

Sport and recreational activities in rural tourism of Zagreb County

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the state and potential of the organization of sport and recreational activities as an added value of rural tourism in the Zagreb County. The analysis of state in the County is based on the analysis of relevant literature and documentation, and SWOT analysis. Based on the analysis we have determined the opportunities for organization of various attractive sports excursions (for example: visiting caves), thematic routes (by bike and horses) and new sport manifestations out of tourist main season. To achieve that, it is important to secure trained staff and high standards of infrastructure for tourists and local people.

Key words: recreation, sport, tourist offer

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is a common term for the activities and types of tourism which exist in rural areas. According to Krajinović et al. (2011) “the specificity of rural tourism is the rural development of tourist products, which are produced by the combination of agriculture and its resources, climate and natural diversity, traditions of local people, indigenous cultural resources and other facilities such as hiking trails, bike paths, cultural entertainment and sporting events, exhibitions and fairs, souvenirs, recreational facilities, ...” (in Štros et al, 2015).

The Republic of Croatia has a great potential for development of rural tourism due to 93%

of land area that is marked as rural, and it is inhabited by one-fifth of the total population (Svržnjak et al., 2014). Grgić et al (2017) have determined that rural tourism in Croatia will attract domestic and international tourist demand, mostly due to its authentic atmosphere, “the warmth of home” and distinctive “custom made” supply tailored experiences customized to different consumer segments.

Zagreb County is positioned in a central part of Croatia, often nicknamed as „Zagreb ring“, due to the City of Zagreb and its neighbourhood that is a separate territorial unit (Figure 1). Zagreb County is rich in tourist attractions, with the potential for tourism development, such as nature parks mountains:

Medvednica and Žumberak – Samobor, and some valuable and protected parts of nature and special reserves: Crna Mlaka and Japetić, and forestry park Tepec – Palačnik – Stražnik. Also, it has a lot of botanical and bird reservoirs, as well as architectural parks, monuments and natural monuments. It is important to mention famous traditional cuisine, cultural heritage, and excellent preconditions for recreation and leisure. With 317.642 inhabitants and 15.849 registered family farms (Kraljičković, 2017), the County has all the necessary preconditions for rural tourism development.



Figure 1: Zagreb County (central of Croatia)
source: <https://webhosting-wmd.hr/zagrebacka-zupanija/> (Feb 5th, 2020)

The most frequent tourist motives to visit Croatia are the following: relaxation and passive rest (54,9%); achieving new experiences (31,3%); enjoying in gastronomy (29,0%); visiting nature sights (26,2%), entertainment (24,2%) and sport and recreation (19,8%) (Institute for Tourism 2017). According to analysis of motives by age, the majority of tourists between 30 to 49 selected sport and recreation.

The aim of this paper is to determine current situation related to sport and recreational activities and sport events in rural tourism in Zagreb County trying to identify possibilities for development by using SWOT analysis.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The analysis of the actual situation related to sports events and activities was conducted by research results, strategic documents and SWOT analysis.

The special feature of Zagreb County are two natural parks: Žumberak – Samobor (34.235 ha) and Medvednica (17.936 ha), which offer different sports activities on trekking and hiking trails (347 km Žumberak – Samobor and 72 marked trails on mountain Medvednica), ski slopes, and sleigh riding (Jastrebarsko – Plešivica) as well as cycling routes (9 routes on mountain Medvednica). For refreshments and/or accommodation tourist rent mountain huts with eno-gastro and accommodation supplies. Besides of the activities in natural parks of Zagreb County, tourist who prefer nature and domestic food, have the possibility to visit Eco parks (Eco village Žumberak, Eco park “Kraš” and Bio-park “Divlje vode) and Etno house “Okić”. The Eco parks offer fishing, horseback riding, tennis, futsal pitch, and paragliding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings about actual situation in offering sports activities and events are presented in several tables (1 – 3). On the basis of analysis, the data and main conclusion are included in SWOT analysis (table 4).

Table 1. Current offer of sports activities in County of Zagreb (Tourist Boards of the towns and municipalities of the County of Zagreb)

Towns and municipalities in Zagreb County	Offer of sports and recreational activities in the County
Velika Gorica	hiking and running, sport climbing, cycling, fishing, hunting, tennis, horseback riding, water-skiing and aeronautics
Jastrebarsko	hunting and fishing, hiking and running, hang gliding, horseback riding, motocross, sport climbing, tennis, shooting
Sveta Nedjelja	cycling, fishing, horseback riding and tennis
Zaprešić	horseback riding, golf, tennis, hang gliding and paragliding
Samobor	walking educational trails, mountain biking sport climbing, running and swimming
Ivanić Grad	cycling, fishing and horseback riding
Sv. Ivan Zelina	cycling
Vrbovec i Dugo Selo	no data about recreational activities

The most frequent sports activities organized in the County are hiking and running, cycling, horseback riding, and fishing. A large number of cycling and horseback riding routes (Table 2) in Zagreb County can contribute to diversity of routes (for example: themed routes) with different lengths and difficulty with the aim to meet the need of a wide range of rural travellers.

Table 2 Data about sports halls in Zagreb County (from Strategy of tourist development of Zagreb County until 2025)

Type of sports infrastructure	Number
Equestrian clubs	5
Golf clubs	1
Paintball fields	2
Motocross track	3
Ski slopes and sledding trails	2
Cycling and horseback riding routes	19

Table 3: Sports events in Zagreb County (according to data of the Zagreb County Tourist Board)

Sports activity	Traditional events with international participation
Marathon	International Žumberak Race, Žumberak - Sošice, 15.5 km Croatian Classic Marathon, old-timer rally, competitive meeting of cars and motorcycles, Sveta Nedjelja Super Marathon Zagreb - Čazma, "Race from Zagreb's to Čazma's Kaptol", 61.35 km Valley of the Cardinals road race, 23.4 km
Fishing	Fishing Cup for disabled persons, Šaran Fishing Society Zaprešić Competition in fishing and throwing disciplines, Šaran Križ Sports Fishing Association
Skiing and sledge	Snow Queen Trophy, FIS World Cup Woman's Slalom, Sljeme Plešivica Sledding Cup – Kamenica trail on Plešivica, the traditional sledding race has been held since 1907
Equestrian	Equestrian show jumping tournament, Buševac, Velika Gorica Equestrian marathon through Žumberačko gorje, Jastrebarsko

Motor and bike race	Croatian Classic Marathon, old-timer rally, competitive meeting of cars and motorcycles, Sveta Nedjelja Martin Auto Rally - European zone championships, Dugo Selo Automobile Association MX3 Open Class Croatian Grand Prix and European Motocross Championships, Mladina track, Jastrebarsko Stjepan Grgac Memorial international cycling race, held since 1972 in memory of Croatia's greatest cyclist, Ivanić Cycling Club
Other different sport activities: Bowling, golf, football, boxing, chess, karate, shooting, orienteering	International Bowling Tournament for Juniors and Cadets Traditional Women's Football Tournament, Marija Gorica Open Golf Days, Novi dvori Golf Centre Danijel Kalanj Memorial International Boxing Tournament, Velika Gorica International Junior Chess Tournament Croatia Grand Prix – international karate competition Croatia Cup and European Championship selection in FIELD crossbow, Ivanić Shooting Club Zagreb Cup, international orienteering race in Marča, forests near Ivanić Grad

Within the project: "Speleological facilities in Zagreb County" speleological exploration of the 43 speleo objects in west part of County has been carried out: Žumberak – Samoborsko gorje and Medvednica. The exploration included systematic survey of the field with the aim to discover new entrances. Ružić (2012) has

determined in the sample of the tourists who have visited Istria that they are most interested in hiking (46,5%), caving (22,8%), and cycling tours (11,8%). After analysis presented in the tables, we dare suggest visiting caves that are especially equipped for tourist as new special attractions for the tourists in Zagreb County.

Table 4. SWOT analysis of potential rural tourism in Zagreb County (focus on sport events and activities) (Glaser, 2017)

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
developed transport infrastructure; near to the capital town; nature parks, forestry parks, botanical and bird reservoirs, as well as architectural parks monuments and nature monuments; advertising and marketing services; sports activities adapted to the tourists' abilities and skills	excessive commercialization of rural – tourism offer huge number of unauthorized landfills lack of public transport between rural destinations; poor language skills of the local population; majority of elderly inhabitants; insufficient focus to tourism industry
OPPORTUNITY	THREATS
all year attractive offer, a new sports events outside the main season; unused potential of excursion (for example visiting caves); increasing demands for outdoor trips and activities and excursion; possibilities for educational, sport and recreational activities; promotion of the County' particularities in Europe	Increasing competition in internal market and globally; Possible future changes in trends; environmental pollution negative impact on environment and biodiversity; rural migration and depopulation poor prospects and profitability lack of brand recognition lack of local inhabitants' interest

According to the Strategy of Tourist Development of the Zagreb County (2016 - 2025), due to higher awareness about healthy lifestyle, it is expected that sports activities and events will be in higher demand. Especially the innovative combination of the current tourist offer and creation of new and more attractive products will be demanded. In the list of the modalities of sports products in Zagreb County, envisaged by the Strategy of Institute for Tourism (2016) are: trekking, hiking, cycling, hunting and fishing, golf, horseback riding, skiing, and adventure sports activities. In creating the tourist offer of recreational sports activities, it is important to ensure a quality of sports infrastructure which will be available to tourists and local people.

CONCLUSIONS

Sport events and activities have an important role in rural tourism development, and its' potential hasn't been fulfilled yet. Increasing the number of tourists who want to visit rural area, and who are interested in sport (participation in activities, visiting sports events, etc.), the Zagreb County has the power to increase income of owners of family farms, which is possible by renting sports equipment, ticket sales of sports events, or to organize a new attractive sport events out of the main season as well as to offer accommodation and domestic food.

One of the preconditions for the development of rural tourism in the Zagreb County has to be based on the profile of tourist (age, level of education, interest, etc.). To improve safety and quality, attractive sport activities like cycling tours, horseback riding, walking and climbing routes, it is important to provide promotional activities and to secure trained staff and high standards of infrastructure. Conclusion of

this paper can contribute to improve the role of sport recreational activities and events in Zagreb County, and its ability to compete with other rural destination.

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Sportske i rekreacijske aktivnosti u ruralnom turizmu Zagrebačke županije

SAŽETAK

Svrha ovog rada je analizirati stanje i potencijale za organizaciju sportskih i rekreacijskih aktivnosti, kao dodane vrijednosti ruralnog turizma u Zagrebačkoj županiji. Analiza stanja u županiji temelji se na analizi relevantne literature i dokumentacije te SWOT analizi. Na temelju te analize utvrdili smo prilike za organizaciju raznih atraktivnih sportskih izleta (na primjer, posjete špiljama), tematskih obilazaka/ruta (biciklima i konjima) i novih sportskih događaja van glavne turističke sezone. Kako bi se to postiglo, bitno je osigurati uvježbano osoblje i visoke infrastrukturne standarde za turiste i lokalno stanovništvo.

Ključne riječi: rekreacija, sport, turistička ponuda