

*FIJET Congress Casablanca – Marrakech
Tourism: Dialogue between civilizations
Morocco 7 -13 September 2013*



Prof.dr.sc. Mario Plenковиć, predsjednik IFCA (Svečano otvaranje kongresa, Casablanca, 8.09.2013.) /
Prof.dr.sc. Mario Plenковиć, President of IFCA (Opening ceremony, Casablanca, 09.08.2013.)

MOROCCO AND CROATIA – SIMILAR TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

Moroccan Casablanca and Marrakesh hosted the 55th FIJET - World Federation of Travel Journalists and Writers congress from September 7th to 12th. One hundred and fifty three delegates and guests from 17 countries participated, among them 20 journalists, writers and photographers from Croatia.

Morocco has a population of over 35 million and an area of 710,850 km² (274,460 sq mi). The political capital is Rabat (1,800,000 inhabitants), although the largest city is Casablanca (with 4,000.000 inhabitants). The oldest of the imperial cities, Fès is the symbolic heart of Morocco (1,500,000 inhabitants). Other major cities include Marrakesh (one million inhabitants), Tangier, Tetouan, Salé, Agadir, Meknes, Oujda, Kenitra, and Nador.

Morocco has a history of independence not shared by its neighbours. Its rich culture is a blend of Arab, Berber (indigenous African) and also other African and European influences.

Tourism in Morocco is well developed, with a strong tourist industry focused on the country's coast, culture, and history. Spared the violence and instability of its North African neighbours, Morocco is looking to lure even more tourists to make up for those kept home by Europe's economic crisis. Tourist receipts in 2007 total US\$7.55 billion. Tourism is the second largest foreign exchange earner in Morocco, after the phosphate industry. The Moroccan government is heavily investing in tourism development.

More than half of Morocco's 9.3 million visitors in 2011 were French or Spanish, but those groups arrived in smaller numbers than before and stayed fewer nights because of financial crises in their nations. To offset those losses, Morocco wants to attract more visitors from Britain, Germany and Saudi Arabia.

The slow growth is a major concern for a country in which tourism is considered a key industry. Morocco's tourism sector, which recently surpassed remittances from workers abroad as the main source of foreign currency, employs about 470,000 people.

The country features a combination of sea and sand tourism, with beach resorts such as Agadir on the Atlantic coast (no trace of the 1960 earthquake, when 12,000 people lost their lives) and exotic medieval-style cities such as Marrakech - the country's top destination. Morocco's 2020 Vision plan, its main development plan for tourism, seeks to expand the country's appeal to include its mountains and deserts. Morocco's relatively high amount of tourists has been aided by its location, tourist attractions, and relatively low price. Cruise ships visit the ports of Casablanca and Tangier. Morocco is close to Europe and attracts visitors to its beaches. Because of its proximity to Spain, tourists in southern Spain's

coastal areas take one- to three-day trips to Morocco. Morocco has an excellent road and rail infrastructure that links the major cities and tourist

destinations with ports and cities with international airports. Low-cost airlines offer cheap flights to the country.

In 2011 Croatia was visited by 11,455,677 tourists and tourist receipts have been 6,62 billions Euro. New strategy for the development of Croatian tourism till 2020, adopted in 2013, has very similar aims to Morocco's. Next to some different aims (development of destination management system on all levels, etc.), it also wants a balanced development of tourism in the interior of Croatia and quicker development of specific products (active holidays, golf, etc.).

As of 2006, activity and adventure tourism in the Atlas and Rif Mountains are the fastest growth area in Moroccan tourism. These locations have excellent walking and trekking opportunities from late March to mid-November. The government is investing in trekking circuits. They are also developing desert tourism.

The participants of the FIJET Congress 2013 have visited the Terres d'Amanar estate located at the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, only 40 minutes away from Marrakesh and abuts on the 100,000 ha of forests on the Toubkal National Park. It has been designed in partnership with the locals. The estate was granted several trophies for responsible tourism. Since mainly locals and people from the neighbouring villages work on site, almost 150 families have been able to stay in the vicinity. The estate offers the organization of seminars, team building, sports challenges, orienteering and olympics. The activities include challenge activities (polo on donkeys, disc golf, relay camel, archery, sports challenges (bicycling, horse riding etc), orienteering, the aerial runway, accro park, climbing, different tracking routes including the visit to the typical Berber village, learning about the local flora etc. Accommodation provides the best natural yet no-frills comfort,

using raw materials (ecolodges, earth and canvas bivouac). Food, from the local farms, is served in several restaurants (within the lodges' area, in the tents' village, an bivouac restaurant).

Morocco, which is close to Europe, has a mix of culture and the exotic that makes it popular with

Europeans buying holiday homes. Many treasures, especially famous riads (riad, garden), are hidden away in Marrakesh and other old towns. Riads are houses, built around a central patio, whose outside walls are entirely closed. They are often converted into guesthouses or restaurants and are a symbol of the Moroccan art of fine living.

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Velebna zgrada najveće džamije koja može istovremeno primiti 100.000 vjernika na obali Casablance /
The magnificent building of the largest mosque, which can accommodate 100,000 people on the coast of Casa-
blanca