



**Rugova Summer Programme: a summer camp for Albanian, Bozhniak and Roma kids in Kosovo, offering environmental education, English teaching and photography.**

*“The amount of fun we had is the same as the amount of trees in the forest” – Kelmendi, participant in the first camp*



### **When?**

The Rugova Summer Programme took place between Monday 26 July and Thursday 5 August 2010.

### **Who?**

A total of 38 young people, 19 each week, took part in the camp. They were aged 9-16, a mixture of boys and girls and Albanian, Bozhniak and Roma.

The camp was run by a mixture of British, Canadian, Estonian, Finnish, Irish and Kosovan volunteers (3 from ERA, 1 from TIP, 2 from the B3P as well as 4 others recruited by TIP and the B3P) – who paid their own transport to Kosovo, where necessary, and their own accommodation expenses.

It was planned and implemented as a partnership between three organizations: The Balkan Peace Park Project – B3P (a UK registered charity), The Ideas Partnership – TIP – and Environmentally Responsible Action - ERA (both NGOs registered in Kosovo).

## Where?

The camp took place in the tiny village of Reka e Allages in the Rugova valley. We received the warmest possible welcome (and many many cups of Turkish coffee) from the village, and we structured the programme with a view to enabling as many of the families as possible to benefit. Five local families had children of the right age to be included in the programme; four other families offered accommodation for volunteers, one further family were paid to do the cooking for the children, and ERA paid others from the village to prepare the site in advance of the camp.

The camp was based around a school building that was constructed by an aid agency after the war in Kosovo in 1999. The building has never been used and has stood empty for 10 years. Neglect led to flooding and bird damage which we cleaned and cleared, making the school usable again.



## What?

The children enjoyed a rich mix of activities including:

- Daily English sessions, often held in the school, but also organized as sessions in the middle of long hikes. The English teaching used songs and games and built vocabulary relevant to the environmental subjects covered at other times during the camp
- Photography – each child had at least two photography sessions during their camp. The sessions gave children the tools and space to focus on the natural environment in close-up, and to present their perspective of the Rugova valley. They were a powerful complement to the whole-group approaches to environmental education
- Litter pick-ups around the village and beyond
- A walk on the waterfall trail created by ERA with local volunteers a few years ago
- A film and discussion about the illegal logging which threatens the forests in Rugova
- Hikes, during which the children were taught to recognize different species of animal, butterfly and bird – and picked fistfuls of blueberries, wild plums, strawberries and marjoram
- Teaching on how to identify animals by their tracks
- Camping – children could sleep inside the school building or in the tents set up in the grounds
- A night hike
- Camp fires complete with scary noises
- Orienteering
- Art activities, including an afternoon making natural sculptures inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy
- Hours of football, skipping, circle games etc.

- Project planning in small groups of kids who come from the same area, where the children planned the work they would do to carry forward ideas they had learned about on the camp (these include litter pick-ups around their school, restoring an old spring in another village in Rugova, a poster campaign against illegal logging, planting trees around Peja city). The Ideas Partnership will support the children with these projects.

We also offered English lessons to adults in the village

### **How much?**

The camp had a cash cost of 4591 euros. We calculate an additional 3496 euros was donated in kind or loaned (e.g. the cameras for the photography project) or contributed by the volunteers in the form of their time, their travel costs and their skills (such as the fantastic design for the much-loved camp T-shirts).

Our donors in kind included:

- People on Freecycle groups in the UK (sleeping bags and sleeping mats, education resources)
- The DfID office in Pristina who provided some of the essential transport to the site
- British Airways who covered the cost of excess baggage for transporting some of the necessary resources from the UK to Kosovo
- The Boden clothing company who donated 3 vouchers which we were able to auction
- Cultural Heritage Without Borders who provided free accommodation for the volunteers on the days before and in between the two camps, in their beautifully-restored kulla

The 4591 euros needed beyond these donations in kind was raised entirely from private donations and we are deeply deeply grateful to all those who contributed, gaining sponsorship for running the Pristina half-marathon, circulating information about the project to their friends and family and donating through the webpage at [www.justgiving.com/rugovasummerprogramme](http://www.justgiving.com/rugovasummerprogramme)



### Want to find out more?

To see an article about the project which appeared in Kosovo's Koha Ditore newspaper visit <http://lajme.shqiperia.com/lajme/artikull/iden/1046907771/titulli/Rugova-nje-mundesi-per-turizem-te-qendrueshem>

Elizabeth Gowing also included the village of Reka e Allages in her Ecosovo column about sustainable tourism in Prishtina Insight newspaper (4 September 2010)

For more information about the work of the Balkan Peace Park Project go to [www.balkanspeacepark.org](http://www.balkanspeacepark.org)

For more information about the work of The Ideas Partnership go to [www.theideaspartnership.org](http://www.theideaspartnership.org) or contact [theideaspartnership@gmail.com](mailto:theideaspartnership@gmail.com)

For more information about the Environmentally Responsible Action NGO go to [www.eradirect.org](http://www.eradirect.org)

