

## Our programme in Croatia

### Our Objective

To show that resort development can take place in an integrated and collaborative way so it creates a positive and beneficial relationship with local communities.



### Current situation

Tourism growth is booming along Croatia's magnificent coastline. In 2014 international tourism receipts by visitors accounted for around one fifth of annual GDP. The existing accommodation is in need of modernisation to bring it up to international standards, and an all-inclusive product is being introduced by Western European tour operators.

Local people living in coastal villages are rapidly seeing changes to their way of life, yet they don't always have a voice in the tourism development process.

### Our approach

In partnership with TUI, we are undertaking research into the development of two large hotels to see how it might be done more sustainably.

### Projects

#### Developing a sustainable tourism destination

Spring 2015 - present

The geographical focus of the project is two villages in Split-Dalmatia County, where two four-star hotels have been opened for mainstream Western European tourists after significant redevelopment. The hotels are part of the Karisma hotel chain, sold by TUI.

#### Aims of the project:

- To create opportunities for tourism skills development, education and employment at destination level,
- To develop local business knowledge of customer source markets to enhance customers' experiences of the local area and spread tourism's economic benefits
- To support hotels to better promote local



businesses as part of their tourism offer

- To nurture key stakeholder partnerships in the destination to enable more effective sustainable tourism management planning, and
- To monitor, evaluate and report the impacts that activities have on the socio-economic make-up of the destination.

### Key activities

A scoping visit was carried out by TF in May 2015. It found that residents and local business owners are anticipating a number of changes within the villages as a result of the hotel redevelopments, some of which are already being realised. These include changes in the quality of the overall tourism product, changes in low employment, an extended season and increased customer discretionary spend within

*Throughout our time surveying, one message from customers came over loud and clear. When asked if they'll return, more often than not we were met with the response, "we'll only return if the charm of the area remains intact".*

*Customers want to visit Croatia. Yes, they want a quality hotel to stay in, but what is attracting them and making their holiday special is Croatia - the food, the scenery, the people."*

*- Patrick Cafferky, Project Discovery Volunteer*

local businesses. Some residents see the changes as positive, and some believe they could be, or have been, negative.

In September 2015, the tourism consultancy, Thinking Tourism Limited, was contracted to carry out research into the current situation in relation to local socio-economic impacts of tourism in the villages and recommend interventions that optimise positive impacts and minimise negative ones.

Since April 2016, our local coordinator in Croatia, Ane Sindik, has been implementing activities that will result in the interventions that were recommended by Thinking Tourism Ltd. Here are some of the activities that we have been carrying out in both villages:

- Workshops with local public and private sector stakeholders to share knowledge about EU funding opportunities to develop the destination
- Research with hotel customers about their expectations when it comes to dining outside of the hotel
- Training activities with SMEs to impart knowledge and skills relating to product development and market access to meet hotel customers' needs and wants.
- Meetings with local educational institutions and hotels to set the scene for a work experience initiative targeting local youth.
- Design and implementation of multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms for local core stakeholders to meet regularly to plan and action upon sustainable tourism development issues in the destination.

- Organisation of a conference which brought together, for the first time, national, regional and local core stakeholders around the theme of 'working collaboratively for a more sustainable tourism destination'.

### Results to date

Our research has shown that villagers are already seeing changes to everyday life, both positive and negative. It has identified opportunities to improve local livelihoods with:

- Local business product development and market access
- Youth employment in the tourism sector

We are bringing together tourism stakeholders from the public and private sectors to find ways to motivate customers to leave their hotels and experience the improved products and services available in the community, creating revenue for local businesses. Hotels are also being encouraged to promote local villages.

## Expected impact and outcomes

**Sustainability criteria embedded within tour operator strategies, ensuring hotel development delivers local socio-economic benefits.**

## Working in collaboration

TUI - funding and providing support with TUI DS communication

Igrane & Zivogosce Tourism Boards - Multi-stakeholder framework set up

Karisma Hotels - GMs support market access and multi-stakeholder collaborative approach

## Supporting documents

Website: [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/croatia](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/croatia)

Blog: [travelfoundation.wordpress.com/croatia/](http://travelfoundation.wordpress.com/croatia/)

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