

WATERTOUR STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

European Union funding can be used in the development of water tourism, and a good example of this is the University of Szeged as the main beneficiary, and the University of Novi Sad as the partner with their Interreg IPA CBC, HUSRB/1602/31/0204. (WATERTOUR) project, which seeks to promote water tourism on the river Tisza, and at the same time to uncover the values of the shared cultural heritage of Hungary and Serbia, the traditions, the river that connects the two countries, and the natural and social values of the Tisza.

The full project has covered several areas (natural geographic and hydrographic characteristics, economic history, population geography, settlement geography and ethnography of the region, its tourism, infrastructure and superstructure, natural treasures and eco-tourism features), with the focus being on water tourism aspects. Project complexity was provided by the connection between sporting, eco- and cultural tourism development activities, and their reliance on one another. The project set out to establish new traditions with the various programmes organised – with the involvement of professional, municipality and service provider partners – that made it possible for university students from Serbia and Hungary to meet and work together at international scientific, cultural, sports and nature protection programmes organised in partnership.



2. DEVELOPMENT BASED ON NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

2. 1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON NATURAL ATTRACTIONS IN THE HUNGARIAN SECTION OF THE LOWER TISZA

Mainly it is gallery forests that cover the floodplains along the river; there are only small patches of agricultural land. All the way along the Tisza there are beautiful liana-type wild grapes and wild cucumbers that form a veil-like association, which is visible from the water and the dykes, but at the same time it is basically impossible to penetrate. When touring on the water in sections like this, we can come across many protected plant varieties and species of animals.

Besides the living river itself, there are other opportunities that haven't been exploited yet. One of these is the protected Tisza backwaters, where there are educational trails too (Tőserdő – Kontyvirág Educational Trail, Alpár Tisza Backwater – Grand Prince Árpád Educational Trail, Mártély Tisza Backwater – Tisza Educational Trail, Floodplain Educational Trail). Our recommendation is that at these points the boats should be transferred on land from the Tisza to the backwaters and then back. This way it would be possible to discover these really valuable areas too for those who are touring on the river Tisza. A large part of the area that is being discussed is protected by law. The Tőserdő – Alpár Tisza Backwater unit forms part of the Kiskunság National Park as its unit No.7. The Pusztaszer Nature Reserve and Mártély Nature Reserve also belong to the national park directorate. From Tiszakécske to the railway bridge in Algyő the whole floodplain, together with the national park and nature reserve areas, qualify as NATURA 2000 territories, forming an uninterrupted 'green corridor' along the river Tisza.

Our short-term development suggestion is making the natural treasures more attractive by doing the maintenance work on the educational trails and restoring them if necessary (relying on funding from grant programmes if necessary). These are the following: Floodplain Rotary educational trail (Szeged), 2. Tisza educational trail (Algyő), 3. Tisza educational trail (Mártély), 4. Grand Prince Árpád educational trail (Tiszaalpár), 5. Kontyvirág educational trail (Lakitelek-Tőserdő).

In the medium-term the task would be building the stops on the Hullámtér Rotary educational trail, placing information boards (about the flora and fauna of the floodplain, the Tisza floods and how the river's fish stock is managed). It would create a new opportunity if the Kurca Main Canal was integrated to form the Tisza-Kurca-Hármas Körös water tour system, as this step would also make the natural, landscape and cultural values of the newly joining towns (Mindszent, Szegvár, Szentés) accessible to those touring on the river Tisza.

Certain problems might also arise if a new water tour route is designated with the integration of the Kurca Main Canal:

- boat transfer on land at the locks (building transfer points is necessary in 8 cases, Kurca-mouth locks (2), Albertcsőszház culvert, T-3 culvert, Talom culvert, Bikaistálló culvert, Zuhogó culvert, Felső-Kurca locks (2), Hármas-Körös lock). The budget for construction works is unknown for the time being, possible financial resources include nature protection and eco-



tourism development funding programmes, and the ‘Accessible Hungary’ programme.

- passing under low bridges (there are 2-3 very low bridges with a height of maximum 1 metre).

Building a new educational trail along the river Kurca (four stops – Mindszent branch-off, Szegvár branch-off, Szentes branch-off, Hármaskörös branch-off, 2+2+2+1, altogether 7 information boards). The budget for construction works is unknown for the time being, possible financial resources include nature protection and eco-tourism development funding programmes, and the ‘Accessible Hungary’ programme. Information board topics:

1- 2: Kurca mouth, Albertcsőszház lock: Natural geographic and hydrologic characteristics of the river Kurca. Flora and fauna of the Kurca. History, traditions and cultural values of Mindszent.

3 - 4: Szegvár, bridge, riverbank at the castle: History, traditions, cultural values and attractions of Szegvár (Castle, Country House).

5 – 6: Szentes City Centre promenade: History, traditions and cultural values of Szentes. The effects of thermal water utilisation on the flora and fauna of the river Kurca, and on the natural environment of Szentes.

7. Felső-Kurca locks: The role of the Kurca in the utilisation of the area (irrigation, recreation, fishing).

Our long-term development proposal is involving the Lakitelek and Alpár Tisza Backwaters in the water eco-tourism programme.

Water tourism suggestion: Canoe tour (18km long). Participants can stop at three locations, they have access to drinking water at two of these, and there are snack bars, restaurants, etc. at the third one.

Canoe tours on the backwaters of the Lower Tisza (Lakitelek and Alpár Tisza Backwaters).

Entering the backwater would be possible at the North end of the Lakitelek Tisza Backwater (at the Tisza’s 267th river kilometre). Going downstream in canoes until the first stop (tour participants can get drinking water and buy food), the Lakitelek-Tőserdő beach. Continuing downstream participants reach a built canal at the South of the backwater, which takes them to the Alpár Tisza Backwater. The second stop would be the beach in Alpár (tour participants can get drinking water, unfortunately the restaurant has closed for good).

The tour can continue by transferring the boats on land at the end of the backwater to the river Tisza. At this point it would be a good idea to build a rest stop (this would be the third stop), which would even make it possible to do the tour in the opposite direction too.

The budget for construction works is unknown for the time being, possible financial resources include nature protection and eco-tourism development funding programmes, and the ‘Accessible Hungary’ programme. It is the Kiskunság National Park Directorate that manages this nature reserve area, and they seem to be willing to give a green light to the construction of boat-transfer-on-land points.

2.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON NATURAL ATTRACTIONS IN THE SERBIAN SECTION OF THE LOWER TISZA

The river Tisza, the riverbanks and the areas located a bit further from the river represent great natural value from all perspectives: They are great to look at, large parts are covered by protected



plants and there are numerous natural monuments, which can play an important role in the development of tourism. However, natural values can only be considered an asset if they aren't ruined and they aren't exposed to great threat in this respect. In this sense tourism can't be isolated from undesired human intervention. These human factors – mistakes made by men – can help the future generations understand that we mustn't intervene in the natural processes of the Tisza.

Recommendations for tourism development based on natural values and attractions:

- Special nature reserves: Szelevény steppe (Horgos), Kapitány meadow (Kispiac), Sósokopó (Törökbecse), Pétervárad-kövi wetlands (Kevevára), Pastures of great bustard (Csóka), Okanj wetlands (Tiszatarrós), Lake Császár (Nagyzerzsébetlak).
- Kamarás National Park (Horgos), Tisza castle park (gingko, yew trees, sycamore, oak trees) in Törökkanizsa.
- Natural monuments: There is a row of pedunculate oaks along the Péterréve-Óbecse road (road No. 102).
- There are two protected pedunculate oaks on the right bank, right above Zenta.
- A row of protected chestnut trees in Zenta.
- Nature reserve: Pearls Island (an area surrounded by the Tisza, with a Muscat Crocant vineyard (the wine made of this grape variety used to be exported to Vienna and Paris)).

Other: 'the blooming of the Tisza' in Magyarkanizsa and Zenta.

- The Prokop in Adorján.
- A former section of the Tisza, a canal-like backwater in Szanád, the Sósokopó (in Csóka).
- The Tisza backwater in Csóka.
- Growing and processing medicinal herbs (chamomile, mint) in Padé.
- Colonies of nesting birds, e.g. close to the Kanizsa-Törökkanizsa bridge there is a colony of grey herons, which nest in the pedunculate oak forest year after year.
- Signs indicating that there are protected beavers living here (on the right bank of the Tisza between Magyarkanizsa and Zenta).
- Stunningly rich flora and fauna on the islands in the river Tisza.

We must also call attention to the negligence and narrow-mindedness of men:

- The dam on the Tisza at Törökbecse, which slows down the current of water. Its effects can be felt up to Csongrád in Hungary (sediment, mud, waste and harmful materials leave slower, there is less oxygen in the water, and the mud accumulates, which endangers the survival of the Tisza mayfly and a few species of fish).
- The planted Canadian poplar forests on the riverbanks – these threaten the biodiversity of the area.
- Invasive species all the way along the Tisza (black locust, box elder, wild grapes, wild cucumber, various types of bird's foot trefoil, black bindweed, different types of European goldenrod, giant hogweed, ragweed, various types of wormwood, etc).
- In Adorján the crude oil pipeline that has been out of use for two decades.
- The tributaries of the Tisza often pollute the river (the Körös in Adorján, the Csík in Péterréve).
- Every island in the Tisza is artificial. The core of these islands is plant-based, on which floating garbage accumulates, these days mostly plastic bottles.





3. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN THE HUNGARIAN SECTION OF THE LOWER TISZA

With its mosaic-like structure, multiethnic and multicultural landscape, the Tisza valley's regional attractive power is very likely to grow bigger in the age of global warming. In order to see more people become interested in the historical and cultural values of the Tisza valley, we need an effective communication strategy. Well-structured information platforms need to be built, which are compatible with today's infocommunication habits and devices. Information will have to be made freely arrangeable on these platforms, according to both cultural and thematic aspects. With historical and cultural values two types of regional arranging principles can be used, categorisation by settlement and by small region. From a thematic point of view it would be a good idea to establish religious and church history, history, politics and public administration, literature, arts and architecture units. The territorial and thematic databases created this way can serve as the basis for making excursion and tour recommendations based on the needs of users. From the databases that we have built, the following thematic excursions can be compiled:

- Settlement network and structure of the Tisza valley. Market towns, villages and farms. The settlement structure of the region and how the towns and villages look perfectly reflect the history of the Tisza valley and the processes that have had an influence on its development. Market towns represent continuity in this settlement structure, while the majority of the farm system and the village network were established after the Ottoman wars ended. The settlement structure also reflects the consecutive stages of modernisation and the political changes.
- Public buildings in the towns and villages of the Tisza valley. From an architectural perspective, the most influential period was the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries in the towns and villages of the Tisza valley. The majority of public buildings – be it municipality buildings, courts of justice, schools, hotels or restaurants – reflect the architectural trends and settlement image of the period of dualism. Art Nouveau buildings are of special importance in the architectural history of the region – these probably constitute the most typical architectural history characteristics of settlements in the Tisza valley.
- School system of the Tisza valley region. The last third of the 19th century was a key period in the development of public education, while the first half of the 20th century played a pivotal role in the development of higher education in the Tisza valley region. In 1868 the public education act of minister Eötvös made elementary school education obligatory, and in order to successfully put the word of law into practice, the state started building schools all over Hungary. This policy was continued in the period when the minister was Klebelsberg. In the first half of the 20th century universities were established in the big cities of the region (Szeged, Novi Sad), creating new educational and scientific centres and 'catchment areas'.
- Churches in the towns and villages of the Tisza valley. The Tisza valley is a multicultural and multiethnic region where several churches and religious traditions are present. Not only the Roman Catholic church built chapels and churches here, but also the Orthodox church



and different Protestant denominations, such as the Evangelical church, the Reformed church and the Baptist church, and synagogues were also built in many towns.

- Historical monuments in the Tisza valley. There are numerous historical and church historical monuments in the Tisza valley. One of the most important of these is the Ópusztaszer National Historical Heritage Park, where several thematic exhibitions introduce the spiritual and material culture of the people living in the Tisza valley.
- Life in the Tisza valley before the regulation of the river. Before the regulation works the landscape of the region was very different from how it looks now. Meandering river valleys and large floodplains dominated the landscape, and these had a huge impact on the economic life too. Certain elements of the old landscape have only survived in nature reserves (e.g. in Mártély).
- Flood barriers and dykes in the Tisza river system. In the middle of the 19th century large-scale river regulation works commenced in the regions, and the project realised here was the biggest landscape-changing enterprise in Europe. As a result of this, the length of the Tisza reduced by one third and more than 20,000km² of floodplains disappeared from the Tisza valley region. However, the regulated river created new kinds of challenges for the people living in the valley, from which the most threatening were the constantly rising flood levels.
- Culinary values of the Tisza valley. The biggest treasures of the Tisza valley's traditional gastronomy are the fish dishes (first and foremost the Szeged fish soup) and the dishes rooted in the agri-food profile of the region – it is needless to say that there is great variation in the ways of preparation. A key characteristic of the region's cuisine is the influence of cooking in the Balkans.

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN THE SERBIAN SECTION OF THE LOWER TISZA

In the province of Vojvodina the migration of the population had its effect felt constantly. Most often people go to live at another place because of financial reasons, but it also happens due to political or religious matters, or simply because they want to survive. Migration routes are difficult to track in Vojvodina, as many ethnic groups have lived here, actually so many that we don't know their exact number. The river Tisza was an important factor in this. Throughout the centuries the rivers served as an economic and cultural passageway, carrying natural phenomena, people, information, goods, cultural values, traditions, economic practices and equipment from one country to another. Thanks to this the ethnic composition of Vojvodina is unique in Europe. There are innumerable cultural and historic monuments situated along the river Tisza today, and with the necessary tourism development these could be the biggest values attracting tourists to the Tisza region.

- The region is rich in archaeological sites: László Szekeres writes in one of his works that looking at the Tisza through the archaeological findings, it is noteworthy that the main characteristic of the Tisza is that the river's cohesive power has always been bigger than that of the Danube River. In many cases the latter – and often for longer periods of time – was the border that separated large areas from each other. (...) It isn't by accident, though, that several



times this fertile land fell under the influence of great forces coming from outside of Europe (Kimers, Scythians, Sarmatians). These influences were the strongest in the Migration Period (Huns, Avars Magyars). The remnants of these cultures were found by the archaeological excavations conducted in the Zenta region.

- There are many archaeological sites in this region, for instance in Magyarkanizsa, Ókeresztúr, Gyála and Titel; Medieval necropolises and Avar period graves were found at Tizsaszentmiklós. Törökbecse is the home of the very important archaeological site Matejski brod (from 3000 BC to 1000 BC), where the constant development of the settlement can be seen, from the Starčevo culture through the early Vinča culture to the late proto-Tisza and Tisza cultures. This is also the village where the Borgyos archaeological site is situated (this is a settlement dating back to the late Neolithic period). These findings, together with the related data and the necessary development work, can serve as the starting points of family programmes.
- Stories about the Tisza – A region rich in traditions: Along the river Tisza innumerable stories have survived, telling the important historical events or other stories from the region's life, usually in the form of tales. Magyarkanizsa is famous for its historical tales telling the origins of the Tisza and its winding route, the death of Attila the Hun and his burial in the river bed (together with his invaluable treasure), but we could also mention the tales about the battle of Zenta. These stories can be perfectly utilised in attracting tourists to the given regions.
- Memories of the nobility's life: Some of the architectural heritage along the river Tisza recalls the life of the nobility in the region. Good examples of this are the following: the castle park in Törökkanizsa (Schulpe castle and Maldegem castle); the Marczibányi castle in Csóka, the Schulhoff castle and the house of György Diván in Padé; the Kárász castle in Magyarkanizsa; the Rohonczy castle on Pearl Island. Each of them is unique in their own way, they are special in many respects and they can tell the story of the extraordinary lives of their owners. Currently their tourism potential is practically unexploited. If these buildings are restored and renovated, they can become attractive tourist destinations.
- Fantast castle in Óbecse is well-known and popular among tourists. The castle is an important historic monument. It is successfully used for tourism purposes, and it represents the harmonic combination of tourism, agriculture, industry, history and culture.
- Religious and cultural mosaic: It is a tall order to keep track of all of the migration trails in Vojvodina throughout history. Historical documents and sources reveal which ethnic groups came and went, but we don't know the exact number of people. Thanks to their religious beliefs though, several churches have survived in the region. The Aracs church ruins in Törökbecse attract many tourists. This old Benedictine church was built in Roman style in 1228. In the towns and villages along the Tisza there are many Pravoslav, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches, from which many are protected by law. The monument commemorating the synagogue in Zenta must also be mentioned here. There are museums in the bigger towns, with vast collections about the rich cultural heritage of the Tisza valley



region. Nagybecskerek, Zenta and Óbecse are the homes of the most important museums.

- Rich folklore: A large number of material and spiritual creations can be found in the collections of the museums located in the bigger towns. Most of the items are home-made artisan objects. These are primarily textiles belonging to various ethnic groups. Some of the most important objects are *carpets, embroidery and goldworks, laces, wooden artefacts, pottery items*, and in the villages *naive paintings and sculptures*, plus many other objects (e.g. *spinning wheels*).

It is really interesting how certain ethnic groups were attracted by different trades:

- *Serbs* – furrier, aba tailor, blanket maker, boot maker, slipper maker, cobbler, baker, wax maker, coppersmith, tinker, cartwright, blacksmith, etc.
 - *Hungarians* – they represented trades related to working with metal and machinery.
 - *Germans* – mason, carpenter, stonemason, locksmith, tinker, joiner, greaser, rope maker, wool processor, cooper, cartwright, weaver, spinner, saddler, etc. (Ivkov, 2006);
 - *Slovaks* – knitter, spinner, etc.
- *Clothing items* could be made the traditional way and this would probably attract tourists too, as this activity involves a whole economic process, from raw material manufacturing to preparing clothes or other textile items (carpets, blankets). There are certain trades which are closely connected to the towns and villages along the Tisza, such as fishing, basket weaving, sheep farming, confectionery, seasoning pepper growing and processing, etc. Most of these were registered in the Repository of Hungarian Values in Vojvodina. Still, their tourism-purpose utilisation is insignificant at the moment, in spite of the fact that traditional craftsmanship could be the basis of tourist visits to craftsman workshops – obviously it would need organisation work to make the work done there presentable to tourists, and after the necessary development in the next phase the typical Tisza valley products made there could also be sold to the visitors.
- Rich culinary heritage: Gastronomy plays an important role in introducing the culture of a country to tourists, and at the same time culinary delights can ensure that visitors can choose from a wider range of programmes. The culinary heritage and traditions of the Tisza region is the result of the unique way of life and the local geographic characteristics – the landscape itself and the socio-economic history of the region. Today it is very difficult to tell which dish came with which ethnic group, as centuries of living together resulted in people exchanging their experiences, traditions and recipes, and the result of this process is the cuisine of Vojvodina today. The **Serb population** has preserved the tradition of having meat soup for lunch on Sundays, made from chicken, hen, goose, duck, guineafowl, turkey, veal or beef. Rindfleisch is cooked meat with various sauces and boiled potatoes. Some experts say that the elements of **Hungarian cuisine** as we know it today have already existed in the period when, with the leadership of Grand Prince Árpád, Hungarians settled here for good in 896. One of the traditions from old Hungarian cuisine that still lives on is the consumption of lamb, which is used in many dishes, but is also roasted on a spit or fried in fat. Certain dishes of the exotic Hungarian cuisine are well-known outside of the Carpathian Basin too, such as goulash, fish soup, chicken paprikash, and cottage cheese pasta with cracklings or various types of strudel.



Just like it happened with other ethnic groups, the cuisine of *Slovaks* has changed due to living together with other ethnic groups. However, they managed to preserve their traditional dishes. Some dishes made along the river Tisza are characteristic of this region only. In addition to fish dishes, this is also true for the way milk is processed. A typical Tisza valley food is made of butter: *vajalja* is made by adding flour and salt to the butter, and frying this mixture in a pan; the result is a dairy product with a long shelf life, which is usually eaten as a spread on a slice of bread. In the Tisza valley and in Vojvodina several different cuisines meet and influence each other. This diversity makes the local cuisine special and at the same time attractive to tourists.

- Events that can attract tourists: Event tourism can be one of the ways of increasing interest in the region, especially if it has something special to offer. The objective of such events is to satisfy various types of actual tourist needs. Folklore festivals can introduce the traditions, religious beliefs, ceremonies and craftsmanship of ethnic groups. Since the region is ethnically heterogeneous, events that are based on the traditions, folk art and craftsmanship of the population are among the oldest elements of tourism development. Because of this we can say the region's rich folklore – besides its cultural, art, economic and academic significance – is important from a tourism perspective too. In addition to the preserving of traditions, the people living along the river Tisza have such rich folklore that events can be organised which can be attractive enough for tourists to come to the region because of them. Harvest day celebrations, folklore festivals, magic and religious rituals and gastronomy festivals definitely have attractive power. Let us list a few of these: Folk Dance House, Children's Festival (Magyarkanizsa), International Folk Art Festival (Magyarkanizsa), Goulash Competition (Csóka), Tiszaszentmiklós Hungarian Cultural Circle (Csóka), Blooming of the Tisza (Zenta), Blessed Virgin (Törökbecse), Tanderbal (Óbecse), etc.



4. WATER AND RIVERSIDE SPORTS TOURISM VALUES

4.1. WATER AND BEACH SPORTS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HUNGARIAN AND SERBIAN SECTIONS OF THE LOWER TISZA

‘Paddling’ on the lower section of the river Tisza and its tributaries in Hungary is the most typical way of touring on the river, which – taking into consideration the fact that it often takes serious physical effort – requires a sporty attitude and the necessary physical preparedness. In accordance with the characteristics of rivers on the South Great Plain and in Vojvodina, itinerant camping is popular in the region – tour participants are paddling downstream and usually spend 1-2 nights at one place before moving on to the next. The high season for water tours is the late spring and early summer and the late summer and early autumn periods.

Water tours are affordable for basically anyone, offering great fun in the nature and physical exercise with good price-value ratio in both Hungary and Serbia. The majority of water tour participants live a physically active life also when not touring. In most cases water tours are organised by private individuals, but sports clubs, schools and sometimes workplaces also organise such tours. Our negative experience is that the majority of water tour participants say they aren’t familiar with the ‘Highway Code’ of the river; still they don’t hire a professional tour guide to accompany them.

Thanks to its natural geographic and hydrologic characteristics the Tisza (as it has already been proven by water tours innumerable times in the past) offers excellent conditions for water touring, but the water level fluctuation and the geographic features of the riverbank are also key factors in implementing water tours safely. Unfortunately in most cases the mooring places and the quality of service provided by places of accommodation – in terms both infrastructure and tourism services – are below the desired level, especially in Serbia. The conscious and complex improvement of the services offered to tourists would result in increased demand for water tourism programmes.

In order to attract more tourists and to provide them with full service, one of the most important tasks is to develop and make accessible modern tourism services. Our experience is that it would be a good idea to offer a wider range of recreational services at the stops on the water tour: Many people would like to participate in cultural, sports and recreational programmes on the riverbank if they were offered – there are very few of these available at the moment. This is mostly true for the bigger towns (e.g. Szeged, Csongrád, Magyarakanizsa, Óbecse), but smaller towns and villages shouldn’t miss out on this opportunity either. The improvement of services provided – in addition to attracting more tourists to the region – would make life better for the local residents as well. They could use the recreational facilities and the services (e.g. places of accommodation, bars and restaurants, mooring place services) would bring financial resources to these towns and villages, creating new jobs and promoting the local programmes and cultural values. It would be best to communicate these in the form of well-organised marketing activities.

Water tourism can only work as a well-formed system if the professional knowledge (e.g.



tourism, sports, economic knowledge) keeps growing as well. The best places for acquiring such knowledge are the water tours organised by schools, universities, various associations and youth clubs. As regards increasing the number of water tour participants, we see great potential in promoting, organising and implementing the water tours of workplaces, because such programmes can be good fun and an excellent team building tool, plus water touring can also make participants healthier and fitter.

Teaming up with water sports clubs and universities that offer physical education and sport science courses (University of Szeged, University of Novi Sad) that have great experience in organising tours would be beneficial at many levels, and at the same time create the firm professional background for water tours (e.g. promotion, physical preparation, organisation, equipment rental, tour guides). Regional or county hiking clubs and nature tourism organisations, with support from the Hungarian Ramblers' Association, can provide great help in training water tour guides and promoting this form of touring. We recommend doing the same in Serbia!

Municipalities and travel agencies should play a bigger role in the providing of sports, ecological and cultural services related to water touring, because then those people would also go on several day tours on Hungarian rivers who don't know much about transporting boats and equipment, booking rooms, etc.

4.2. WATER AND BEACH SPORTS FOR EVERYONE IN THE HUNGARIAN AND SERBIAN SECTIONS OF THE LOWER TISZA

When implementing the WATERTOUR pilot project, it is recommended to follow a strategy that creates the permanent presence of sports and sporting holiday facilities in the towns and villages situated along the river Tisza. These places are the following: Tiszakécske, Csongrád, Mindszent, Szeged, Magyarkanizsa, Ada, Óbecse, Aradi, Zalánkemén. The recommended number of kilometres rowed per day should also be specified. After the implementation of the project, the recommended daily rowing is 25 kilometres.

The following sporting facilities are proposed:

BEACH GOLF – A version of golf played on a sandy beach. It is a simpler and more accessible version of the game. Originally beach golf is played on a 2 kilometres long course with teams of two competing. We suggest that this course should be reduced to 300-500 metres and teams of four should compete. The task is to reach the goal with a soft polyurethane ball with as few hits as possible, using classic golf clubs. Teams start with a 3-minute delay.

MORNING YOGA (15 minutes): Light morning yoga means a short series of yoga poses, which are perfect for starting off one's metabolism, and improving the person's concentration and increasing their energy levels. Certain asanas and poses strengthen and stretch the body, and contribute to the harmony of mind, body and spirit, making the person feel fit and flexible.

WATER GAMES – They are best in swimming pools and aqua parks. Swimming through plastic



rings, pushing a ball on the water while swimming and bringing up objects from the bottom of the pool.

FRISBEE – Team sport without a physical contact between the players. Teams can score a point by successfully taking the frisbee to the teammate standing on the other side of the pitch. Players can't walk with the frisbee in hand, they are only allowed to throw it. If the other team intercepts a pass, a pass doesn't reach the teammate or the frisbee lands off the pitch, it is the other team's turn.

AEROBICS (15 minutes): Morning aerobics freshens one up for the rest of the day. Aerobics improves the physical condition in general, and it is especially beneficial for the cardiovascular system, improving blood flow and circulation.

GAMES FOR STRENGTHENING THE TEAM SPIRIT

PILATES (15 minutes): With morning pilates exercises one can improve their body posture and movement coordination, and with the right breathing stress can be reduced, too.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL – Team sport, the goal of the two teams is to get the ball over the net and land on the side of the opponent.

MORNING GYMNASTICS (15 minutes): Morning gymnastics is the best training for the whole body, which results in a better general health and pleasant feelings. The mind can only learn to be happy and work without stress if the body does exercise regularly. One can sleep better, avoid getting depressed and lose weight by doing a bit of morning gymnastics.

JOGGING (15 minutes): Running is an excellent, comprehensive physical exercise that gets one in better shape, which means that they become fitter for other physical activities. It helps to build muscles, improves stamina and strengthens the body in general. In addition to making the jogger more muscular and stronger, running also contributes to achieving a spiritual balance.



5. COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Socio-economic (including tourism) data on the region, plus information from the websites of the towns and villages, give a comprehensive picture of the region's tourism offerings and development path. Based on these we can say that the region has a large number of values that could be utilised for tourism purposes, but many of these aren't exploited yet. Having analysed the situation, the development plans of local decision-makers and the best practices of similar regions, we recommend the following measures:

Coordinated development:

- Coordinated development work by the towns and villages along the Tisza on the Southern Great Plain and in Vojvodina is of utmost importance, which involves highlighting the unique characteristics of the settlements and specifying the target groups for tourism purposes. Generally speaking it is true that by realising similar development projects, the two parties are trying to attract the same target group (e.g. building spas), which would mean competing with one another and causing revenue loss to the other party. At the same time due to the 'itinerant' nature of water tours on the river Tisza, parallel developments – primarily in the field of the infrastructure – are absolutely necessary.

Designing complex tour routes:

- It is advisable (in terms of both distance and time) to design long and short tour routes too, which involve both boat cruises and paddling on the river. The tour routes, depending on the place of mooring, would be comprised of visiting natural values along the Tisza (e.g. educational trails, backwaters, forests, meadows), going to see historical and cultural values (e.g. museums, castles, churches, events), and using sports tourism services (e.g. adventure parks, sports grounds, bicycle trails), plus visiting restaurants and places of accommodation. This way participants of canoe/kayak tours would have the opportunity to learn about the natural, folklore, cultural and historical values that are characteristic of the Lower Tisza region.

The availability of sports services

- When planning the tourism offerings, it is important to provide several types of services. With paddling-type tourism on the river it is essential to have sporting experts present – professionals who teach tour participants about proper touring on the river, about the right way of paddling, saving people from drowning, the 'Highway Code' on the river and how to build a camp. Another important element of the programme is sporting and camping equipment rental and repair services.

Further services that need to be highlighted

- Besides the physical activities, we must also call the attention of tourists to the available places of accommodation, cultural programmes and the local culinary treasures. Within this it could be of key importance to offer more thematic programmes and recreational activities at the stops of the water tour. In addition to canoeing or kayaking, the towns



and villages along the river Tisza should be waiting for tourists with cultural, historical and culinary experiences too.

Package offers by restaurants and places of accommodation to tourists

- It would be a good idea for places of accommodation, restaurants, museums, sports and other service providers to join forces and make package offers to tourists. Such offers would motivate tourists for using as many services as possible, by this taking part in more experiences, which would result in bigger revenues for service providers.

Specifying the target groups

- Target groups of the tourism product that we are about to develop can be people who like to do sports (both tourists and locals), families, workplace communities and eco-tourists – we also suggest developing package offers to them.

Discounts for water tour participants

- In the towns and villages where the infrastructure is better at the mooring places (e.g. Tizsakécske, Csongrád, Szentes, Mindszent, Szeged, Magyarkanizsa, Ada, Óbecse), it would be useful if restaurants and places of accommodation offered special discounts to water tour participants.

Developing sports tourism facilities on the land to

- We recommend developing the beach sports infrastructure of mooring places (e.g. beach football, beach volleyball), and developing the non-water sport infrastructure too in towns and villages along the river Tisza (e.g. from Tizsakécske to Titel good conditions could be established on the dykes for cycling and running).

Building mooring places and rest stops

- It is absolutely necessary to build mooring places, so that simple and safe stopping with the boats is possible (e.g. jetties, stairs, sandy beaches), minimum in those towns and villages where there are more tourist attractions and programmes available. Besides these, rest stops also need to be created – with benches, tables and open-air cooking facilities – where water tourists can take a rest and prepare food if they wish.

Selective waste collection bins must be placed in the spirit of sustainability

- In the future it will be possible to increase tourism turnover easily with comprehensive and harmonised development work in the Tisza region, but this also means that more attention must be paid to sustainability too. One of the most important elements of such a strategy is the placement of selective waste collection bins – or adding more if there are such bins already – at the mooring places.

Involvement of the local population

- In addition to competitive and recreational sports, the municipalities of towns and villages should also make efforts to involve the local population, motivating them with



programmes and price discounts for engaging in physical activities that can help them stay healthy.

Motivating young people

- There are two large universities in this section of the river Tisza, the University of Szeged and the University of Novi Sad, and the students attending these can be an important target group of the water tourism service. Consequently, it is recommended to get in touch with these universities, making special offers and giving special discounts to the students for the period of the summer vacation. This step could convince them to spend their summer with active recreation and at the same time strengthen their ties with the Tisza.

Collective marketing communication, uniform image

- After realising the infrastructural development projects mentioned above, the next very important task is implementing a collective marketing communication campaign in the whole region, establishing a uniform tourism image. This would involve presenting the local values and services on the websites of towns and villages in a standard fashion (e.g. places of accommodation, basic healthcare services, general information about the place). It is of key importance to advertise the thematic tours and the complex tourism routes online, in the form of smartphone apps and in printed brochures. What is more, this promotion campaign should be integrated into the Hungarian tourism strategy as well. The marketing materials prepared have to be made available in several languages (Hungarian, Serbian, Romanian, English, German), in order to attract foreign tourists too.

Establishing a tourism association

- Non-governmental organisations for the development of water tourism on the Tisza need to be established in both countries; these would unite and coordinate the stakeholders of water tourism in both Hungary and Serbia (e.g. municipalities, tourism offices, tourism and sports service providers). Within the framework of this a uniform image could be established, which would make work easier and result in more effective marketing activities. The tourism offices of the bigger towns, which have more experience in this field, would be responsible – in cooperation – for maintaining and managing the tourism infrastructure that has been built.

Disclaimer:

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