

TOURISTIC POTENTIALS OF STRUGA AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

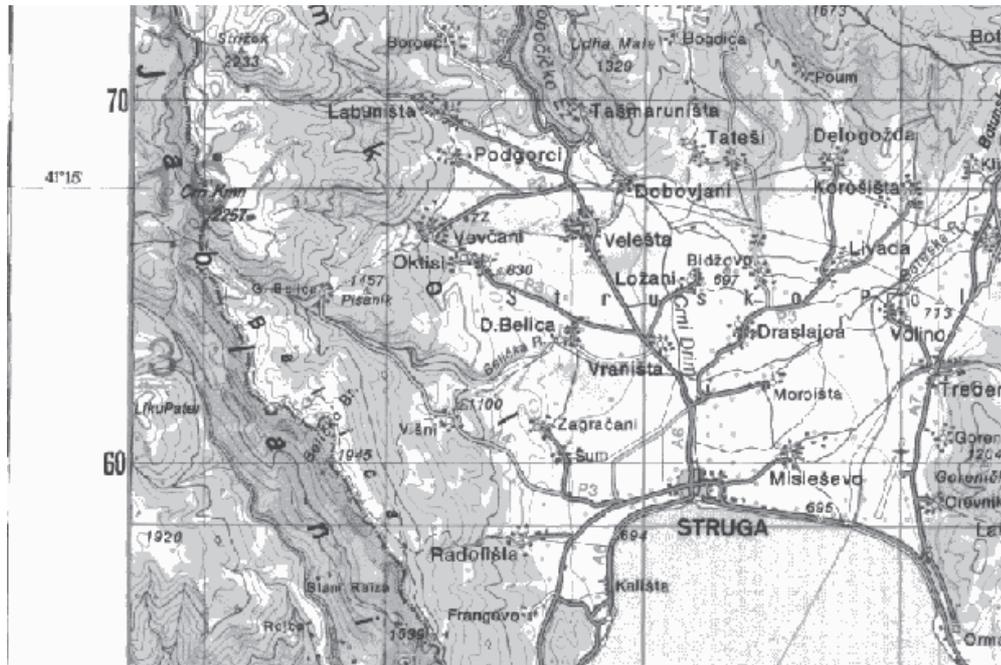
This paper aims to present the natural potentials, cultural and historical motives, human and economic potentials, respectively the current and potential future investments by the domestic and foreign subjects in the region of Struga. Natural potentials are of great importance and are determinant for touristic development. The attractiveness of a touristic place will be more emphasized and the visitor interest will be greater if natural elements are irreplaceable compared to other locations by being typical only to that location. Natural potentials that Struga possesses are extraordinary and irreplaceable, such as the beautiful relief, climate, hydrographic network with the Lake of Ohrid and the river Black Drin, and the biogeographic motives. There are many cultural and historical motives in Struga, especially those in rural areas with great values and opportunities for using. But, no evidence has been done by the local and central authorities to process and study these values. In this framework, this paper tries to identify this inheritance which is a great asset for touristic development of Struga. Considering the fact that Macedonia as a state passed through various difficult processes and situations, foreign investments which are real generator of tourism are very few. But in perspective these investments will enable a sustainable development of tourism as economic activity, by including Struga in regional and European touristic itineraries, and with this to integrate and promote gradually and internationally this region.

Keywords: Natural potentials, cultural and historic motives, sustainable economic development.

1. Introduction

In physical-geographic units of Western Macedonia, Struga hallow and mountain range surrounding it, takes important part, separated with visible natural borders. It spreads on south west side up to the border line with Republic of Albania, which spreads through the mountain range Jablanica-Belica up to Qafa San (1051 m) and western shore of Ohrid Lake. While as natural borders are

Karaorman mountain on north, Galičica on east and Ohrid Lake on south, characterizing itself as typical meridian spreading, as all hallows in Western Macedonia except Skopje hallow. Border mountain ridges end in Struga hallow with interrupted down hills, formed in normal tectonic interruptions, forming morphologic contrasts, connecting with tectonic differences.



Topographic map¹: Lake of Ohrid and Struga hallow

¹ Topographic institute, Skopje

2. Touristic Potentials

Fair geographic conditions, existing of Ohrid Lake, one of the most beautiful lakes in Europe, rich with flora and fauna, flowing of the River Black Drin through the city, wealth cultural heritage and ancient historical localities are elements that give the town of Struga possibilities to improve itself as touristic center¹.

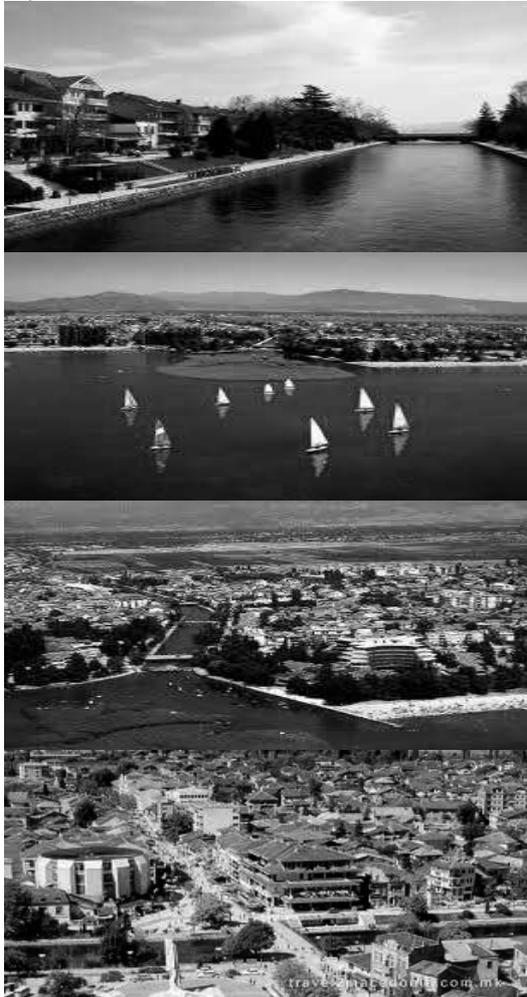


Photo 1: Struga

Except the agriculture, tourism is another perspective economic branch. If we want our town to be visited by tourists during all the year not only in summer, we will need to build modern infrastructure and prepare authentic study by using summer, winter, cultural, health and mountain tourism, too. Touristic potentials are attractive subjects, issues and processes in nature and society that attract tourists and satisfy touristic necessities. Main trumps of Struga to attract tourists are "natural touristic potentials" including: geomorphologic, climate, hydrographic, biogeography, and anthropogenic touristic potentials.

2.1. Natural Touristic Potentials

2.1.1. Geomorphologic Touristic Potentials

Geomorphologic touristic potentials are touristic motives occurring of relief significant issues and processes in environment².

In the complex relief of this zone there are two main morphological units, as the water shed of Ohrid Lake, with compound part of Struga hallow, and border mountain ridges. They are divided with natural morph tectonic borders, composed of normal tectonic breaks, with closing of the structures, particularly horst-anticline by the graben of Ohrid Lake. These morph tectonic borders are expressed also very well in morphogenesis that is in nowadays relief of this zone, represented by structural down hills, mainly of tectonic, modeled long during interruptions.

In north of Struga hallow, there is the mountain of Karaorman, raising among the tectonic valley of the River Black Drin on west and the River Sateska on east, while the mountain ranges of Galičica are spreading between Qafa Livadhit on south-east and flow shed of Belçishta on south-east. In west of this flow shed, there are the mountain ranges of Jablanica–Belica between Qafa San and the valley of Domosdova (out of the border), closing in west in range flow shed of Debar.

2.1.2. Climate touristic potentials

Climate is one of the most important touristic motives, since it directly influences over other natural touristic motives, and its characteristics influences on the structure and disposition of vegetation, hydrological characteristics of hydrographical touristic motives, etc³. The above displayed borders of this zone have mediate continental climate with influence of the Mediterranean climate, thanks to the influence of Adriatic Sea from west, but completely keep the features of mediate continental climate. These features of climate conditions on the zone are manifested also very well in its characteristic elements with daily, monthly, yearly flows, which have important role in morphogenetic and socio-economic issues.

2.1.3. Hydrographic Touristic Potentials

Despite the fact that water constitutes essential element for life, it is one of the main touristic motives, and dominant motive that attracts greatest number of tourists nowadays.

The above said geologic, climate and morphologic factors have determined a rich hydrographical net in this zone, determined with other zones in Macedonia and wider. These natural water recourses are the lake of Ohrid, the rich net River of Black Drin, many springs and the artificial lake Globočica, all of them with great economic value.

Struga hallow composes the natural border between left and right branches of Black Drin River, while the Ohrid Lake spreads on south side with a mouth of 10 km towards the valley.

Higher density of surface water expiry meets in the Northeast of this zone, on the border between the mountain range of Karaorman and north part of Galičica, connected with waterproof Paleozoic coat, forming the water gathering shed of the river Sateska (right branch of Black Drin).

¹ Zhaku S.: Doctoral Dissertation, Tirana 2009

² Marinovski N.: Turistička Geografija, Skopje 2001

³ Cavallaro C., Pipino A.: Geografia del turismo, Torino 1991

The east side comes after including the mountain range Jablanica-Belica, connected with many glacial cirques⁴ where all left branches of Black Drin River flow. South block of Galiciça has lack of surface water flowing because of limy composition and density karsts issues. This hydrographic issue is directly connected with underground water flowing across galleries and caves of various greatness, courses and level with main exit in Ohrid lake (springs in St. Naum with 11m³/s).

2.1.4. Biogeography Touristic Potentials

Fauna and flora as integral part of natural environment depends on climate, glacial and hydrologic characteristics of site. Another important component of nature of this zone is plant cover, which is relatively rich and various, characterizing itself with a vertical zone⁵ tight-knitted with types of ground.

The Flora and fauna with its variety in Struga region is a magnificent biogeography touristic motive. This result of particular animals, especially hunting game and fish species enable specific, touristic hunting and fishing activities.

2.2. Anthropogenic touristic potentials

Anthropogenic touristic potentials are issues and processes in the region attracting tourists, as a result of influences of human activities and creativities. In the group of Anthropogenic touristic potentials belong: ethno social, cultural-historical, manifestation and ambient motives. In the first group of touristic motives belong: economic activities, traditional dishes, national customs, ancient houses, national art, national literatures, etc, which are greatly present in Struga region and they are of great importance for tourists attraction.

2.2.1. Cultural-Historic elements

Cultural-Historic elements which is very rich but not completely discovered and presented in this touristic zone, is very important as material heritage from the past to nowadays, which represent the culture of one nation and development of society. In this group belong: archeological localities, monuments, mosques, churches, monasteries, etc.

Archeological locality means source of culture and development of society from the past to nowadays. Archeological localities are in the place "Gruke" near the spring of the River Black Drin, in the village of Delogozhda "Kalaja", "Setelia", "Alaniva", "Crcka" in the village of Radolishta "Grobishta", localities in Trebenishta, Vranishta, Veleshta, Tashmarunishta, Dobovjani, Oktisi, etc.

There are a lot of religious objects representing the spiritual culture of the local population in Struga valley, such as: Mosque Musafa Çelebi built in XV century, mosques "Teqe", "Sulejman Arap" in Struga, other in

Delogozhda, Ladorishta, Veleshta, Labunishta, churches "St. Paraskeva" St. Bogorodica, St, George, etc.

The monuments in Struga valley were built after the Second World War, such as: Monument of Revolution in the center of Struga, museum D-r Nikola Nežlobinski, private historical museum in Livadhi.

2.2.2. Cultural events

Cultural events held throughout the year in Struga are also touristic values that attract visitors. These manifestations indicate cultural achievement, old traditions, costumes, etc. They are many in number and found in all nationalities, showing the ethnic structure of population.

- The main manifestations are: " Struga Poetry Evenings" international event where poets gather together from the whole world with their creations. This event is held in the Black Drin bridges and every year the laureate of the poetry for the best creation is elected.
- The festival of folk songs and dances "Strugë Jeho" is another event where cultural and artistic societies are joined from Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. The Festival of serious and light music called "The Struga autumn musical" shares the price for society and the best performance.
- "Folk clothing revue "is organized by the museum of the town Struga, where costumes of all nationalities are unfold in the centre of the town.

⁴ Zhaku S.: Glacial lakes of mountain range: Jablanica-Belica, the importance and precautions for their protection, EUROGEO International Conference, Athens, 2011 ⁷ Mersimllari M.: Raport mbi florën dhe vegjetacionin e rajonit Ohër-Prespë, Tiranë 1997

2.3. Touristic Infrastructure

Accommodation for tourists consists of various hotels, motels, restaurants, auto camping of various categories.

Tab. 1. Distribution and the number of beds in municipality of Struga

Munic.of Struga	hotels	Motels	Private houses	Auto camping beds	Children resorts	Villas	Restaurants	Fast food	Bars
Nr.	20	9	/	3	2	60	50	20	40
Number of beds	3484	105	6625	2804	841	267	/	/	/

Source: Municipality of Struga

From the data table above we can see that Struga has 20 hotels, 9 motels, 3 auto camps, 2 resorts for children, 60 villas, 50 restaurants and 40 cafés, and has a total of 14,126 beds distributed as follows: 3484 beds in hotels, 105 in motels, 6625 beds in private houses, 2804 auto camping beds, 841 beds at the resort for children and 267 beds in holiday villas. The largest number of hotels, motels, auto camps and resorts for children are inherited from the former Yugoslavia, which were built for economy of time and investment in terms of their change, after privatization the owners are less. It should be also noted that the categorization of all hotels and motels has been indiscriminate with the will of the owners.

Tab 2. The number of tourists (visitors) and sleeping in Struga from 2009-2011

year	Tourist			sleeping		
	native	foreign	total	native	foreign	total
2005	46408	15114	61522	287326	44197	331523
2006	40181	17692	57873	249992	51075	301067
2007	43602	20102	63704	264831	59057	323888
2009	39994	16276	56270	255717	45753	301470
2010	40768	16493	57261	252510	46379	298889
2011	36459	22620	59079	231873	85270	317143

Source: Municipality of Struga

The data above shows that there is not a great change considering the number of tourists and their sleeping between 2005-2011, but on contrary there is a small decrease. There are some factors that affected these changes, such as: the omission of new offers, the absence of integration in the international trade tourism, the old infrastructure etc.

From the data of the tourism sector, largest number of foreign tourists and overnight derived from them are from neighboring countries and the region, mainly from Albania, Serbia, Greece, Turkey and from Netherlands during 2011¹.

3. The main types of tourism in Struga

Based on primary and secondary potentials mentioned in Struga these types of tourism can be developed:

Balneal tourism- Struga has numerous potential for balneal tourism, including:

- Lake Ohrid with a wide consumer base consisting of:
 - The complex landscape of the lakeshore with natural dominant view and large capacity space for tourist use
 - Baths of water, sun and sand, which form the core of the tourism offer
 - Good climatic conditions, with temperatures averaging 70-75 days over 25 ° C and 15-20 days over 30 ° C

- Black Drin River
 - The Ohrid Lake with source in the town of Struga
 - With stunning views separating the city
 - Very good physical and chemical characteristics of the water
 - Shoreward and riverbed in the city
- Sateska River, springs and streams abound with these same

Winter-sport tourism- has great potential and opportunities for development in the mountains² of Jablanica-Belica and Karaorman. These mountains have conditions and great opportunities to build ski centers, particularly in the Jablanica mountain string-Belica where a study was done in this field. Spaces where they can build these centers are in the Upper Belica, Vishnja, Lena, Baçilla of Llabunishta in Mountain Jablanica-Belica and Alaniva, Crck, Korita in the mountain Karaorman. Potential for tourism development is Lake Ohrid for the enhancement of water sports and good conditions of terrain and climate for the preparatory stages of other sports.

Health tourism- diverse forms of relief (mountains), good climatic conditions, clean air, rich hydrographic network³ are numerous potentials available to the municipality of Struga for the construction of health centers for treatment

² Bartoluci M, Čavlek N.: Turizam i sport-razvojni aspekti, Zagreb 2007

³ Hitrec T.: Zdravstveni turizam-pojmovi i koncepcijski okvir, I međunarodni simpozijum, Opatija 1996

¹ Municipality of Struga

of various diseases such as respiratory diseases, heart diseases etc.

Rural tourism- is a new form of tourism, held the last 2-3 decades⁴. Municipality of Struga has great potential for developing this form of tourism, based on:

- the area of 507 km² consisting the town of Struga and 51 rural settlements
- Rural landscape
- With about 25,000 ha of agricultural area with mixed structure (fields, gardens, vineyards, fruit) and diversities of cultures.
- Traditional Livestock.

Hunting and fishing tourism- the hunting reserves are mainly found in the Jabllanic-Belica and Karaorman where different kinds of wild animals and wildfowl live such as bears, roes, wild goats, pigs, wolves, rabbits, etc., and some types of birds. Lake Ohrid, Black Drini and Sateska are very rich in various fish species, like spotted trout, carp, belushka, eel etc.

Cultural tourism- numerous archaeological settlements, forts, combined with religious buildings, monuments, museums (all above) are resources for the development of this form of tourism. These indicate that this area has been inhabited by the fourth century BC, invasions and periods in which has passed the development of society.

Ecotourism- is based on three characteristics⁵, which are:

- The natural environment with the original natural landscapes in Struga which are characteristics especially in the rural areas that make up the majority of area and habitats
- Motivation and educational assessment that indicates preserve the original nature and cultural values which are revealed above.
- Older anthropogenic environments in the settlements that lie in the mountainous areas of the municipality of Struga

Gastronomik tourism- gastronomy as growing demand of tourists for the values and authenticity in Struga, has an original cuisine that uses local quality products with nutritional value. Traditional dishes are to prepare the fish (trout and carp), the eel, bean pie, vegetables pie, rice dishes and seasonal vegetables.

4. Investment in tourism

Most of tourist infrastructure the Riviera of Struga has inherited from former Yugoslavia. About 80% of hotels, motels, resorts were built in that period. Their infrastructure was built in that period and conditions were for the huge market. Besides tourism infrastructure and communications infrastructure is outdated. After 1991 Macedonia was a separate state and the privatization started which was based on political and ethnic rules.

But Macedonia confronted the problems with the interior region such as:

- The wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo

- Greece's economic blockade against Macedonia
- Internal conflict of 2001, etc., brought economic problems which were reflected in the branch of tourism in the area of investment and reducing the market⁶.

The dispute over the name of Macedonia by Greece, non integration into NATO alliance and the EU, appoint Macedonia as unstable region that also directly affect in the economic development, namely the lack of foreign investment and domestic economic and tourism trades in general. From the data of the municipality of Struga, there are no direct investors from outside but there are some investments from our compatriots working in Western Europe and the U.S. also from some domestic investor. Such investments are Royal Hotel, Apollonia Hotel, Clinton Palace, Diplomat and several motels and restaurants.

4.1. Struga as an attractive town for investors

Struga is an attractive town for investors because of the:

- Good geographical position as a bridge between East and West
- Good climate
- The existence of Lake Ohrid, the wealth of unique, pearl of Europe and beyond
- Black Drin river that divides the town and the hollow on both sides
- River Sateska
- Various forms of relief with stunning landscapes
- Clean environment without industrial pollution
- Rich plant and animal world
- Tourism as a primary sector of economic development
- The rich cultural heritage
- Qualification of relatively high educational structure
- Low labor cost, etc
- Potential areas for investment:
 - The shore of Lake Ohrid
 - Black river
 - Sateska
 - Mountain range Jabllanica-Belica (Upper Belica, Vishnja, Lenishte, bacille of Llabunishta, glacial lakes, etc..)
 - Mountain range of Karaorman (Alaniva, Crcka, Korite etc..)
- Potential investments may include:
 - Hotels, motels, restaurants, villas
 - Cultural center
 - Sports center (tennis, golf, soccer fields, etc..)
 - Ski center
 - Cable Car
 - Rural tourism
 - Hunting, fishing
 - Archaeological settlements
 - Castles, etc

⁴ Ruzhić P.: Ruralni Turizam, Pula 2009

⁵ Doka Dh., Draçi B., : Gjeografia e Turizmit, Tiranë 2009

⁶ Pollozhani P.:Struktura ekonomike dhe punësimi si prezantues të zhvillimit ekonomik, Strugë, 2008

5. Institutional Issues

The success of Struga in international tourism markets will require a high level of cooperation between local, central, private sector and civil society. Collaboration should consist of:

- Strategic Plan
- Urban planning and road infrastructure investments
- Environmental policy and governance of the natural potentials
- Rural development related to quality and food safety
- Elimination of noise
- Fiscal policy
- Sufficient information, etc.

6. Sustainable development of tourism in Struga- as a necessity

Since the mid 90's of last century the development of sustainable tourism has become a priority of EU institutions⁷. According to the World Tourism Organization, Council Tourism, and the land council with sustainable development of tourism we implicate managing all resources in order to meet economic, social, aesthetic, and preserves cultural integrity, the basic ecological processes, biodiversity and systems to support of life⁸.

Sustainable Development Strategy has three main objectives:

1. Economic development
2. Equality and social cohesion
3. Environmental protection

Economic development objectives are fully available in Struga, but this needs a full cooperation between central and local governments, businesses and governmental organizations in order to raise the quality of supply, environmental protection and satisfaction of tourists.

7. Conclusions and suggestions

- Good geographical position, combined forms of relief, good climatic conditions, rich hydrographic network, high biodiversity, rich cultural heritage are important elements that enable Struga to become a tourist hub in the region and beyond. In this case Ohrid Lake should be emphasized with its unique wealth of high biodiversity and Drin River which passes through the city.
- Communications' infrastructure, the roads of different levels are old and dilapidated.
- Touristic infrastructure (hotels, motels, resorts) is old, and is created like a market and a system as in the former Yugoslavia.
- There is a lack of hotel infrastructure and high levels, as five-star hotels.
- Lack of foreign economic investment in order to raise new infrastructure

- Cultural Heritage has not taken the proper shape because of the archaeological settlements which are still covered as a result of politics.
- Based on natural and human potentials the forms of tourism such as medical, mountain, rural, hunting and fishing, eco-tourism, gastronomic etc. are developing or are likely to be developed.
- Development of tourism have prevented a number of events in the region, such as the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and the internal conflict of 2001.
- Limiting factor is the non integration of Macedonia into NATO and the EU

Suggestions

- Redaction of a strategic plan in view of sustainable development.
- Creation of the favorable conditions by the local and central feature of investment from domestic and foreign business.
- Creation of favorable tax policies for investors.
- Creation of a tourist information center that gives detailed information to the attractiveness of the area and tourist infrastructure.
- Detailed information, on economic forums on natural and human resources of the area as investment opportunities.
- Enhancement of tourist offer with new content, products and services that would have raised the quality of supply.
- Engagement of experts to create guides.
- Construction of traffic infrastructure, which was destroyed and inherited from the former Yugoslavia.
- Investment in existing tourism infrastructure, particularly the construction of five-star hotels.
- Stimulation of crafts and local culture.
- Advertising the tourism product in print and electronic media.
- Engagement of archaeologists at the opening of archaeological settlements, and their coverage.
- Education and training of tourism workers.
- Development of agriculture and livestock in view of tourism.
- Selecting the problem of solid waste (waste depots wild).
- Selecting the sewage problem in rural areas.
- Avoidance of cemented constructions in the shore of Lake Ohrid

⁷ Brussels: European Commission, 1995

⁸ World Tourism Organization: Guide for sustainable development, 1993

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