

# Tourist Potentiality in the Rural Areas in Vojvodina – North Serbia<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Since the end of the last century the mass tourism and its concept have reached culmination. General tendencies are focused on the tourist development towards new directions in the domain of particular needs. Future touristic development should be based on the various rural areas. Pollution, alienation from the natural environment, standardization are only a few concepts of ordinary life influencing a lot of people to turn back towards nature and the healthy way of living.*

*Vojvodina is situated on the north part of Serbia, belonging to the Panonian area. Natural and geographical benefits offer good possibilities for investing and development.*

*Vojvodina is marked with very attractive natural ambient: Fruška Gora, National Park, Kovilj-Petrovaradin boogy region, typical villages and farms, rivers like Danube, Tisa Tamiš etc. This area, also is characterized by rich antropogenesis resource marked with strong multiethnic element. All above mentioned characteristics offer great potential for further rural development and represent the possible starting point for further total development of this area.*

**Key words:** *tourism, sustainable development, rural area*

**JEL Classification:** *L83, O18, Q01*

## Introduction

As in many other industries, accepting the terms, so frequent in recent future, like *tourist industry, leisure industry*, in tourism in the very beginning of its development phases, natural resources and their exploitation were not placed among important factors. Everything focused on the term of mass tourism. Natural environment and its protection were performed selectively, partially and urgently in the most cases. Sometimes it was too late for a particular area or region. Concerning the fact that tourism has been incorporated in all spheres of economic and social development, in other words multidisciplinary, the constant need for its influence from the environmental point of view has aroused. Contemporary literature uses terms such as „environment predator” for tourism.

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The main aim of sustainable development is to pay attention to total economic and social growth and its influence on ecological processes and environment quality. Sustainable tourism means the most suitable way for solving the problems of contemporary generations, tourists and residents. Pollution, alienation from the natural environment, standardization are only a few of the concepts of ordinary life influencing a lot of people to turn back towards nature and the healthy way of living. Undoubtedly this represents an increasing possibility for sustainable tourist development of rural areas.

Benefits of the natural and geographic position of Vojvodina in the region of Panonia offer large possibility for investments and development of its rural areas. The concept of sustainable development must play an important role in this case. All plans, programmes and actions must be directed in that way. The basis for the rich additional tourist offer in these areas must consist of various natural and geographic units and its preserved ecosystem, multiethnic, old crafts etc.

As we know, tourist destination represents more or less framed geographical unit with attractive, communicative and receptive factors. Concerning the fact that Vojvodina, with its surroundings, has all these characteristics, some of the important facts of this tourist destination are as follows:

- it is placed in the northern part of the Republic of Serbia;
- it covers an area of 21.506 square kilometers;
- with 2.031.992 inhabitants or 21.6% of total population of Republic of Serbia, according to the information gained 2002;
- bordered by Hungary on the north, Romania on the east and Croatia on the west, Bosnia and Herzegovina on the southwest, its south part is bordered by Sava and Danube rivers;
- Capital and the biggest city is Novi Sad, and other large towns are Subotica, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Sombor, Vršac.

## **Aim and Methodology**

The main aim of this paper is to point out potential strategic directions of tourist destination future development in the light of sustainable development. Using this way, great potential (resources) of further development practically might be assigned the right value. Undefined marketing policy, gained so far, has not given any results. Strategy of the market focus, integral marketing with clearly precise tourist aspects, followed by implementation must be the foundation for further development.

Methods used in this paper are:

- inductive and deductive;
- qualitative;
- quantitative;
- comparative.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Protected Natural Goods as the Basis for Sustainable Touristic Development**

Model of the fast industrial development has spent all of its generic sources and facts, leading to serious damage of the natural ambient. In other words it means that the ecological pollution is taking place. The term of sustainable development arises during seventies of the last century and

regarded establishing positive relations among humans for better life quality, economic development and destroyed natural environment.

During this decade the document named “World Conservation Strategy” by “International Union for the Nature Protection”, has formulated the sustainable development concept. During the following years, accepted documents along with growing interest in the frequent ecological problems (incidents) has changed and extended the basic definition. Today, a lot of adopted documents are collected from the various conference and gatherings dealing with sustainable development.

Focusing on the term sustainable touristic development, one must recognize the rights and needs of the domestic people, consider their resources (natural, social and antropogenetic), lifestyle, culture and the right to influence the future of local resources, touristic ones among the other kinds.

At this very moment, the Republic of Serbia has 6.59 % of so called «protected areas». Until 2010, it is planned to protect another 3.41 % of the land. Vojvodina in general covers preserved natural ambient, in some way. One must mention Fruška Gora first, announced as the National Park in 1961, and, afterwards, adopting suitable Law and Plan for the Area, pronounced as the area with particular natural, cultural and historic values and monuments. 25.400 ha of its land is protected by the state. Along with Đerdap, Šar-planina, Kopaonik and Tara, they represent the National Parks of Serbia.

As particularly important parts of Vojvodina in the ecological way as well as in their further sustainable development, the following *areas* must be mentioned:

1. Protected natural areas – Natural Parks: forests of Subotica, Lake of Palić, Panonija, Tikvara, Begeč Hole, Mountain of Vršac, Ponjavica;
2. Protected natural areas – Ramsar areas;

According to the Ramsar Convention focused on preserving and reasonable using of swamps, concerning them as the regulatory water and settlement regime, particularly flora and fauna and swamp birds. One can differentiate three areas in Vojvodina:

- Ludoš Lake, special natural reserve;
- Special natural reserve Stari Begej – Carska bara, (The Tzarš bog);
- Special Natural reserve Obed,s bog;

3. Protected natural goods – Natural reserves;

Since recently, Serbia has proclaimed 71 natural resorts covering a total area of 84.000 ha. Natural resorts are covering an area larger than 100 ha. In Vojvodina one can find: Desert of Seleven (Selevenska pustara), Ludoš Lake (Ludoško jezero), Upper Danube (Gornje podunavlje), Pasturage of Velika Droplja (Pašnjaci Velike droplje), Slano Kopovo, Karadorčevo, Stari Begej – Carska bara, Koviljsko – Petrovaradinski rit, Zasavica, desert of Deliblat (Delibratska peščara) Obedš bog (Obedska bara).

4. Protected natural areas – Boundary areas;

Joining the project «Support of the Protected Boundary Areas» which is a part of the action plan „Parks for life” (financed by IUCN EUROPARC) Natural Protection Unit of Serbia has established five areas. Vojvodina is hosting three of them:

- Park of the Forest of Subotica;
- Special Natural Reservat Selevenjska pustara;
- Special Natural rezervat Gornje Podunavlje;

## 5. Internationally important bird settlements – IBA areas.

Republic of Serbia owns 35 districts marked as bird settlements, satisfying strong IBA – criteria, respecting all regulations settled by Bird Life International. In the region of Vojvodina we must mention: Upper Danube, Lakes and deserts of Subotica, Fishery of bečej, Jegrička, Kovilje boogy region, Forest of Bosut, Obedska bara, Dunavski lesni odsek, Jazovo – Mokrin, Slano Kopovo, Carska bara, Uzdin Fishery, Vršac Mountain, Desert of Deliblata. All these areas testify that a great deal of preserved quality in eco.system exist in these areas. Natural ambience, in general, is very well preserved, as well as all ecological standards. Further tourist development demands care about all elements important for its preservation. Sustainable development concept must gain its importance.

## Cultural and Historical Inheritance and its Protection

Preserved available antropogenetic resources of this destination are based on the very rich history of this area, and might be concerned as the main presumption of planning its further touristic development. Concerning the fact that in this areas the tourism has not gained enough attention, though dealing with the respectable cultural and historic inheritance, further tourist development leads to certain investments with a view to adapting them for further purposes.

Cultural and historical inheritance might be divided into the following *aspects*:

### 1. *Cultural and historical units* by areas:

- Urban centers: Novi Sad, Subotica, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Sombor, Vršac;
- Large number of rural areas covering all destination;
- Farms as particular characteristics of Vojvodina;
- Nacional Park Fruška gora with 18 monasteries;
- Numerous cultural and historical monuments and other;

### 2. *Important places and pieces* with monumental and artistic characteristics;

Particular places in every of the above mentioned ambience units with important cultural and historical characteristics are numerous, demanding particular attention and detailed presentation. A lot of these places play important role in the national and European history, carrying marks of the cultural monuments with rare artistic, historic and aesthetic values.

### 3. *Folk heritage and manifestation values*;

Cultural and spiritual richness of various nations and ethnic minorities living in these areas is extremely large. Tourist coming from the highly developed countries of North America, west Europe, Japan etc., might be interested in these monuments and places. Ethnic contents, as the researches show, look very exotic for the tourists from different countries. Various manifestations, typically for Vojvodina, and its citizens made, and might make, and enrich cultural content of numerous rural environments. Future development planning must take this fact into consideration.

It is also very important to mention some of the already proven manifestations with wealthy tradition. These manifestations are very popular: Theater Gathering Sterijino pozorje, Liteeral Gathering Zmajevje dečije igre, Brankovo kolo, Music Festival EXIT (visited daily by more than 50 000 guests):

4. *Institutions of culture* - numerous theaters, museums, galleries, are the part of human lives and tourist offer, also;
5. *Archeological sites*;

Petrovaradin, Fruška gora and numerous places testify for the history during centuries in these areas.

### **Perspective of Particular Interests Tourist Development**

Agriculture as the primary economic source has a long-termed interest in complementary cooperation with all economic sectors. This means tourism, too. Numerous villages from Vojvodina represent the basis for further planning, particularly concerning new modern trends coming from the West Europe like «roots coming back» «green food» concept « old habits and crafts». Extra popularity of typical ethnical contents - music, folk dances, naive painting etc. To this aim, as the necessary part of the tourist offer, local, regional and national aspects are more often promoted. Rural households are strong affected, showing respectable resources of the destination, according to the fact that at the end of the last decade Russian Rural Development Act was adopted presenting the multifunctional nature of European agriculture and its developing role in the economy and society in general.

*Country or rural tourism* – it is very important to make a distinction between country and rural tourism. Rural tourism has a wider sense, framing the active role of the tourists in the agricultural activities of the host household. Practically, this situation lies in the very nature of tourists themselves: if they are interested in joining these activities, especially those tourists from highly developed countries. A lot of population from the whole tourist destination area is in in/direct way connected with agriculture as basic or nonbasic occupation. A lot of inhabitants are working in the bigger cities, while still living in the countryside.

Some of important *aspects* of this specified touristic development might be:

- Expert choice of certain households dealing with country tourism. Establishing certain conditions and standards of those households becomes very important.
- Local inhabitants need to be educated as regards the way of presenting the level and quality of tourist services. This is a very important presumption for further development. It is related to all aspects of tourist organization. All governmental and other institutions must also play an important role.
- Qualitative programme for country staying must be a serious object of analysis. Accent must be placed on the Tourist Organization of Novi Sad.
- Suitable urban conditions must be defined for further tourist development, concerning the state as well local organisations (local communities).

Different rural areas, according to their natural, ecological, and ambient characteristics, have very interesting future perspective in tourist developing. Suitable houses in the countryside full of peace and tranquility, represent true oasis for people from highly industrialized countries. In the past, this kind of tourist development was not of adequate concern for the society. Recently, some fresh ideas have come to the surface like the one from 2004. While promoting Athens Olympic games two farms from Vojvodina were built as typical representatives of these customs (Salaš 84 and Salaš 137). These farms are placed among the tourist offers of Serbia, located in the Novi Sad surroundings. Nowadays, Vojvodina is building a few more farms like these.

The sustainable development concept based on natural resources, demographic structure (thought very depopulated) richness of its multiethnic and defined market with its target groups is the main frame which guarantees the success.

*Perspectives* which might provide full contribution from the tourist expansion offer might be:

1. Tourists and their introduction to tradition and habits of nations and national minorities. Multi ethnics is one of the main characteristics of this area offering creativity, various activities and programmes. We are very proud to present 26 different nations living in this area;
2. Gastronomy, in other words local specialities manufacturing, «green food» preparation, organic food production. This concept is very popular in highly urbanized countries during the last decade and might become the main offer of restaurants and other touristic offers in Vojvodina;
3. Agricultural products. High level of preserved agricultural products that the tourists wish for consumption certainly offer possibilities for good earning. Multifunctional character of agriculture should be underlined;
4. Old crafts and tools presentation. Unique products of this kind are highly valued, and contemporary tourists wish to run away from globalization. A lot of crafts and tools are almost forgotten today, turning thus Vojvodina into a very interesting tourist destination for the tourists from highly developed countries. These crafts might be preserved only owing to the great attention from the local inhabitants. They must be organized, supported in the resources collecting and products placement. In this way inhabitants should obtain extra profit. Unfortunately, in this destination such organizations do not have any activities;
5. Folk craft – richness in multi ethnics creates richness in folk crafts, creating exotic products. Every rural area has its particular offer. Inhabitants place their time, craft, skill and sense for art in those final products. They might become the basis for particular economic development in the rural areas.
6. Cultural and sport manifestations, enriching and softening tourist offer. Local tourist organization must play important role in this events.
7. Folk dances of particular nations and national minorities. According to the above mentioned features, it is logical that we organize various manifestations, fulfil cultural programmes during the whole year in different rural areas.

Private sector might play an important role in these developments. Making partial touristic offers deserve support, particularly financial, and gain their place on the market. Enriching the additional tourist offer should represent and value antropogenetic and other resources from these areas. In this way, it also represents the basis for additional employment.

*Wine tourism* – these areas are characterized by rich tradition of wine growing and producing . In the recent times a lot of tourists have visited areas full of grapes. Benefits are collected from wine selling, as from the other additional manifestations.

Sremski Karlovci, the small town in Vojvodina, has the important potential for this tourist development. Today, in Wiena the sort of rose wine is protected as very famous “Karlovački tovjan”. The most popular wine from this town is manufactured from dry grapes, especially black, „suška”. From this grape the famous “ausbruch” (samotok) “ciparsko vino”, “bermet kapljaš” (tropfwermt) and “pelenaš”, from Karlovac were made.

The other very important town in wine production is Vršac with its very famous manifestation of grape collecting „Vršacka berba”. This manifestation is annual, visited by a large number of tourists from all parts of Serbia and abroad.

*Tourism on the Danube* – Danube plays the role of the second European river, followed by the recent channel Rhein-Maine-Danube. It covers 588 km of Serbia, in other words 13.5% of its total length. The nautical tourism development makes a natural consequence of everything that this river is offering. River banks are covered with numerous beaches providing a lot of opportunities for the additional touristic offers.

*Hunting and fishing* – Generally Vojvodina has a long hunting tradition, maintaining a very pleasant relation between flora and fauna. In the last 15 years the most popular hunting places were not favored, unfortunately: Plavna, Moroviæ, Karakuša, Karađorđevo, Forests of Sombor, Apatin, Desrets of Subotica and Deliblat, and the biggest one – Fruška gora. Fruška gora once represented diplomatic hunting field of the highest level. According to its natural resources it offers ideal conditions for wild animals settlements particularly deer, boars and small games. With suitable legal acts concerned with sustainable development and ecological standards, and appropriate investment this aspect might also greatly influence the tourist potential.

*Photo-safari* – Variety of plants and animals on this destination make its offer very interesting. Untouched nature is filled with deer, eagles, various flowers and conifers.

In the boogy region of Kovilj and Petrovaradin live a lot of various bird species, most of them very rare: black stork (*ciconia nigra*), redbeak swan (*cugnus olor*), whitetailed eagle (*haliaeetus albicilia*), black bird (*milvus nigrans*), GAK (*hucticorax*), big white heron (*egretta alba*) SMALL WHITE heron (*egretta garyetta*), etc.

*Monastery tourism* – Fruška Gora, with its 17 monasteries, has a great potential for this kind of tourism development. Monasteries like Beoëin, Basenovo, Divša, Gregateg, Jazak, Krušedol, Kuvezdin, Mala Remeta, Velika Remeta, Novo Hopovo, Staro Hopovo, Petkovnica, Rakovac, Prvina glava, Šišatovac, Panek i Ravanica represent our cultural, historical and religious jewel. This is the reason why this mountain is often called “second Serbian Mount Athos “. In the recent past these monasteries were neglected. During their history they were burnt and destroyed many times and their reconstruction and adaptation is absolutely necessary. It is the task of the state of the highest priority, cultural and spiritual. To this aim, the permission of the Serbian Orthodox Church must be obtained. In other words it means that tourists must respect all religious rules. Good example of this kind of tourism one can find in the surrounding countries like Romania, Greece and Bulgaria.

*Visting the castles* – Following the example of Great Britain („*Magnificent seven*” dated year 1975. fulfilled later during 80s and 90s with three famous castles making in that way famous campaign “*Treasure house of England*”), France (castles on the Loara River: *Šanbor*, *Šenonso*, *Bloa*), Austria (castles in Vienna : *Shenbrun*, *Belvedere*, ) and with various examples from other parts of Europe it is possible to enrich this touristic offer. In this destination one might find 42 castles.

## Conclusion and Implications

Fast industrial development has led to great use of all natural resources, causing great damage to the natural environment. As concerns the concept of mass tourism which was dominant in the second half of the twentieth century, one can find all the above mentioned characteristics in this area. Vojvodina has great potential for sustainable tourist development having very well preserved natural and anthropogenesis resources. Different rural environments are offering the bases for further planning and action in this sphere. Approach must be based on planned and selective fundaments. Program making needs creativity covering all levels of tourist activities and its vertical and horizontal organisation. Wide spectra of various tourist activities represent the great chance. This has to be exploited in the future development. Important tourist guidelines equal good investment. The problem of investing and economic interests discovering must follow these statements, as the priority in further tourist development. Sustainable development and its concept must be imperative, properly respected. This is the main interest of all actors: natives and tourists, from Serbia or abroad from the highly industrialized countries. These foreign tourists have shown great interest in our country in the recent years.

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## Potențialul turistic din zonele rurale din Voivodina – nordul Serbiei

### Rezumat

*Încă de la sfârșitul secolului trecut, turismul și conceptul de turism în masă au atins punctul culminant. Tendințele generale sunt acelea de a dezvolta turismul în noi direcții ce acoperă nevoi specifice. Dezvoltarea viitoare a turismului ar trebui să se bazeze pe diversele zone rurale. Poluarea, deteriorarea mediului natural, standardizarea reprezintă numai câteva dintre conceptele vieții obișnuite care îi determină pe oameni să se întoarcă înspre natură și înspre modul de trai sănătos.*

*Voivodina este situată în partea de nord a Serbiei, aparținând zonei Panonice. Beneficiile geografice și naturale oferă bune oportunități de investiție și dezvoltare.*

*Voivodina se caracterizează printr-o atmosferă naturală atractivă: Fruška Gora, National Park, regiunea Kovilj-Petrovaradin, ferme și sate tipice, fluvii precum Dunărea, Tisa Tamiș etc. Această zonă se constituie totodată și ca o bogată resursă de antropogeneză marcată de un puternic element multietnic. Toate aceste trăsături oferă un potențial ridicat pentru o mai bună dezvoltare rurală și reprezintă un posibil punct de plecare în scopul unui plan de dezvoltare unitară a întregii zone.*