

Montenegro: the Mediterranean’s wild beauty is firmly invested in sustainability

In recent years, the small Mediterranean state of Montenegro has been praised for its wild and unparalleled beauty and diverse cultural offer, making visitor numbers soar season after season. Tourism is a key driver of Montenegro’s economy and the job market and the country’s position as stable candidate for accession to the European Union creates an attractive atmosphere for investment, allowing Montenegro to differentiate itself and continue to innovate its tourism offer. Nature and adventure tourism as well as a focus on spa and wellness will allow Montenegro to reach out to new segments and markets, thereby helping to curb lower demand influenced by seasonality.

The country’s increasing relevance as a tourism destination in the Mediterranean is a clear example that tourism development is heading the right way. With the objective of reaffirming the country’s commitment to sustainability, the Tourism Board of Podgorica, Montenegro’s capital, has recently taken the lead in an initiative to implement the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS). The project coordinators at the Tourism Board remark, *“We want to ensure the continuation of balanced tourism growth while preserving all of our valuable resources. Montenegro’s small size works to tourism’s advantage, particularly in stimulating rural development and regional integration of the Northern part of the country. Visitors can experience an immense diversity of landscapes and heritage even when they travel rather short distances. This is a very attractive factor especially for the nearby European markets.”*

Montenegro is no foreigner to sustainable tourism indicators. Long before ETIS testing, the country was proclaimed the first Ecological State of Europe and can thus look back at almost 25 years of joint efforts by public and private stakeholders according to the principle of integrating environmental concerns into all development plans. This provided an excellent point of departure for data collection during the ETIS pilot phase and has delivered new impulses for sustainable improvements in the management of the tourist destination.

“Tourism will continue to exert a transformative force for Montenegro’s economic and social progress. This is also reflected in our visitor figures, which show that international tourist arrivals have increased at twice the rate of other Southern Mediterranean regions in Europe over the past years,” states the Tourism Board of Podgorica. *“In accordance with the Tourism Development Strategy, our vision is for Montenegro to become a Mediterranean destination with a varied and year-round tourism offer that appeals to middle and luxury markets, but also strengthens our capital city’s position as a MICE destination.”*

To achieve this goal, the Tourism Board of Podgorica cooperates closely with stakeholders and investors, who bring in much of the resources, experience, integrity and knowledge necessary for the realisation of the common vision. A key tourism infrastructure project for the coming years foresees the construction of 130 hotels in the 4* and 5* categories in line with the country’s established sustainable and social values.

Further information:

Podgorica Tourism Board

<http://www.podgorica.travel/en/>

Montenegro’s national tourism web portal

<http://www.montenegro.travel/>

ETIS destination spotlight: Podgorica

Montenegro’s attractiveness as a tourism destination has not remained unnoticed by travel providers and hotel and gastronomy chains of international standing.

In order to provide quicker connections and direct routes to passengers travelling from Brussels and London, the Montenegrin government has signed a 4-year cooperation agreement with the budget airline Ryanair. Between June 2013 and April 2015, Ryanair alone has facilitated almost 36,000 tourist arrivals in Montenegro.

Capacities in the premium hotel segment were leveraged with the arrival of the Hilton hotel brand in 2010 and first successes have given way to the development of new resorts. Hard Rock Café has selected Podgorica as a first of its kind location in the Adriatic Region and is present in Montenegro since February 2015.

