worldwide and is growing by 10% each year, providing income and jobs for 1 in 10 people around the world.

The #BeOurGuest campaign is based on MCP research that shows Moldova's warm hospitality is the country's most attractive asset. Pavel Bas and his friends saw an advert within the campaign, inviting youth to create a video showcasing Moldovan tourism opportunities to other youth. They jumped at the chance. “We needed a new test that could take us out of our comfort zone” he says.

The group was determined to prove that the famous reputation of Moldovan hospitality is true. They plotted a route around key sites and destinations they had never visited, and decided to visit them all by hitchhiking. And it worked.

The resulting high-quality video won the #BeOurGuest video competition and is has been profiled on national television, inviting other young Moldovans to get ‘out of their comfort zone’ and discover their country. The prize is a hot-air balloon ride over the country, but Pavel and his



Photo credit: Anatol Tomasa, MCP
Photo caption: Pavel Bas

friends have given the ride to a children's' leukemia charity, the very embodiment of Moldovan hospitality. “We already live our lives to the max, I think there are other people who deserve it much more than us”.

MCP is funded by USAID and Sweden, and invests in the development of Moldova's tourism industry.

“Everyone, absolutely everyone who stopped their car, agreed to help us for free. In over 530 miles, we did not spend any money. This is proof of the true hospitality and kindness of our people”

**Pavel Bas,
Winner of the #BeOurGuest video contest**

As a result of MCP activity, Moldova is now placed as one of Europe's 'top-10 must-visit destinations' in global publications such as Trip.com and Lonely Planet, only four years after being declared Europe's 'least visited destination'. The number of foreign visitors is also beginning to increase, with 17 percent average growth during 2016-2017, reaching up to 3.2 million visitors and 121,000 tourists.