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## Maritime Domain and the Development of Nautical Tourism

### Abstract

This scientific article analyses the interrelation between maritime domain and the development of nautical tourism in the Republic of Croatia. The paper examines the legal framework, economic and social impacts, and the challenges of sustainable development amid the growing nautical tourism sector. The aim of the article is to explore how the maritime domain, as general domain of special interest, can serve as a foundation for sustainable and competitive nautical tourism development. The analysis covers historical evolution, spatial planning, concession system, marina management, and environmental standards. Findings indicate that sustainable management of the maritime domain and integration with local communities are essential for the long-term competitiveness of Croatian nautical tourism.

**Keywords:** maritime domain, nautical tourism, sustainability, concessions, economy.

### 1. Introduction

The maritime domain represents one of the most valuable natural resources of the Republic of Croatia, central to the economic, social, and environmental development of the coastal area. In the context of tourism, it has exceptional importance, as the sea and the coast constitute the foundation of national tourist identity [5]. Considering the strong growth of nautical tourism, which has become one of the most profitable forms of selective tourism in the Mediterranean, the issue of managing the maritime domain becomes crucial for ensuring sustainable development and protecting the public interest [7]. It encompasses the sea, seabed, subsoil, and coastal zone intended for general use [13]. In the Croatian legal system, the maritime domain holds the status of general

domain of special interest and cannot be privately owned. This fact gives it significant social and economic value, as it remains accessible to all, yet simultaneously requires responsible and professional management.

Nautical tourism, on the other hand, represents one of the most significant branches of selective tourism in the Mediterranean [5]. In Croatia, owing to its indented coastline with 1,244 islands, islet, rocks (reefs) and favorable climatic conditions, it has become a strategic sector that generates multimillion-euro revenues annually and strongly stimulates the local economy [9]. However, the development of this activity often exerts spatial and environmental pressure, especially in areas with limited capacities. The purpose of this paper is to present the relationship between the maritime domain and the development of nautical tourism, analyze the legal and institutional framework, and highlight the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. The working hypothesis is that the long-term development of nautical tourism in Croatia is possible only through sustainable management of the maritime domain and balancing economic, ecological, and social interests.

## **2. Research methodology**

The methodological framework of this paper is based on the analysis of available scientific and professional literature, relevant legal acts, and statistical data provided by the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure. Descriptive, comparative, and analytical methods were applied, while the inductive-deductive approach was used to draw conclusions regarding the specific features of Croatian maritime domain management system. The main sources include Luković [5], Tolić [11], Nadi [10], Marinović [7], and UNEP/MAP [12].

## **3. Findings and discussion**

### **3.1. Definition and legal framework of the maritime domain**

The maritime domain in the Republic of Croatia is defined by the Maritime Domain and Seaports Act (Official Gazette no 83/2023) as public property of special interest, inalienable and outside the scope of legal commerce. It encompasses internal sea waters and the territorial sea, their bed and subsoil, a part of the land which by its nature is intended for general use and which is designated as such, as well as everything that is permanently connected to that part of the land on or below the surface and consists of real estate which, by its natural characteristics, appearance, purpose, location and method of use: seashore, sea beaches, sandbanks, capes, cliffs, reefs, islets covered by the largest waves during storms, shores, ports, breakwaters, quays, piers, embankments, moorings, sea salt pans, mouths of watercourses that flow into the sea and channels connected to the sea, including buildings that are

permanently connected to the maritime domain and belong to it. The fundamental principle of *res communis*, inherited from Roman law, ensures that the maritime domain remains accessible to all [13]. It is managed through concessions that enable economic use under the condition of safeguarding the public interest. An essential part of this framework is the Maritime Code, which regulates navigation rules, safety standards, and the responsibilities of participants in maritime traffic. Additionally, strategic documents such as the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 and the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy until 2030 play a significant role by seeking to integrate economic valorization with environmental protection (Official Gazette no 2/2023), Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy until 2030. As a member of the European Union, Croatia is also obliged to harmonize its national legislation with European Union regulations. Notably, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean promotes the balanced use of coastal resources, while The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) reinforces regional cooperation [12]. This confirms that the maritime domain is not merely a national issue but part of a broader regional and international framework. In conclusion, the maritime domain represents an inseparable link between natural resources, the legal framework, and tourism development. Its role in tourism is multidimensional – spatial, economic, social, and ecological – and these aspects collectively determine Croatia’s long-term competitiveness as a Mediterranean destination. Therefore, proper management of the maritime domain is one of the key prerequisites for the sustainable development of Croatian tourism and the preservation of its international recognition [5, 7].

### 3.2. Development and significance of nautical tourism

Nautical tourism is defined as a set of activities and relationships that arise from the use of vessels for recreation and leisure [5]. Croatia has more than 70 marinas and over 18,000 berths, along with one of the largest charter fleets in the Mediterranean [9]. Geographic advantages such as an indented coastline with 1,244 islands, a favorable climate, and rich cultural heritage make Croatia the third most visited nautical destination in Europe [3].

The fundamental characteristics of nautical tourism can be summarized through several key dimensions:

- ◇ Navigation and stay at sea – unlike other forms of tourism, the primary experience here is directly related to the sea, discovering new destinations, and the freedom to choose routes.
- ◇ Infrastructure dependence – the development of this form of tourism is impossible without marinas, anchorages, port capacities, and service facilities. Marinas are not only berthing places but also service centers that include retail, hospitality, technical support, and entertainment.

- ◇ High purchasing power of guests – studies show that nautical tourists spend two to three times more than average tourists, which makes this form of tourism economically highly attractive [8]. Their expenditures include not only charter and berthing fees but also restaurants, cultural activities, shopping, and local services.
- ◇ Seasonality with potential for extension – although the highest demand occurs in July and August, charters and regattas enable an extension of the season into spring and autumn.
- ◇ Selectivity and specific motivation – nautical tourists are attracted by natural beauty, coastal diversity, authenticity of destinations, and active leisure.

Nautical tourism encompasses various forms of using the sea and the coast, and its classification is most often based on the type of navigation and accompanying infrastructure. According to Luković [5], three main forms can be distinguished: charter tourism, cruise tourism, and tourism related to nautical ports and marinas.

- ◇ Charter tourism involves renting vessels, with or without a crew, where tourists determine their own sailing itinerary. Compared to other EU member states and other countries in the Mediterranean, Croatia is very competitive in this segment, possessing the largest charter fleet in the Mediterranean—over 4,500 vessels [9].
- ◇ Cruise tourism, which includes the arrival of large cruise ships to ports such as Dubrovnik, Split, and Zadar, generates significant revenue but also raises concerns due to its negative impacts on the environment and local infrastructure [1].
- ◇ Ports of nautical tourism, including marinas, moorings, and anchorages, ensure navigational safety and provide supporting services such as maintenance, supply, and hospitality.

A key feature of nautical tourism is the duality between private and commercial segments. Private boaters use their own vessels and seek berths in marinas or harbors, while the commercial segment refers to the charter industry, where guests rent vessels for shorter or longer stays. Croatia stands out in the charter segment, possessing one of the largest charter fleets in the world, over 4,500 registered vessels. In addition to its economic significance, nautical tourism has important cultural and social dimensions. Sailing enables direct contact with local communities, the discovery of cultural and historical heritage, and participation in events such as regattas and local festivities. This creates experiences that go beyond the classic “sun–sea–beach” model. According to UNEP/MAP [12], it is precisely the cultural component and authenticity of space that significantly increase the added value of a destination in the eyes of nautical tourists. A distinctive feature of nautical tourism is its dependence on a preserved environment. Clean seas, natural coves, and unspoiled coastlines are the foundation of its attractiveness, and nautical tourists are highly sensitive to environmental quality.

Therefore, ecological initiatives in marinas and the development of sustainable infrastructure have become key factors of competitiveness. The development of nautical tourism in Croatia started in the mid-20th century, when the advantages of its indented coastline, safe coves, and natural anchorages were first recognized. The first marinas began to be constructed in the 1960s, with a major milestone being the opening of the Punat Marina on the island of Krk in 1964, often cited as the first modern marina on the eastern Adriatic coast [2]. During this period, boating expanded rapidly, and the Adriatic Sea became established as a destination for foreign tourists increasingly arriving with their own boats. Systematic development followed in 1983 with the establishment of the Adriatic Croatia International Club (ACI), a state-owned enterprise created to develop a network of nautical tourism ports. Within only a few years, ACI built and unified a chain of marinas along the entire coast, from Umag to Dubrovnik. The establishment of the ACI system proved to be a strategic step forward, as it enabled service standardization, centralized management, and the international recognition of Croatia as a nautical destination [5]. By the early 2000s, Croatia had positioned itself as one of the leading charter destinations in the Mediterranean, while ACI marinas had become synonymous with safety, quality, and luxury in this sector [10]. Today, the ACI system consists of 22 marinas located in strategic coastal areas. In addition to berths, marinas offer restaurants, maintenance services, shops, and other facilities, making them an integral part of the tourism offer. Their role is not only operational but also promotional – ACI participates in international nautical fairs, strengthening Croatia's image as a leading nautical destination [9]. Through all these stages of development, it is evident that ACI marinas have laid the foundations of modern nautical tourism in Croatia and enabled its current competitive position. Their importance is therefore not limited to historical context but is also reflected in ongoing and future development processes.

### 3.3. Economic and social effects

Nautical tourism generates pronounced multiplier effects on the economy. The average daily expenditure of nautical tourists exceeds 180 euros, which is almost three times higher than that of the average visitor [8]. In addition to direct revenues, it contributes to the development of local communities through employment, hospitality, and cultural activities [4]. However, the growth of this activity also causes spatial pressure, increased seasonality, and the risk of overtourism. While conventional tourism is concentrated in larger coastal cities and resorts, nautical tourism extends to islands and smaller settlements. In this way, it promotes more balanced regional development but simultaneously increases pressure on less developed coastal communities [4]. This spatial dimension makes it distinctive, as it creates opportunities for the valorization of resources that would otherwise remain outside mainstream tourist flows. A feature frequently emphasized in the literature is its integration with other forms of tourism. Nautical tourism connects hospitality, cultural, sports, and even health tourism,

producing multiplicative effects on the overall economy [6]. For example, nautical tourists dine in local restaurants, participate in local events, visit cultural landmarks, and rent additional services and experiences. In the context of Croatian tourism, nautical tourism represents a strategic sector. Given the country's natural resources, indented coastline, and numerous islands, Croatia has positioned itself as one of the leading global destinations for this form of tourism. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (DZS, 2023, 2024, 2025), more than 200,000 vessel arrivals were recorded in Croatian nautical ports in 2022, while the sector's revenue exceeded 900 million kuna (approximately 119.45 million euros). In 2023, the revenues were approximately 160 million euros while in 2024, nautical tourism ports generated total revenues of 180 million euros excluding VAT, which is 12.1% more than in 2023. These figures confirm that nautical tourism is one of the most dynamic and promising segments of Croatia's tourism offer. Moreover, nautical tourism contributes to the diversification of the tourism offer. Unlike mass coastal tourism, it attracts a specific niche of guests seeking a high level of service, safety, and destination authenticity. This reduces dependence on mass tourism flows and increases income stability. Economically, it is also significant that nautical tourism extends the tourist season. While conventional tourism is concentrated in the summer months, charter sailing and regattas often start as early as April and continue until October or even November. This helps mitigate the problem of seasonality, one of the main structural limitations of Croatian tourism [10]. According to the European Commission (2020), Croatia ranks among the top three nautical destinations in Europe, alongside Italy and France. This position confirms that its economic significance extends beyond the national level, contributing to international competitiveness as well. The economic contribution of nautical tourism thus goes far beyond marina and charter revenues. It strengthens local economies, creates jobs, enhances the country's global image, and establishes Croatia as a destination for high-spending tourists. For these reasons, this branch of tourism holds a key place in the national and regional development strategies. Overall, nautical tourism is defined in theory and practice as a specific, selective form of tourism based on navigation and tourist stays at sea, relying on specialized infrastructure and services. Its key features – high guest purchasing power, selectivity, seasonality, spatial dispersion, and integration with other forms of tourism – make it unique and strategically important for the further development of Croatia's economy [5, 12].

### **3.4. Sustainable Development and Environmental Challenges**

Sustainable management of the maritime domain requires balancing economic interests with environmental protection. Negative environmental impacts include marine pollution, damage to *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, and coastal urbanization [12]. Initiatives such as the Blue Flag program and ecological anchorages contribute to marine preservation and raise awareness among nautical tourists. Marinas such as those in Punat and Cres have introduced digital systems for monitoring energy and

water consumption, establishing models of environmentally responsible business operations [9].

Contemporary trends are shaping the further development of this tourism sector, with four areas standing out in particular.

- ◇ The first trend emphasizes sustainability. Tourists increasingly seek destinations and marinas that invest in green technologies – such as solar panels, recycling systems, and wastewater treatment facilities – and implement measures to reduce plastic waste [12]. In recent years, Croatia has developed a network of marinas with eco-certification, which further enhances its competitiveness.
- ◇ The second trend relates to digitalization and the introduction of smart technologies. The processes of berth reservation, itinerary planning, and charter services are increasingly carried out through digital platforms. Marinas are implementing smart systems for monitoring energy and water consumption, while mobile applications facilitate access to information and payment of services [10]. These innovations increase operational efficiency and improve user experience, which is essential for guest loyalty.
- ◇ The third trend emerged strongly during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many tourism sectors experienced sharp declines, the charter industry recovered more rapidly because it enabled safe and individualized vacations in isolation. According to the European Commission (2021), charter sailing demonstrated resilience during crisis conditions and became even more attractive to travelers seeking flexibility and privacy.
- ◇ The fourth trend concerns the diversification of tourism products. There is growing interest in luxury yachts, regattas, themed cruises, and combinations of nautical tourism with other forms such as gastronomy and cultural tourism. This not only increases Croatia's attractiveness as a destination but also extends the season and stimulates local economies [8].

The classification and contemporary trends in nautical tourism show that it is a multifaceted activity combining various forms of navigation and segments of demand. New trends – sustainability, digitalization, crisis resilience, and diversification – are shaping the future of this tourism branch. Thanks to its natural resources and developed infrastructure, Croatia has the potential to maintain and further strengthen its leading position in the global market [5, 2, 1, 10, 12]. Despite its strong economic significance, nautical tourism generates a number of environmental pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems. The sea and coast, as key resources, have limited regenerative capacity, meaning that the growing number of vessels and tourist activities increases the risk of pollution and spatial degradation. For this reason, the concept of sustainable development has become indispensable in all discussions about the future of this tourism segment.

The most common negative environmental impacts include:

- ◇ Marine pollution – discharge of wastewater and fuel from vessels
- ◇ Excessive anchoring – damage to the seabed and Posidonia meadows
- ◇ Noise and crowding – disturbance of peace and natural balance in sensitive areas
- ◇ Infrastructure development – occupation and concreting of coastal areas and loss of natural habitats
- ◇ Increased waste generation – especially plastic and municipal waste from marinas [12].

Anchoring of nautical tourism vessels in protected bays does not require spatial interventions and may seem acceptable. In reality, this is not the case because anchoring can affect the ecosystem of the sea and the seabed. Anchoring outside designated areas damages Posidonia meadows, which are essential for marine biodiversity and ecosystem stability. According to research by the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (2021), the surface area covered by Posidonia has decreased in some locations over the past decade due to intensive anchoring of tourist vessels. To reduce negative impacts, the concept of sustainable development in nautical tourism has been further developed. According to the World Tourism Organization (2017), sustainable tourism entails the optimal use of resources, environmental protection, and respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of local communities.

In nautical tourism, this means:

- ◇ planning marinas and moorings in accordance with spatial carrying capacity
- ◇ installing wastewater treatment systems in marinas
- ◇ educating nautical tourists on environmentally responsible behavior
- ◇ developing networks of ecological anchorages
- ◇ promoting the use of renewable energy sources on vessels and in ports [10].

Examples of good practice already exist in Croatia. Several marinas have implemented the Blue Flag program as international recognition for sea quality and sustainable coastal management. Additionally, eco-friendly mooring systems that prevent seabed damage are being developed. An increasing number of charter companies are promoting sustainable sailing through skipper and guest education programs [8]. Spatial planning is another important aspect of sustainability. If new marinas are constructed without clear ecological criteria, there is a risk of excessive coastal urbanization, which can ultimately diminish the destination's attractiveness. Therefore, county and city spatial plans must incorporate the principles of sustainable development and integrated coastal zone management [7]. Sustainable development in nautical tourism is not only about protecting nature but also about creating long-term competitive advantages. Tourists increasingly value preserved environments and prefer destinations that invest in green technologies and ecological standards. Consequently, sustainability is also an economically viable strategy that strengthens Croatia's image as a responsible tourist destination [12].

### 3.5. Examples of good practice in Croatia and Europe

The development of sustainable nautical tourism in practice is best illustrated through concrete projects and initiatives implemented in marinas and coastal communities. As one of the leading Mediterranean destinations in this sector, Croatia has, over the past two decades, introduced numerous measures demonstrating how economic growth and environmental protection can be effectively combined. At the same time, experiences from other European countries offer valuable guidelines for further improvement. Several examples stand out in Croatia. Marina Puntat on the island of Krk is recognized as a pioneer of environmental initiatives, being among the first to introduce wastewater treatment and waste recycling systems. It also implements the “Eco Marina” project, which includes digital monitoring of energy and water consumption, enabling guests to actively participate in reducing negative environmental impacts [9]. ACI Marina Cres has installed solar panels for electricity production and separate waste collection systems, while ACI Marina Dubrovnik continuously invests in educating sailors through workshops on sustainable navigation [10]. International standards also play an important role. The Blue Flag program is particularly widespread in Croatia. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports [8], more than 30 marinas in the country hold this recognition, placing them among the highest-quality ports in the Mediterranean. The Blue Flag certifies compliance with criteria of seawater cleanliness, safety, education, and sustainable management. Beyond raising environmental standards, it also has a promotional function, as nautical tourists increasingly value destinations that hold internationally recognized eco-certifications. On the European level, several notable examples can be identified. In Spain, marinas in Barcelona have implemented integrated waste and energy management systems, including solar rooftops and electric charging stations for boats [12]. In Italy, Marina di Rimini is known for using ecological moorings and innovative wastewater filtration systems, while Greece is developing the “Eco-Anchor” network to protect Posidonia seagrass beds. French marinas on the Côte d’Azur have introduced strict regulations to reduce plastic waste and offer specialized educational programs for skippers [1]. A common element of all these examples is the close involvement of local communities in marina management. Before making decisions, local authorities, NGOs, and sailors are invited to express their opinions and participate in decision-making. In this way, all stakeholders involved in nautical tourism are sensitized, increasing awareness of the importance of conserving natural resources. This participatory approach emphasizes that sustainability is not only a technical matter but also a social process [7]. In Croatia, there is certainly room for improvement, particularly through strengthening cooperation between local communities and marinas. International examples demonstrate that sustainability is achieved more effectively when environmental initiatives are linked with local economic development, for instance, by encouraging local food and service providers to participate in marina operations or by developing cultural and sporting events tailored for nautical tourists. Examples of good practice in Croatia and across

Europe confirm that investing in sustainable technologies, international standards, and user education brings multiple benefits. On the one hand, it reduces environmental pressure, while on the other, it enhances destination competitiveness and creates added value for local communities. Such models clearly indicate the direction in which the development of nautical tourism should proceed, toward responsible use of the maritime domain that ensures long-term sustainability and the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

### 3.6. Regulation and governance

The regulation of maritime domain in Croatia requires further modernization, particularly in the areas of concessions and spatial planning. Although things are changing a little bit, what is missing in the Republic of Croatia is a Maritime Resource Management Plan for the entire sea area of the Republic of Croatia. Maritime domain concessions are not only issued for marinas, anchorages, ports, but also for aquaculture and other activities. In practice, concessions for, for example, the installation of fish cages are placed in bays that would be interesting for boaters to anchor. Furthermore, when considering the ecological effort of the layout of marinas and anchorages, it is observed within one local government unit, and at a very short distance there may be a location of the same content, but within another local government unit. A lack of coordination between local and national institutions often slows down project development [11]. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and the participation of local communities are crucial for achieving a balance between environmental protection and economic benefit [12]. In practice, the use of maritime domain in tourism faces numerous challenges. One of them concerns the balance between economic interests and public accessibility. Although marinas and beaches generate significant revenue, local residents often express dissatisfaction due to limited access or the commercialization of public space. Examples include beaches being turned into paid zones or marinas that prevent traditional uses of the coastline [4]. Another problem concerns the lack of transparency and complexity of the concession system. It has often been pointed out that concession procedures are not always clear enough, leading to conflicts between local communities, private investors, and state authorities [1]. As a result, confidence in the system is undermined, and the implementation of projects that could contribute to tourism development is delayed. On the other hand, the concession system also provides numerous opportunities. Well-structured concessions can ensure the sustainable use of the maritime domain, as they include financial compensation that can be used for environmental preservation, as well as prescribed conditions for resource protection. In this way, the maritime domain not only serves the tourism industry but also ensures its long-term sustainability.

The use of the maritime domain in tourism therefore represents a dual challenge: it is necessary to simultaneously ensure economic development and preserve the public character of the space. If this balance is achieved, the maritime domain can become a foundation for sustainable tourism and a long-term competitive advantage for

Croatia in the Mediterranean market. A critical issue is also the insufficient alignment between national and local levels. While the state adopts legal regulations and strategic documents, local authorities are responsible for implementation through spatial plans. In cases where there is no clear coordination, contradictions arise – for example, the planned construction of a marina may be approved at the local level but face restrictions under national regulations or conflict with environmental protection goals [4]. Positive progress has been made with the adoption of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, in which tourism is defined as one of the key economic sectors. The document emphasizes the importance of sustainable use of the maritime domain and the need for a balance between economic development and environmental protection. This confirms that spatial planning must be integrated with the state's long-term development strategies. Therefore, spatial planning and the legal framework play a dual role. Marine spatial planning for Croatia is more than a process that regulates the activities on the sea. It is an analytical approach to the setup of human activities in the marine area. As a maritime country, Croatia has ratified the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management and undertook the obligations of the Barcelona Convention. However, an appropriate document has not yet been made that would enable quality management of marine space. MSP and its onshore version contribute to the establishment and development of various activities, taking into account environmental, natural, economic, and sociological criteria. MSP is a continuation of spatial planning of the mainland area and must undoubtedly consider the more expansive coastal environment and the activities there. On one hand, they are regulatory instruments that restrict unsustainable practices and protect the public interest. On the other, they are developmental tools that enable planned and sustainable use of the maritime domain in tourism. The success of this process depends on effective implementation and cooperation among all stakeholders – the state, local communities, investors, and civil society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The maritime domain and nautical tourism represent a fundamental link between natural resources, economic development, and sustainable management of Croatia's coastal area. As public property of special interest, the maritime domain plays an essential role not only in legal and spatial terms but also in shaping Croatia's identity as a maritime and tourist country. Its preservation and proper management are prerequisites for the long-term development of tourism, particularly that selective form which brings high added value – nautical tourism.

Nautical tourism in Croatia has developed into one of the most significant and profitable segments of the tourism industry. Thanks to its indented coastline, natural coves, developed infrastructure, and long maritime tradition, Croatia has become one of the world's leading nautical destinations. This sector generates strong economic effects through marina revenues, charter services, and related activities, while also

promoting local development, employment, and the preservation of cultural heritage and authentic experiences. However, intensive development also generates certain risks. The increasing number of vessels, construction of new marinas, and coastal pressure require careful planning and strict adherence to sustainability principles. Environmental challenges, such as marine pollution, seagrass degradation, and coastal urbanization, highlight the importance of integrated management of the maritime domain and the inclusion of all stakeholders – state, local communities, investors, and users. Examples of good practice in Croatia and Europe confirm that sustainability and economic growth can be harmonized through ecological standards, innovation, and education.

The maritime domain and nautical tourism constitute an integral part of Croatia's tourist identity. The analysis shows that successful development is possible only through sustainable management of the maritime domain, a clearly defined regulatory framework, and active involvement of local communities. Nautical tourism brings significant economic benefits but also ecological challenges that require systematic control. The introduction of green technologies, transparent concession policies, and integrated spatial planning represent key guidelines for the future. Owing to its natural resources and maritime tradition, Croatia has all the prerequisites to become a leader in sustainable nautical tourism in the Mediterranean. Ultimately, the future of Croatian nautical tourism will depend on the ability to balance economic benefits with the preservation of natural resources. The maritime domain must remain public, accessible, and protected, while tourism that develops upon it should serve as an example of responsible and sustainable spatial use. Only such an approach can allow Croatia to maintain its competitive advantage, reaffirm its position as a leading Mediterranean destination, and ensure the harmonious coexistence of humans and the sea.

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