



Case Study

Pension U Sebastiáná

Apartments from above (Archive of ASZ ČR)

1. Introduction

Pension U Sebastiana is an agro-tourist farm situated in the foothills of the Sumava Mountains, which combines agricultural production with hosting activities. The company was founded in 1992 and started operating agrotourism in 1996. It offers accommodation for 27 people in four apartments with the possibility of renting the whole building.

The farm specialises in growing cereals, including spelt, oats, wheat and occasionally rapeseed, on 55 hectares of land. Horse breeding is also part of the agritourism experience. Guests can take horse rides, watch the farm animals and even try riding a tractor or combine harvester during the working seasons.

For families with children, Pension U Sebastiana offers an outdoor playground, an indoor play area and all the amenities for children, including cots and high chairs. Agritourism accounts for about 25% of the family income, which means a variety of income for the farm owners.

NAME OF THE BUSINESS

Pension U Sebastiáná

LOCATION

Hodoušice, Sumava, Czech Republic

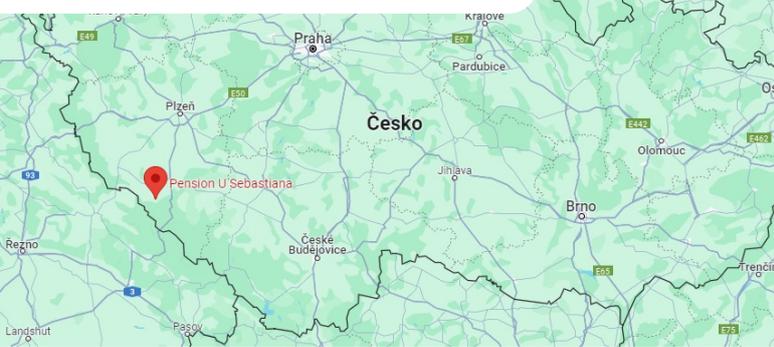
2. About the agrotourism

Pension U Sebastiana is situated in the foothills of the Sumava Mountains, offering visitors a unique place for their travel experience. It is located on the edge of the picturesque village of Hodoušice in Sumava, which together with the district of Klatovy and the proximity of the village of Nýrsko provides guests with a great starting point for exploring this magical part of the Czech Republic.

The guesthouse is surrounded by beautiful forest on one side, which ensures peace and contact with nature. From the other side, it opens its view to the vast meadows, which offer a wonderful view of the local landscape. This connection with nature creates an idyllic setting for those seeking a peaceful family holiday or an escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Pension U Sebastiana also offers the opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside. It is the last house in the village, and behind it is a path that quickly leads you to the paddocks with the local horses, to a forest full of walking trails, and to the vast meadows that are part of the guesthouse grounds.

The local garden transforms seamlessly into a large meadow, giving guests the opportunity to enjoy the rural tranquillity and beauty of nature. This area allows you to immerse yourself in the rural life of Sumava and discover the beauty of this regional destination.



When did the agrotourism business start?

The farm was founded in 1992, but agrotourism started in 1996.

Number of workers

Only Mrs. Hrabětová and her husband work on the farm. At present, they use only one contract worker to help clean the agrotourism facility.

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Pension U Sebastiana offers a varied and family-oriented travel experience in the foothills of the Sumava Mountains. The guesthouse offers various accommodation options and a range of activities for tourists, especially families with children.

The guesthouse has a capacity for 27 people in four fully equipped apartments with one, two or three bedrooms, a private kitchen and a bathroom. This offer is suitable for large families and groups of friends, and the guesthouse can also be rented as a whole building.

The farm offers horse riding through the Sumava countryside and tourists can watch the horses or even feed them apples and carrots. During the field work season, the more curious can experience a tractor or combine harvester ride.

For families with children, the guest house is a great

choice as it offers an outdoor playground, an indoor play area and all the amenities for children, including cots, high chairs and much more. Guests need not worry about noisy or playful children, as most stays are family-friendly and the environment is child-friendly.

For relaxation and entertainment, the guesthouse offers a lounge with a fireplace and pool table, a terrace for barbecues and a fire pit. Mountain bikes are available for hire, including children's bike seats, allowing you to explore the surrounding countryside by bike.

The guest house also supports regional Sumava producers and offers Sumava breakfast packs with products that come from the surrounding area and are made without unnecessary additives and preservatives. This gives tourists the opportunity to taste local specialities and support local farmers.



Inside the apartment: living room and kitchen (Archive of ASZ ČR)



Inside the apartment – common room (Archive of ASZ ČR)

About advertising

Pension U Sebastiana is characterized by a diverse approach to marketing its business. We start with the website, which serves as a key information element for potential guests. (<https://usebastiana.cz/>) Here, visitors can find details about accommodation, activities, photos and all relevant information about the guesthouse. The website also allows for quick and easy online booking.

In addition, the guesthouse uses the “Countryside Holidays” platform, which is another way to reach potential guests. (<https://www.prazdninynavenkove.cz/plzensky-kraj/pension-u-sebastiana>) This platform allows the presentation of similar establishments with a rural character.

Social media also plays a role in the guesthouse’s marketing strategy. They have a strong fan base on Facebook and share news, photos and interact with guests there. (https://www.facebook.com/PensionUSebastiana/?locale=cs_CZ) Even on Instagram, they occasionally post to increase visual content. (https://www.instagram.com/u_sebastiana/?hl=cs)

However, the most obvious element of marketing for Pension U Sebastiana is guest reviews and recommendations. This form of feedback plays a key role in improving the quality of service and the credibility of the business.

About commercialization

1. Previo: The pension uses the Czech hotel system Previo (Property Management System – PMS) for efficient management of its operations. This system allows easy management of accommodation capacities and reservations. It allows customers to make online reservations and keep track of availability. Previo also allows minute-by-minute traffic records, which is useful for managing tables in restaurants, sports venues and wellness facilities. It also provides easy management and reporting of various aspects of operations, including revenue, RevPar (Revenue per Available Room), ADR (Average Daily Rate) and legally required obligations of the accommodation provider, such as reporting foreigners to the foreign police and sending reports to the Czech Statistical Office.

2. Pension U Sebastiana operates its own website, which serves as an e-commerce website. Here customers can find detailed information about accommodation, prices, activities and make online bookings.

3. Communication. This form of communication allows for efficient bookings and ensures that potential guests are well informed and served.



Lavender field (Archive of ASZ ČR)



The family (Archive of ASZ ČR)

About starting up the business

Starting an agro-tourism business for Lucie and Radomil Hrabět was a process that began in 2015 when they inherited responsibility for an existing farm and has since undergone significant development and transformation. This process involves several key aspects:

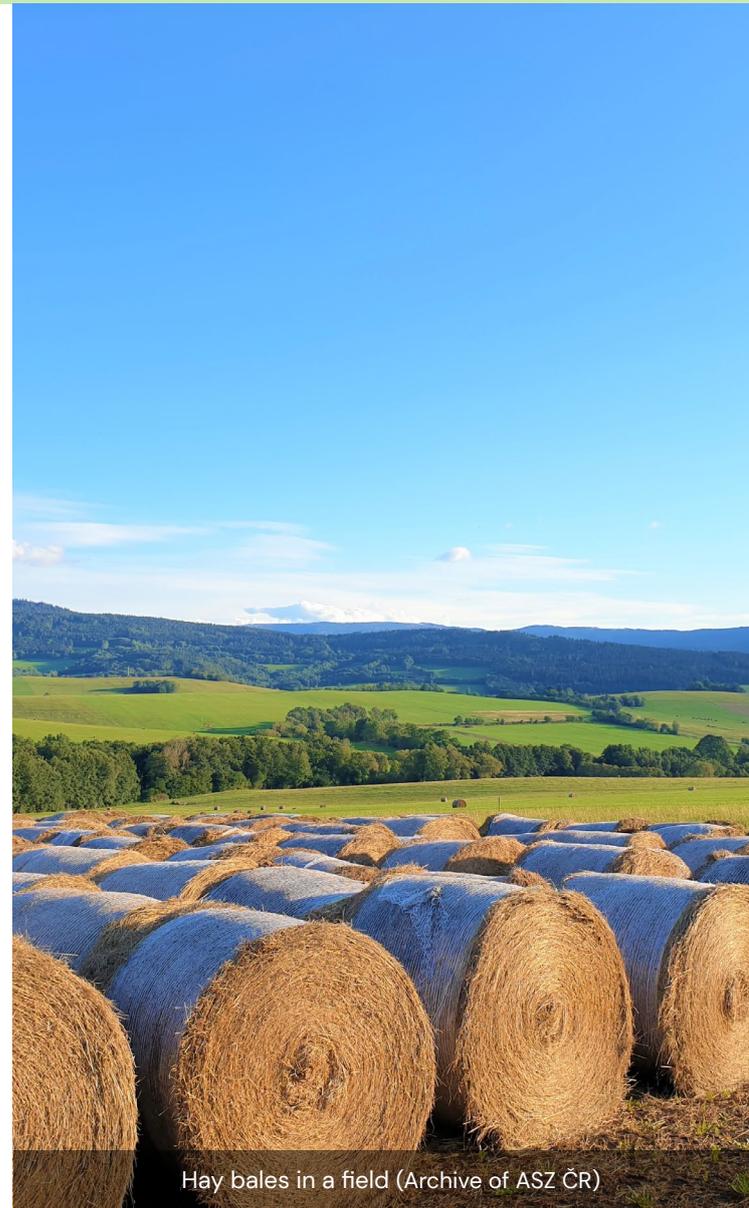
1. Motivation and decision: Lucie and Radomil decided to invest in agri-tourism because they saw the potential in this sector and also had a personal interest in the rural lifestyle. They wanted to create a space where they could offer guests a unique and peaceful experience in the beautiful Sumava countryside.

2. Experience and background. However, they were determined and willing to learn and acquire the necessary skills gradually while running the guesthouse.

3. Renovation and improvement: Pension U Sebastiana has undergone a significant transformation since its establishment. Through renovation and new equipment, the guesthouse has gradually transformed into a modern accommodation facility with four apartments for 27 people. They have strived to achieve four-star certification from the Rural Tourism and Agritourism Association, which has led to greater care of the premises and overall facilities.

4. Obstacles and challenges. One of the challenges was ensuring that the renovation was completed in time to make the planned bookings. This was challenging because finding a reliable company for the renovation was difficult. Closing the guesthouse for an extended period of time would have meant a loss of revenue.

Although Lucie and Radomil Hrabět had no previous experience in the tourism industry before starting their agro-tourism business, their determination, careful reconstruction and attention to improving the quality of service contributed to the success of Pension U Sebastiana.



Hay bales in a field (Archive of ASZ ČR)

About managing an agrotourism business

Starting and managing an agritourism enterprise on this farm was an interesting process combining agrarian production and hosting activities. The farm specialises in crop production with an emphasis on cereals on 55 hectares of land, which includes the cultivation of spelt, oats, wheat and occasionally rape as an improvement crop. These agricultural efforts are complemented by the breeding of horses, which play a large role in agritourism.

Radomil, the owner of the farm, is involved in growing spelt and other crops. Spelt is a relatively demanding crop, but he has gained enough experience and skills to work with it successfully.

Lucie has recently become enthusiastic about lavender. She has started growing 1,500 lavender

plants, which give the farm a beautiful appearance and in the future will serve as raw material for the production of essential oil, hydrolates and various products. These products are to be offered to the farm's guests, adding another element to the agro-tourism offer.

The agro-tourism activity on this farm accounts for about 25% of the family income, which means that the farmers are able to combine traditional farming with the hosting business. This brings diversity of income and increases the economic stability of the farm.

Farm owners consider hosting, marketing and communication skills with guests as important skills for running an agro-tourism business.





Advice for new entrepreneurs

From Lucie and her husband Radomil

1. Clearly define your goal and target group:

First of all, it is essential to be clear about what you are going to offer and to whom. Try to find your unique focus and avoid the mistake of offering “everything and for everyone”. Specialization will help you better reach a specific market segment.

2. Interact with guests: agritourism is about interacting with guests. Guests are often eager to learn about what and how farmers do things on the farm. Be open, willing to share your experiences and introduce them to the rural way of life.

3. Develop marketing skills: once you are sure who you want to reach, start looking for ways to reach that target group. Improving your marketing skills is the key to success.

4. Getting feedback: Keep track of what your guests are saying about your services and their stay at the farm. Feedback will help you improve the quality of your service and adapt to the needs of your guests.

