

news

Protection of animals – an economic factor in tourism

In a country like Croatia which depends on tourism, protection of animals represents an economic factor, says President of the German Association PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS CROATIA. There are lot of reasons why a well-organized system of animal protection could be very important for the tourism industry in the Mediterranean region.

People from central or northern Europe, who want to spend their vacation in one of the Mediterranean countries, compare many things before making a final decision when choosing the country in which to spend those special moments - their vacation. In addition to comparison the key costs, fuel, accommodation, sandy beaches, entertainment, etc., tourists also compare the condition of animal protection in these countries as a very important factor for a pleasant holiday. Tourists want to enjoy their vacation. They do not want to see hungry and sick dogs or cats roaming in front of their hotels and other accommodation facilities, or anywhere in the country during their journey.

Tourists often take their pets with them. Therefore, they inform themselves about possibilities and quality of pet accommodations, professional care, and the availability of veterinary clinics. In the end, they will choose to stay in the country with the best care for their pets, dogs and cats. Therefore, organized professional care for animals, which would show tourists that animals are welcomed and beloved, can be a very important argument when inviting foreign tourists to spend their holidays in Croatia.

The above argument was never used in Spain, Italy, or Greece, but Croatia could

take advantage of it. It is assumed that the system of animal protection, education of professionals who take care of animals in shelters, the types of buildings for shelter, as well as considerate behavior of the locals to animals, can be successfully developed step by step.

Volker Fritzemeier, president of the Association, who has spent four years in Croatia since 1997 working for international organizations, is convinced, being familiar with the country and its citizens, that Croatia has the potential to develop a system for protection of animals which would give tourists a reason to come to Croatia. He even coined the promotional slogan that could be used in future: "Your pets are welcome in Croatia." However, he argued that it will only be possible with the support of government.

From the perspective of routine activities of the tourism sector, the treatment of guests' pets, especially the integrated system of animal protection in the country, represents an minor segment of the overall problem of tourism. There is no research on this topic, this issue is not adequately regulated by tourism regulations. There is a lack of knowledge or awareness about the economic damage it causes to tourism in Croatia.

Without systematic consideration it is not possible to give a satisfactory answer to this question, because it is not easy nor straightforward. The general system of animal protection is very important for the tourism image of the country. However, an important difference should be emphasized between the accommodation and other services for pet animals accompanying their owners on their travels and systematic general care for abandoned animals. In both cases, it is about the tourism potential and tourism resource.



Providing conditions for pets accompanying their owners on vacation would represent an expansion of tourism and catering supply as well as creation of *direct tourism resources* (tourism and catering facilities and associated tourism services). Tourism industry makes a decision about the introduction of such a service, while the competent authorities make decision about the conditions that should be satisfied. For these purposes, the demand for such services should be examined in the major emitting countries for Croatian tourism. Attitude of tourists visiting Croatia as well as the available tourism facilities and their ability to accept pets of tourists should be examined too. Then, a plan for optimal expansion of such tourism offer with its promotion concept should be created.

On the other hand, a system of animal protection in a tourism destination, outside of tourism facilities, constitutes *indirect tourism resource*. Although it has no direct impact to the tourism industry,



it could be subsumed under a broader framework of environmental quality, in tourism destinations and the country as a whole. From the tourism point of view, destination management companies and destination management organizations could take an advisory role in protection of animals within the tourism destination management. However, the proper instruments for the protection of animals comprise veterinary regulations, work of special inspections, education of the local population, and work of specialized associations, with which tourism should closely co-operate.

It is necessary to increase tourism industry awareness of animal protection, to encourage researches and to support respective associations and actions which are in line with European directives for animal protection.

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