

1. The hydro – insulation of Gjirokastra Castle and the proposed “Chronicle in Stone” Museum.

In early March, the GCDO encouraged and supported the production and broadcast of a documentary about Gjirokastra’s heritage. The documentary - a production of Albanian Public Television - was a prime time broadcast in two series and enabled the GCDO to highlight the need for the hydro-insulation of the extensive Gjirokastra Castle roof. Hydro-insulation is not just essential to ensure the long-term protection of the castle, but it is also the first step in the GCDO efforts to create a new regional museum – provisionally entitled the “Chronicle in Stone”- that will serve as a focus point for the increasing numbers of tourists visiting the city and the region.



The
Government
of Albania
has verbally
committed
funds to the
project and
the
commitment
was



reiterated by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, Ylli Pango in Gjirokastra on April 19th. Mr. Pango was in Gjirokastra to inaugurate the start of works to restore six category one houses in Gjirokastra along with seven other buildings in the bazaar. This restoration project is being managed by UNESCO. Meanwhile, GCDO had completed the cleaning of the terrace from the remainings of a movie, produced years ago in the ambience.

2. Agreements signed with the Municipality of Gjirokastra and the Regional Directorate of Institute of Monuments of Culture in Gjirokastra.

During the months of March – April the GCDO signed two important partnership agreements with the Gjirokastra Municipality and the Regional Directorate of the Institute of Monuments of Culture in Gjirokastra. The agreements formalized the cooperation that GCDO has with these two important partners along with the support of other ones, during the rest of 2008. Projects are likely to include a building conservation school, a restoration project (with UNDP's help), an artisan training centre (with Swiss Contact), the development of tourist signs in the town and improvements to the environs around the Castle.

3. The 2008 tourist season and the Tourist Information Center in Gjirokastra (a GCDO project).



The first anniversary of the opening of the TIC fell on 17 March, 2008. The TIC has served 4049 tourists, two thirds of the total number of tourists visiting Gjirokastra. Data this year shows there is a 25% increase in tourists numbers since last April while three foreign journalists, writing about Gjirokastra, have also experienced TIC service. Further improvements have been made to the tourist service.

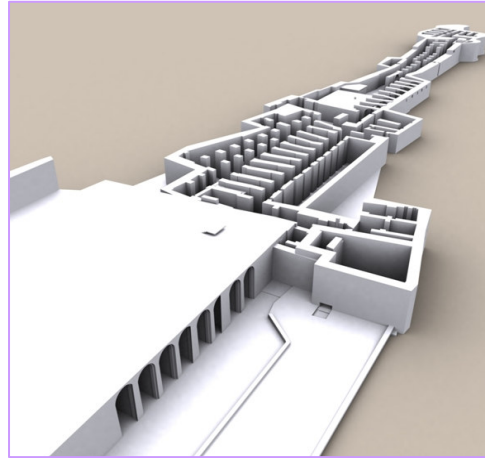
The TIC now offers a mailing service to tourists; and there are more books to choose from, (a whole collection of Kadare's books as well as more leaflets and information). Part of the TIC working plan for 2008 is guide training in Gjirokastra, as well as information panels for Gjirokastra in Rinas Airport, Butrint, Kakavie and the Port of Saranda.

4. The Castle of Gjirokastra – surveyed for the first time.

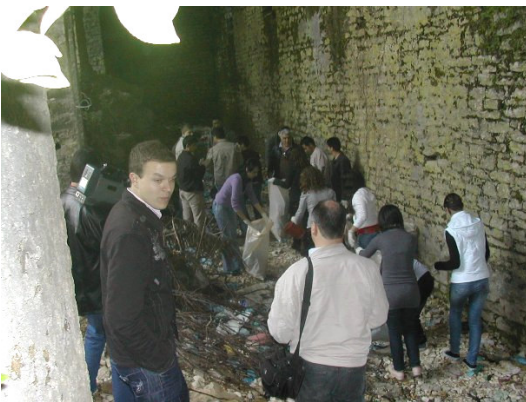


A team of young and enthusiastic architects – K.Merxhani, K.Dervishi and Gj.Caca have compiled the first thorough building plans of the Gjirokastra Castle. This monumental task, sponsored by the GCDO, has taken months to complete, but the

painstaking work has created an invaluable resource which will be of great benefit to any future conservation/development work to be carried out in the Castle.



5. The “Friends of Monuments” Association – another GCDO youth initiative.



On April 18th, International Monuments Day, students from “Asim Zeneli” High School in collaboration with the GCDO, established with the school’s environmental association, the “Friends of Monuments” association. On the same day, the Friends helped with the

cleaning of the Castle environs, especially close to the Bektashi Tyrbe in the Castle.

The activity continued with a demonstration of vegetation control on the Castle roof. This is the latest in a long line of initiatives aimed at raising awareness among young people about the historical town of Gjirokastra.



6. The National Artisan Fair.



A team with representatives of the Municipality of Gjirokastra, The Friendship Association and the GCDO has started work to organize a National Artisan Fair in Gjirokastra in 27 – 29 September 2008. This will be a three day activity and is a follow up to the highly successful Artisan Fair held in Gjirokastra last September. Its aim is to recreate the feel of a traditional Ottoman-style bazaar

in the Gjirokastra old town. The fair, which will see artisans coming to the town from Albania, Kosova and Macedonia, will be accompanied by exhibitions, conferences, and concerts.

7. Wood-carving training in Butrint gathers craftsman from Gjirokastra too.

Invited by the Butrint Foundation, two trainees representing the Artisan Center of Gjirokastra and the Forum of Artisan and Craftsmen in Gjirokatra, participated in a three day “wood-carving” training. The training aims to help artisans develop their traditional skills to create products suitable for a tourist market.



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

** If you would like more information about the GCDO and our efforts to help Gjirokastra, please contact the Director, Sadi Petrela on spetrela@gjirokastra.org or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*