

Tourism potential of Prespa as an opportunity for investment

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Abstract

Changes in global tourism characteristics of world acquirement and numerous challenges have prompted many countries to plan their strategies for making tourism one of the most powerful and sustainable economic development.

This paper aims to present the natural potentials, to highlight the cultural and historical reasons (cultural heritage). Consequently, we present all possible shapes of tourism, which have the opportunity to develop, to analyze data with a tourism resort with the same potential, to identify problems why it is not developing at the same level. Further we present investment opportunities, and needed measures for a sustainable tourism in Prespa as primary economic branch.

Natural potentials are of a great and decisive importance in the development of tourism.

Cultural and historical motifs in Prespa are numerous, especially in rural areas with values and opportunities of using but there is a lack of a good job by the central and local governments for identifying and processing these values.

Various forms of tourism are an opportunity for gathering tourists throughout the year and not just during the summer season.

Comparison of touristic data with another touristic area with potentials approximately the same highlights the defects encountered in the area concerned.

The attraction of the area is an opportunity for foreign and domestic investors in the establishment of a tourist area with tourist contemporary models.

By sustainable development of tourism we understand the management of all resources in order to meet economic needs, social and aesthetic, which preserves cultural integrity, basic ecological processes, biodiversity and life support systems which is entirely possible in Prespa.

Key words: tourism, potentials, cultural-historical, economic development, investors

1.Introduction

The hollow of Prespa spreads in South-West physical-geographic unit of Macedonia and it is separated with visible natural borders with typical meridian spreading. As natural borders are Baba mountain on the east, Galicica on west, Biglla and Platen on north and Prespa Lake on

south¹. Being a border land, there are two border lines, one with Greece Republic through Mexhitia which is 45km far from Prespa town and the other with Republic of Albania through Stenja which is 23km far from Prespa. There is also another important border line, called Kemba e Markos that is not activated. Human and natural

¹ Abdullai F.: *Fushëgropa e Prespës, Detroit, 2010*

potentials in Prespa can bring to the development of tourism, as a third economic branch, which consists 10% of world's GDP and 10% of the employers in the world, in a direct or indirect way.

research methods used in the realization of this research paper are:

- Collection of theoretical information by local and foreign contemporary literature
- Illustration of theoretical material with photos, sketches
- Mathemathial and statistical method
- Cause and effect analysis, in order to highlight the factors that influence the development of tourism.

Applied values consist in that by knowing the natural and human resources we aim to provide the sustainable economic development to the hollow Prespa and this will be a local contribution towards the creation of development plans and regional tourism development strategy, central strategy for tourism development at a national level, investors, non-governmental organizations, students, etc.

2. Touristic Potentials

2.1. Natural Touristic Potentials

Prespa hollow is characterized with rich natural wealth, with incalculable and unique values. Among these values there is Lake Prespa awarded as a natural monument, two national parks, one that of Pelister and the other of Galicica, natural reserve Liqenasi, the Great Island(The Great Town) on Lake Prespa with area of 1km², great biodiversity and also the cultural-historic elements which make this zone to be touristic place with important values within the country and abroad.

2.1.1. Geomorphologic Touristic Potentials

In the complex relief of this zone there are two main morphological units, such as the graben basin including Prespa hollow and board-line mountains. Mali i Thate is spreading in south-west of graben, where as in the west there are mountain ranges of Galicica, announced national parks in 1958 for their beautiful hollow shapes, the rich flora and fauna and for the mountain Petrina. It covers an area of 22750 h. In the east the mountain ranges of Baba are spreading with the peak Pelister recognized as a national park of Pelister in 1948 with the area of 17150ha. In north of this graben, mountains Billga and Pillaken are spreading¹.

2.1.2 Climate Touristic Potentials

Prespa hollow is characterized with mediate continental climate with Mediterranean influence coming

from the Small Lake of Prespa in south-west². Mediate long term temperature is 12.9°C. It is 5.1°C in January and 21.6°C in August. The average temperature of water in Lake Prespa is 12.9 and it reaches over 20°C in July. These climatic features show an ideal condition for touristic development in Prespa throughout the year.

2.1.3. Hydrographic Touristic Potentials

A determined touristic potential for the zone with unique values is Prespa Lake, which belongs to Lakes Desaretis formed during pliocene as a result of tectonic movement. Prespa Lake consists of two lakes: the small Prespa Lake and the great Prespa Lake³. The great Prespa lake is situated in the altitude of 835m, with the area of 284km², from which 65% belongs to the Republic of Macedonia, 18% to Republic of Albania and 17% to Greece Republic. The small Prespa Lake belongs to Republic of Albania and Greece Republic. Water resources of this zone are Great River of Bratucina (Lumi i Madh), River of Kranj (Shara) and River of Pretor which flow in Prespa Lake and in other sources⁴.

2.1.4. Biogeography Touristic Potentials

Fauna and flora are important components for touristic potential. As we claimed before this zone has a mediate continental climate which underlines the characteristics of fauna and flora in this area. Fauna is characterized with vertical emphasized structure and contains of oaks, beeches, pines and alpine pastures⁵. Flora with its variety in Prespa region is an important biogeography touristic motive consisting the plant cover and water. There are 23 types of fish in Prespa Lake from which 5 types are endemic for the region and 2 for Balkan.

2.2. Anthropogenic touristic potentials

2.2.1. Cultural-Historic elements

Cultural-Historic elements in Prespa hollow are very rich and represent material values which show the culture of one nation and development of society from the past to the recent years.

Prespa region is an antique town. Almost in every village there are archeological places, where 130 antiques of different periods are presented, including nearly 1000

¹ Andonovski T.: *Karakteristiki na relefot vo R.Makedonija, Geografski razgledi, Skopje, 1995*

² Lazarevski A.: *Klimata na Makedonija, Skopje, 1972*

³ Mileski G.: *Prespansko Jezero, Geografski vidik, Skopje, 1972*

⁴ Abdullai F.: *Prespa, Detroit, 2004*

⁵ Kolčakovski D.: *Osnovni biogeografski karakteristiki na R.Makedonija, Skopje, 2000*

archeological exhibitions, 500 coins and 450 exhibitions of ethnological heritage. An archeological place which is discovered and partially restaured is a place called Qyteti i Madh in The Great Island, where as the other group of archeological places are in the villages: Pretor, Asamati, Kurbin. As an evidence for this is the Via Ignatia road crossing, dated from Roman Empire and the existence of toponym in Pretor which comes from Latin language with a meaning "leader of administrative unit". Byzantine Empire has also got the traces including frescoes which decorate a lot of churches in this region, such as St. George church built in the 9th century, St Peter church in Kurbin, built in 16th century, St. Arangel built in 17th century, etc. Ahmed Nijaz Beu, who was a senior officer of Ottoman Empire, built " Prespa's Sarai" in Prespa, a luxurious palace with French architecture, where a House of Culture is currently situated.

2.2.2. Cultural Events

Cultural events 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.

- **European Actor** is an international theatrical event held every year. It started from 2002 in Oteshevo but it is recently realized in the House of Culture in Prespa.
- **Apple Collection in Prespa** – is a traditional event .It is an important agricultural activity which represents the start of apple collection in this region.
- **Traditional Meetings with migrants** is an event realized mainly from May till August, when the migrants return home.
- **Ilinden Meetings-** a 35 year-old tradition cultural activity. These events belong to popular folklore.
- **Contemporary colony of ceramics-** is a professional colony and member of UNESKO colony, where authors from the world meet each other. Ethnographical values, flora and fauna of the lake and the ground are presented in the museum of Keraca Visulceva and Podmolcani.

2.3. Touristic Infrastructure

Accommodation for tourists (visitors) consists of a net of touristic objects including hotels, motels, restaurants, auto camps, etc.

Table 1. Number of beds and types of accommodation capacity

Types of accommodation capacity	Number of beds	Number of beds in %
Hotels	445	5.65
Rest House	1864	23.69
Camps	4886	62.10
Private accommodation capacities	600	7.62
Rehabilitation home for respiratory and chronic disease.	72	0.91
Total	7867	100

Source: Municipality of Resnja

The data above shows that the overall number of beds in Prespa is 7867 from which 445 beds are in seven hotels with B category, such as; hotel Kitka in Prespa, Pretor in the village of Pretor, Evropa, Yugoslavia, Shkupi, Pelikan and Kozara. There are 1486 beds in the rest houses, situated in Kranj, Pretor, Asamat, Sirhat and Oteshevo. Moreover, there are 4886 beds in the camps in Kranj, Pretor, Sirhan and Oteshevo; 600 beds in private houses and 72 beds in rehabilitation institute of chronic and respiratory disease.

It should be noted that host infrastructure capacities are built during ex-Yugoslavia and a lot of renovations have been done after privatization.

Table 2. The number of tourists and sleeping 2005-2011

Year	Tourist			Sleeping		
	Native	foreign	total	native	foreign	total
2005	6355	315	6670	47508	1236	48743
2006	5630	137	5767	41361	191	41552
2007	5899	138	6037	43157	350	43507
2008	5230	79	5309	36032	124	36156
2009	4595	176	4771	27661	543	28204
2010	3341	64	3408	20808	177	20985
2011	8284	134	8418	54371	357	54728

Source: State Entity for Statistics

The data above shows that there is not a great change considering the number of tourists and their sleeping in Prespa. It is worth mentioning the number of foreign tourists which is symbolic. This data does not argue the great natural potentials including Lake Prespa, a net of rich rivers, glacial lakes of Pelister, Pelister National Park, national park of Galicica, natural reserve Liqenasi, the great Island and a huge number of anthropogenic resources. There are some factors that prevented the development of tourism, such as outdated communication infrastructure, roads, hotels, motels inherited from ex-Yugoslavia, lack of information for the potentials of this zone, outdated offer, etc. Foreign tourists come from neighboring countries, mainly from Albania, Greece, Turkey and Serbia.

3. The main types of tourism in Prespa

Based on the above potentials, Prespa is a developed town and it can develop these types of tourism:

Balneal tourism- for the development of this form of tourism there are three elements important: sun, sand and water¹. Prespa has a great potential for development of balneal tourism, including:

- Prespa shore landscape dominant natural water, baths of water, sun and sand, good weather conditions, etc.
- Great River of Bratuçina, River Kranj (Shara) and the river of Pretor, several small streams and numerous sources.

Sport tourism- sport tourism in the area has great potential for development. These potentials enable these types of tourism based on the spaces²:

- Closed type, which include indoor activities like tennis, ping-pong, basketball, football on a small field, volleyball etc.
- Semi-closed type, which include golf, swimming, rowing different boats, etc.
- Open type - which include skiing, cycling, hiking, fishing sport, flight sports, etc.

Winter tourism- has a development opportunity with ideal conditions. This form has great potential for development in the Baba Mountains, Galicica Dry Mountain, Biglla and Pllaken. Such opportunities exist in villages Brajçin, Luboj which gravitate towards Baba mountain where there is a ski center by cable - car.

Agro-tourism - is a new form of tourism that has its origins since 1970 in order to prevent the rural population to migrate³. This form can be done in rural areas, where they allow tourists to get acquainted with the agricultural activities of the area's, traditional cuisine, cultural heritage etc. In view of this, it is also a project invested from Germany in order to create conditions for residents to welcome the tourists in their homes. This project has been successful and in some rural areas there have been used donations from this project. Main farmers' products of this area are apples and it is known as an area with a long tradition in this field.

Cultural tourism- archaeological settlements, religious buildings, city museum, cultural activities are an opportunity for the development of this form of tourism.

Hunting and fishing- is a form of tourism with very good conditions that can be developed in the Dry Mountain, Baba, Pllaken, Biglla and Galicica, which are inhabited by wild animals and birds, characteristic of the area. The Lake Prespa, the river Bratuçina, Great River, Kranja and Pretori are rich with different types of fish, which appears as fishing opportunity.

Weekend tourism- allows the existence of a large number of weekend houses not only in the lakeshore area but also inside the other settlements. There are more weekend homes in Pretor.

Transit- tourism – as border area with two crossings with Albania (Stenje) and (Markos foot) and another passive crossing creates opportunities and conditions for the development of this form of tourism.

Health Tourism - diverse forms of relief, good weather conditions, clean air and rich hydrographic network are

¹ Doka Dh., Draçi B., : Gjeografia e Turizmit, Tiranë 2009

²Hitrec T.: Zdrastveni turizam-pojmovi i koncepciski okvir, I megjunarodni simpozium, Opatija 1996

³ Ruzhiç P.: Ruralni Turizam, Pula 2009

important elements for the development of this form of tourism⁴. Health tourism is present in the region of Prespa with the Institute for rehabilitation and chronic respiratory diseases in Otesheva. Physical and geographical features of the area are ideal for this type of tourism, knowing the attractions of international market today. It should be noted that the aforementioned institution is built in the former Yugoslavia and after the independence of Macedonia there has been no investment in this form of tourism.

4. Prespa tourism development in comparison to other areas

To mirror the development of tourism in the Prespa region there must be done analysis with physical and geographical features with approximately the same potential. As comparable zones are Ohrid and Struga with nearly the same potentials, tourist area, climate, geomorphologic features and a range of other potential⁵.

Tab. 3. The number of overnight stays in Prespa, Ohrid and Struga

Viti	Prespa Sleeping			Ohrid sleeping			Struga sleeping (eco)		
	native	Foreign	total	native	foreign	total	native	foreign	total
2009	27661	543	28204	245137	185074	430211	255717	45753	301476
2010	20808	177	20985	195477	151703	347180	252510	46317	298827

Source: State Entity for Statistics

The analysis of the tabel above shows the level of tourism development in Prespa, Ohrid and Struga. According to these data, it is clear that in 2009 there were 28204 total sleepings for Prespa, 430211 for Ohrid and 301476 for Struga whereas accommodation of foreign tourists in Prespa has had 543 nights, 185074 in Ohrid and in Struga 45753 nights. This large difference in the number of overnight stays is also seen in 2010. Analysis of the three areas with the same physical and geographical features indicates that Prespa is a region with undeveloped tourism in comparison to other two areas.

Factors that prevented Prespa from developing tourism beside its great potentials are:

- Distance from the local tourist emitting countries and European countries
- Low level communication infrastructure (roads) inherited from the former Yugoslavia
- High relief forms that require large investments in communications infrastructure building
- Lack of rail traffic
- Lack of air traffic
- Host infrastructure (hotels, motels) built in the former Yugoslavia and predicted to the tourist market
- Lack of water traffic
- Lack of sewage wastewater for the rural area
- Lack of offers and contemporary tourist propaganda
- Limited human resources and low educational structure (migration very developed)

- Lack of domestic investment
- Lack of information in international forums on potential investment of the area etc.

5.Strategic plan for tourism development

To create a strategic plan for tourism development in Prespa the following problems have been identified:

1. Identification of needs
2. Presentation of priorities
3. The goal and work plan

5.1. Advantages as investment opportunities in the region of Prespa

Prespa region has great natural potential for tourism development. These are potential investment opportunities from domestic and foreign investors such as:

- Two lakes connected with flora and fauna
- Ecological clean environment with two national parks and a nature reserve
- Creation of the Prespa Park by three neighboring countries
- The lack of heavy industry
- Good conditions for the development of agro tourism

Multiple opportunities for sustainable tourism etc.

Investments may consist of:

- Hotels, motels, restaurants
- Sports Center
- Road infrastructure
- Archaeological Settlements
- Cultural Center
- Water Traffic
- Sanitation infrastructure of wastewater and solid waste
- Rural Tourism
- Hunting, fishing
- Bicycle paths etc.

6. Sustainable development of tourism in Prespa

Priority of EU institutions is a sustainable economic development in all economic branches⁶. Tourism as economic branch is also one of the priorities of the EU with major priorities which require special attention in terms of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development Strategy faces three main objectives:

1. Economic development
2. Equality and Social Cohesion
3. Environmental Protection

Economic development objectives are fully available in Prespa, 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 tourists satisfaction.

7. Conclusions and suggestions

Combined forms of relief, the existence of two national parks (Pelisteri, Galicica) natural reserve Ligenasi, good climate conditions, rich hydrographic network, high biodiversity, rich cultural heritage, good condition for

⁴⁴ Hitrec T.: Zdrastveni turizam-pojmovi i koncepciski okvir, I meglunarodni simpozium, Opatija 1996

⁵ Zhaku. S: Doctoral Dissertation, Tirana, 2009

⁶ Brussels: European Commission, 1995

agricultural development are important elements to enable Prespa become a tourist center in the region and beyond.

- The hollow surrounded by mountain ranges, is linked with mountain neck that hamper communications.
- Communications infrastructure, interconnecting roads that connect the Prespa hollow with Ohrid hollow and Pelagonia which are old and inherited from the former Yugoslavia.
- Tourist infrastructure (hotels, motels, holiday- places) is old, established for a market and a system such as the former Yugoslavia was.
- Lack of new and high level hotels infrastructure.
- Lack of foreign economic investment in the function of new infrastructure building purposes.
- Cultural heritage is not located in the function of tourism.
- There is no water traffic to make the connection with Great Island (Great City), which is the only lake island in Europe and beyond.
- The natural and human potentials enable to develop these forms of tourism: medical, sports, winter, rural, hunting and fishing, transit, health, eco-tourism, gastronomy, etc.
- Development of tourism has prevented all the wars that took place in the former Yugoslavia.
- Limiting factor is also the no integration of Macedonia in NATO and the EU.

Suggestions

- Develop strategic plan for the development of tourism.
- Introduction of natural potentials in economic forums to attract foreign investors

- Establish communications infrastructure by the central government.
- Establish liaison water traffic with neighboring countries in view of tourism.
- Encouraging local residents to stop the emigration.
- Creating conditions and favorable fiscal policies to investors in the investment function.
- Cooperation between local, national and non-governmental organizations in order to increase the region in the high level of tourist sustainable development.
- Establish a tourist information center so that the tourists are provided with detailed information about the attractiveness of the area and tourism infrastructure.
- Enrichment of tourist offer with new content, products and services that would have raised the quality of the offer.
- Engage specialists to create guides.
- Investment in existing infrastructure and new host.
- Stimulation crafts and local culture.
- Product advertising resort to more print and electronic media.
- Commitment of archaeologists at the opening of archaeological settlements, and their placement in the function of tourism.
- Education and training of tourism workers.
- Development of agriculture and livestock in view of tourism.
- Solution of the problem of solid waste (garbage wild depots).

Solution of the problem of sewage in rural areas

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