

## SELECTED FORMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM IN ISTRIA

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***Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to support the thesis that new forms of special-interest tourism can meet the needs of tourism demands in the Istrian destination. New forms of tourism can significantly help to change the existing mass structure of the offering, can focus better on meeting the individual needs of tourists and can become one of the most attractive areas for implementing the market development of tourism in Europe and the Mediterranean.*

***Design –** The focus is given on the new possibilities of development of Istrian tourism product as an answer on the actual needs of the tourist market. The paper also presents forms of special-interest tourism with an accent on the specifics of the Istrian destination.*

***Methodology –** The methodology of the research includes the examples of good practice, analysis of the existing forms of special-interest tourism in the Istrian destination and descriptive methods of the new forms of special-interest tourism.*

***Approach –** There are particular interests in developing of new forms of special-interest tourism. The Istrian destination has still a variety of untapped potential and a lot of resources waiting to be develop to enrich the Istrian tourism product.*

***Findings –** The problem of defining new forms of special-interest tourism in the Istrian destination presents the starting point for further tourism development by meeting the needs of tourism demand in the Istrian destination with and that by development of tourism potentials and resources of the Istrian destination.*

***The originality –** The originality of this research consists on the fact that it refers on a still undeveloped resources and potentials in the Istrian tourism that can be activated in order to give a new boost to the Istrian tourist product by implementing new forms of special-interest tourism.*

***Keywords:** competitiveness of Istrian tourism, individual tourist demands, tourism product, special-interest tourism*

### Introduction

Tourists are becoming increasingly more discerning and seek a variety of different experiences in their travels. The quality of a tourism product can be seen as a jigsaw puzzle with many equally important but different sized pieces that must fit together perfectly to satisfy tourists. While nature, cultural and historical heritage, architecture and other attractions make up the tourism resources of any destination, together they constitute the authenticity of a given

destination, making it different to and competitive with other destinations. Enabling tourists to learn about a destination's cultural and historical heritage needs to be one of the primary tasks of any destination, not only from the perspective of providing personalized experiences that modern tourists are increasingly seeking, but also from the perspective of enhancing the tourism offering and valorising available tourism resources.

### **1. New Opportunities for Developing Istria's Tourism Product in Response to Current Needs of the Tourist Market**

The growing need for non-standardized services, together with tourist behaviour that is increasingly aimed at meeting personalized needs, is directly linked with:<sup>1</sup>

- a search for self-actualization
- a greater travel experience, that coincides with both the growing selective approach to quality that tourists take when independently planning vacations, as well as with the rationality of their selection
- a growing desire to connect with nature, have cultural experiences and learn about the customs and traditions of residents
- a rising environmental awareness and sensitivity to quality of life.

The sales of pre-packaged holidays in Europe is in decline, while the sales of dynamic packaging, which enables tourists to individually design their holidays, flights hotels, vehicles, activities in the destinations, etc., is on the rise. The trend is to design product for a specific market niche that is different from the usual sun-and-sea product. This trend is the result of growing demand for individualized holiday packages adjusted to individuals and their specific wants and needs.

By developing special-interest tourism and implementing Total Service Quality Management, it is possible to improve the competitive position of Istrian tourism, maintain its competitiveness in the long term and restructure its current mass tourism offering.

The classical concept of a mass sun-and-sea offering, which has undergone radical changes in many competitor countries, must change in Istria as well. Such changes are needed and must take place in a number of segments. First, the existing offering needs to be expanded with numerous new well-designed facilities and services which will complement the sun-and-sea offering.

Rural regions in the hinterland, for example, have a great potential for developing various forms of rural tourism. A number of reasons support this fact: the proximity of the western market, the vicinity of the sea, the well-preserved environment, resources for organic food production, and an

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<sup>1</sup> Monutinho, L., *Strateški menadžment u turizmu*, Masmedia; Zagreb; 2005., str. 19.

abundance of cultural and historical attractions. None of these opportunities, however, has been capitalized on. New forms of tourism can help to significantly change the existing mass-tourism offering. They have a clearer focus on meeting the individual demands of tourists and can become one of the most appealing areas for implementing the market development of tourism in Europe and the Mediterranean. It must be kept in mind, however, that according to today's tourists key resources and challenges include not only a high-quality and diverse offering but concern for the condition and preservation of the environment; the need to strike a balance between ecological, economic, socio-cultural and technological sustainability; the need to ensure optimum carrying capacity, etc.<sup>2</sup>

In light of the above, it would be possible to intensify the development of certain forms of special-interest tourism that already exist in Istria, while designing entirely new forms that would further enrich the Istrian tourism product.

Examples of various forms of special-interest tourism include:

- geotourism
- spiritual tourism
- learning-oriented tourism
- music tourism
- film tourism
- astro tourism
- mythological tourism
- old crafts tourism
- holidays spent repairing Istrian stone huts (*kažun*) and drystone walls
- old-timer tourism
- vintage diving suite tourism
- dinner-in-the-sky tourism.

## **2. Forms of Special-Interest Tourism with Emphasis on the Destination's Specific Features**

*Geotourism* can be briefly defined as tourism that sustains, supports, promotes and appreciates the geographical character of a place visited by tourists – its environment, aesthetical appearance, heritage and the well-being of people living there.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Demonja, D., Ružić, P., *Ruralni turizam u Hrvatskoj s hrvatskim primjerima dobre prakse i europskim iskustvima*, Izdavačka kuća Meridijani, Samobor, 2010., str. 121.

3 Honey, M., *Ecotourism and sustainable development: who owns paradise?*, Island Press, USA, Washington, 2008., str. 154.

When it comes to tourism planning in a destination, sustainable tourism is no longer a novelty, although in the past it primarily referred to providing support in preserving the ecological equilibrium of the environment and minimising the negative effects of mass tourism. While the concept of geotourism is closely tied to sustainable tourism, it has a substantially broader scope. Not only is it associated with the conservation of a destination's geographical character, but it also takes into account all combinations of natural features and human personalities that differ from one destination to another. While agritourism and ecotourism are the closest to this concept, geotourism brings together these and other forms of tourism under a common banner.

Geotourism encompasses both elements – the cultural element and the element linked to conservation of the environment – and takes into consideration tourism's influence on, and importance for, the economy and life styles within a destination.

In its expansive efforts to satisfy everyone and create conditions in which tourists will feel “at home”, the tourist industry is putting at risk and sacrificing those real values and special traits that attract tourists to a destination in the first place. The result is the loss of the most important characteristics of a local community, the erosion of local customs and cuisine, the lack of authentic regional architecture, and a general loss of cultural identity and distinctiveness in many tourist destinations. These are the factors (a region's authenticity, traditions and customs, local cuisine, historical heritage) capable of attracting those tourists who travel the most, spend the most money and account for the greatest volume of arrivals.

Essentially, geotourism is a means of reinforcing and reconstructing various forms of tourism with the aim of enhancing the tourism-related value of a destination's diversity and its natural and cultural features.

A Geopark is a territory that must comprise several geologically or geomorphologically important features. In addition to geological sites, Geoparks also include a variety of other sites, important in terms of ecology, history and culture. A Geopark is an area possessing remarkable geological heritage, together with a strategy for the sustainable economic development and promotion of that heritage to the benefit of the local community.

Istria has considerable potential to enable the rapid development of geotourism in sites such as the Brijuni National Park, Učka Nature Park and other protected areas. The most important protected areas that are representative of Istria's natural wealth and diversity are:

- Učka Mountain Range
- Motovun Forest
- Kontija Forest
- Lim Channel
- Cape Kamenjak

- Palud Ornithological Reserve
- Romuald's Cave
- Baredine Pit
- Pazin Pit
- Feštinsko Kingdom Cave
- Mramornica Cave and many other natural sites.

Tourism activities in these areas certainly need to be intensified by improving the organization, promotion and accessibility of their offerings, while ensuring the conservation of the natural environment, which is a major feature of geotourism.

*Spiritual tourism* is barely present in Istria, although the region does possess the basis for developing this type of tourism. Especially prominent in Istria's cultural and spiritual offering are its small medieval towns (15) featuring churches and chapels that, given their unique architecture and history, represent cultural and devotional monuments in their own right. Because these rich resources are poorly organized, tourists are left to their own devices in discovering them. All these places could become destinations of organized religious excursion tourism targeting tourists staying in Istria's coastal region.

Istria's churches and chapels, however, should not remain merely an element of the cultural offering, but should be seen as elements for driving the development of *spiritual tourism*. Advantages in this respect include the region's appealing and peaceful landscapes, away from urban tumult. A centre for spiritual rehabilitation for foreign, as well as domestic, guests could be set up, or a "pedestrian Calvary", etc. This tourism segment should be integrated into a unique offering or product, and marketed as such.

*Learning-oriented tourism* is a type of tourism that focuses on providing specialized educational and creative workshops. This form of the offering is clearly underutilized in promoting an integrated tourism product in Istria. It could be adapted to the Istrian environment and indigenous products, and offered to tourists within the framework of agritourism and other establishments, for example, through the following specialized courses or workshops:

- *Courses/workshops/demonstrations in gathering, processing and using medicinal herbs and spices.* Istria's mild climate and rich soil provide opportunities for growing medicinal herbs and spices. These products are in great demand on both the domestic and foreign markets. The cultivation of medicinal herbs would be suitable for small family farms in environmentally preserved areas in Istria's hill and mountain regions, where the cultivation of alternative crops is limited. Many naturally-growing medicinal herbs in these areas are not gathered and are left to waste. A wide variety of commercially important medicinal plants and herbs could be cultivated, such as camomile, sage, lavender, mallow,

hawthorn, fennel, horseradish, elder, gentian and fern. The most interesting opportunities involve the production of various types of tea blends, essential oils and aromas. Growing in an environmentally preserved area, these plant species would be unpolluted and protected, enhancing their value as medicinal plants and herbs. Most of the medicinal plants produced would be sold during the tourist season to the many tourists and visitors coming to Istria. An “organic green market” could also be organized during the tourist season in Istria’s populated mountain region at which visitors and tourists could buy organic agricultural products and medicinal herbs and learn how they are produced.

- *Courses/workshops/demonstrations in producing organic honey.* In the past, honey was a delicacy and medicine for ordinary people, but food for the rich. In addition to having medicinal qualities, honey does not spoil. Although honey production can be organized wherever melliferous plants are found, organic honey can only be produced in environmentally preserved areas that are also rich in honey-bearing plants. Istria is such an area, abounding in a great number of melliferous plants that grow throughout the entire summer. It also has numerous natural medicinal plants and grasses for bee grazing. Although these facts are well known, these resources remain untapped in Istria. Istria’s environmentally preserved regions, rich in melliferous and medicinal plants, have great potential for the production of organic honey. Tourists could buy organic honey and learn the secrets of its production.

In the modern tourism offering, *music tourism* is increasingly becoming a special niche of cultural tourism. In 2009, two-part singing and playing in the Istrian music scale was inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, making this form of tourism even more attractive. The *Istrian music scale* consists of six tones that alternate in half degrees or whole degrees. Songs are sung in two voices, with one voice lower than the other, in non-tempered intervals (slightly less than a small third or slightly more than a large sixth). Ivan Matetić Ronjgov was the first to establish and record the Istrian music scale in 1925 in his works *O istarskoj ljestvici* and *O bilježenju istarskih popijevki* and a year later in *Još o bilježenju istarskih popijevki*. He later went on to create vocal pieces.

Istrian traditional music is largely presented to tourists through folklore, which in a way diminishes the authenticity of Istrian music because of wide-ranging interventions to the original form of musical pieces to make them more compatible to the demands of tourists. Another aggravating fact in Istria’s music tourism offering is that the tourism system often ignores Istrian song-writers and performers. The best-known song-writers include Dario Bassanese, Đeni Dekleva-Radaković, Nello Milotti and Branko Okmaca, in addition to

Ivan Matetić-Ronjgov and Slavko Zlatić, who both produced excellent traditional music.

To present the works of the above-mentioned composers to the tourist audience, efficient cooperation needs to be established between cultural activities and the tourism system through a body responsible for managing cultural events at the regional level. The songs and/or performances of these composers could be incorporated into thematic traditional concerts or musical events that would help to enrich the cultural product of the entire Istrian destination. As an additional attraction, a House of Istrian Traditional Music could be opened. This unique centre would clearly contribute to enriching Istria's cultural offering.

*Film tourism* in Istria has much greater potential for development than is now the case. Live pictures and language are far more effective than mere photographs in brochures. In recent years, the power of the media to influence the activities of people during vacation and travels has come to the fore, demonstrating the declining popularity of the written word and the growing importance of what is shown on the silver screen.

Istria's two film events, the *Pula Film Festival* held in the Pula Amphitheatre and the *Motovun Film Festival* held in Motovun, have a largely local character and are poorly promoted on international tourist markets. Once an important international film festival, the Pula Film Festival has seen a decline in its importance on the international scale over the past three decades. An excellent way of making the festival more attractive would be to invite world-famous movie stars. This, however, entails spending substantial funds of which there is, unfortunately, never enough.

A key issue in organizing the Motovun Film Festival is the lack of physical space in the town itself to accommodate all visitors to the festival. As a partial solution to this problem, a second venue could be set up in a nearby and appropriate location, while the finale of the festival would be held in Motovun. Obviously, in addition to the above, greater efforts should be made in promoting the two festivals, focusing on special-interest niches, such as the filmophile niche.

Parallel to the growing importance of film tourism in the world, there is an upward trend in encouraging film makers to shoot at specific locations in a given destination.<sup>4</sup> This would be a chance for Istria to profit from film-making on its territory.

Excellent preconditions exist for the rapid development of *astro tourism* in Istria, primarily involving the well-known but, in terms of tourism, poorly used observatory in Višnjan. The Višnjan observatory is one of the ten

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4 Geić, S., *Menadžment resursa u selektivnom turizmu*, Sveučilište u Splitu, Split, 2009., str. 98.

most productive observatories of all time, in the world, and it is ranked first in Europe by the number of asteroids (small bodies in the Solar System) it has discovered. Established in 1976 by young enthusiasts and amateurs, it is located in the centre of Višnjan. It became a public observatory on 13 November 1992 by the decision of the Assembly of the Višnjan Amateur Astronomical Society. Still later decisions of the Višnjan Astronomical Society and the Višnjan Science Education Centre transformed the observatory into an astronomical institution in 2005. In the eyes of the world, Višnjan has become well known for its achievements in the field of astronomy. The observatory's 40-centimetre wide telescope has discovered more than 1,400 asteroids. Astronomy is not the only discipline in which the observatory is engaged. It is also involved in a number of educational projects in the fields of physics, biology, chemistry, ecology, etc. Targeting young people in particular, these educational programmes provide new, creative methods for learning about various sciences.

Višnjan boasts a School of Astronomy and celebrates World Astronomy Day in the town square, together with Astrofest, an annual festival that brings together astronomy enthusiasts. The festival's programme includes concerts of alternative music, a wine exhibition, star gazing by telescope, dancing and games, a celebration of the summer solstice and other events. The observatory is open to visitors who can gaze at the stars through its telescope.

In addition to this new attraction, the Višnjan region is also renowned for the number and quality of its agritourism establishments. The people of this region, known as hard-working and attuned to the rhythms of nature, have opened the doors of their hospitable homes, offering visitors the real customs and pleasures of the Istrian people and sharing with them the tastes and fragrances of Istria and the true joy of living.

Despite this, however, greater efforts are needed to further develop astro tourism in Višnjan. With the help of the local community and the Istria County, the observatory could be transformed into a distinctive "astro brand", whose "astro product" would be a prime motivation for travelling to Istria. The Višnjan astro offering needs to be actively promoted on the tourist market and communicated to tourists through a distinctive and thematic astro narrative.

Through the joint efforts of the Višnjan Astronomical Society, the Višnjan Municipality, the Town of Poreč and Istria County, and with the help of government support and numerous sponsors and individuals, a new observatory was erected on Tičan Hill close to the village of Tičan to replace the Višnjan observatory in asteroid watching. The observatory in Tičan was opened in February 2009. It took almost ten years to build and cost about HRK 3 million. Its primary purpose is to detect small celestial objects and educate astronomers from Croatia and around the world, as well as the attendants of the Višnjan School of Astronomy, who have discovered some 1,700 previously unknown celestial bodies.

Plans are underway to enable research in other areas of astronomy. For this purpose, a modified and automated telescope, previously belonging to the Italian observatory in Basovizza, will be set up in the 8-metre dome.

Once the Tičan observatory is operational, the Višnjan observatory is destined to become a scientific centre for educating young people, as well as a key tourist destination for star gazing, and will help to foster the development of astro tourism.

**Mythological tourism** in Istria could become a particularly interesting form of special-interest tourism provided the entire Istrian tourism system (public and private) shows a commitment to its development. Today, mythological tourism is still an untapped potential in Istria, despite numerous facts that speak in favour of its development: Archaeologists around the world have acknowledged the primeval man of Šandalj, whose remains, tooth and flint knife were uncovered in a cave in the Valtura region of Pula. Red Istria, which is older than both Grey Istria and White Istria and which was connected with the peninsula only after millennia of tectonic movement, has a rich geological history.

It is also a fact that there are four sites in Istria where dinosaur footprints have been found.

The peninsula also boasts the so-called Istrian pyramids on hills named Picugi and Mordele and the Istrian Stonehenge located on a hill known as Little Holy Angel near Mordele. These sites are located close to Valkarinsko Polje in the immediate hinterland of Poreč. The significance of these hills is known only to a small number of highly specialized experts, mostly archaeologists. The oldest archaeological findings in Mordele date back some 4,000 years to the time before the Istrian people. Even for those tourists who are not interested in history, these sites could be an ideal place for mediation, poetry reading or listening to music. A nature education park could also be opened in this region.

Fifteen years ago, Marko Pogačnik, an alternative scientist from Slovenia, published an interesting study about “dragon furrows” in Istria his book *Introduction to the Secrets of the Istrian Landscape: Dragon Lines – Earth’s Energy Network*. The book is about Earth’s energy meridians and the converging points of these “furrows” which are powerful sources of the Earth’s positive energy. Pogačnik claims that even the oldest civilisations were aware of the energy relationships existing within the landscape and organized their lives according to dragon furrows and their converging points.<sup>5</sup> They built their most important buildings, usually sacred sites, on these energy sources and their interventions in space matched the directions of the dragon furrows. According to Pogačnik’s system, three dragon furrows converge at Motovun, making it

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5 Pogačnik, M., Zmajevje linije - energetske mreže Zemlje; Uvod u tajne istarskog krajolika, Planetopija d.o.o., Zagreb, 1998., str. 87.

the strongest source of positive energy in Istria.<sup>6</sup> The furrow heading from Motovun to the west goes straight through the centre of Little Holy Angel Hill at Mordele.

Catchy narratives conducive to mythological tourism development could be spun around the tale of Motovun. Legend has it that Motovun was the home of giants, including *Veli Jože* (Joe the Giant) who shook the bell tower of Motovun. Another tale is that of the Pula Amphitheatre, the arena that, according to lore, the emperor Vespasian had erected for his mistress. The arena was built by fairies, but the crowing of roosters drove them away before they could finish the roof.

A narrative for Pazin could involve the Pazin Pit and the Castle, both of which play a vital part in *Mathias Sandorf* (1885), a novel by Jules Verne (1828 – 1905), renowned French adventure and science-fiction writer. In the book, Mathias Sandorf, a Hungarian count, is accused of plotting against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and taken to the Pazin Castle where a court martial sentences him to death. Sandorf escapes from the Castle, climbs down the cliff into the Pazin Pit and is carried by the flooded Pazinčica River through subterranean passages all the way to the Lim Channel and Rovinj.

The above tales could be used to make the authenticity and originality of Istria's heritage a part of a special-interest form of tourism that could help to augment tourist satisfaction by providing new experiences and knowledge about the destination. To accomplish this goal, however, requires more than just designing a service offering. What is also needed is the painstaking professional work of all tourism providers at the destination level to sell these narratives as a concrete experiential product. An incentive in this direction would be the publishing of a "Mythological Guide to Istria" by the Istria County Tourist Board, in which this offering would be united, and presented to tourists and promoted at tourism tradeshows in outbound tourist markets. To serve in tourism purposes, Istria's myths, lore and legends need to be re-interpreted and used as a platform for developing the cultural tourism offering, taking into consideration the rules of the profession and the trends on the tourist market.

Tourists are increasingly looking for meaning and a positive frame of mind through a variety of experiences and related images. Accordingly tourism should be understood in its postmodernist sense, as something consumers can play with and can use in countless ways to improve their lives and gain a better understanding of their self-worth and identity.

A properly designed cultural tourism product based on myths, legends and lore could offer tourists an opportunity to follow their dreams and enter new spheres of life. It would provide them with a time-out from their everyday existences, giving them freedom and liberation. Whether they stay for a few days or a week or two, every part of their experience must be special. Istrian

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, str. 91.

tourism must make every effort to ensure that tourist stays are always exceptional and unforgettable.

**Old crafts tourism** is a segment of theme tourism that Istria could easily capitalise on, because an extensive basis for developing this form of special-interest tourism already exists within the destination. Organizing this form of tourism would help to valorise Istria's intangible cultural heritage and would demonstrate awareness of the importance of tradition and old customs by bringing together the traditional and the new. Old crafts tourism would combine traditional customs and spirituality with contemporary endeavours in developing entrepreneurship and tourism. Attention should focus on traditional crafts that would bring together a large number of residents, as well as tourists, in making a variety of artefacts used in old customs and practices. Workshops for tourists would help to promote interest in making such artefacts, while drawings and instructions posted on the Web pages of Istria County would enable tourists to make them at home, as well. Some workshops would show tourists the art of spinning, weaving, fulling (immersing woollen fabric in water after weaving), knitting and sewing, while others would engage blacksmiths and carpenters to demonstrate how to make pruning knives, *rankun* (a type of reaping hook), scythes, whetstones, quivers (to hold water and whetstones used to sharpen scythes), earthenware jugs, a *tuturela* (a type of horn-shaped instrument), a *fjonda* (a type of slingshot that was once the only toy of children in Istria) and other traditional artefacts. Fairs could be organized at which these products are sold. Products displayed at these fairs could range from folk to artistic handicrafts, with prices ranging from affordable to high for one-of-a-kind artefacts.

A major precondition to developing this form of the tourism product is the existence of traditional trades and crafts, together with the knowledge and skills needed in making such artefacts and products. Efforts should be made to ensure that these values are not lost as handicraftsmen pass away. When a local community becomes aware that a certain craft is disappearing, the handicraftsmen still left should be encouraged to pass their skills on to the younger generation that would then keep up the tradition. The tradition and its future would thus be ensured, and customs cherished in families and communities would be linked to tourism, helping to make everyone coming to Istria feel special and unique.

**Holidays spent repairing Istrian drystone walls and huts (*kažun*)** are another part of theme tourism that has potential for development in Istria. A *kažun* is a traditional stone hut built in a field using the drystone technique. It was used by farmers for keeping tools and as a shelter from heat or bad weather. Today miniature replicas of the *kažun* represent one of Istria's authentic souvenirs. Istria's largest *kažun*, seven metres high, is located at Galižana.

A drystone wall is a wall made of layers of stone without any mortar binding the stones together. While natural stone is commonly used, drystone walls can also be constructed using concrete blocks with roughly finished surfaces. Drystone walls can be constructed to ensure privacy, provide protection from the wind or to fence in a garden. On slopes and hilltops, drystone walls prevent landslips. Many plants and animals make their homes within the cavities of these walls. Drystone walls should not be built higher than 1.2 metres on ten degree slope because of the danger of a cave-in.

Although found in all of Istria, drystone walls and *kažuns* are heavily concentrated in the southern part of the peninsula. This is also the largest concentration of drystone huts in the Mediterranean. Because these huts are at risk of vanishing due to disrepair, an initiative was launched four years ago to ensure the reconstruction and conservation of drystone walls and huts. Leading the way since 2008 is the Town of Vodnjan where free-of-charge workshops entitled *Moj kažun – La mia casita* are organized every year in May to teach participants how to reconstruct drystone walls and huts. Upon completing the workshop, participants are invited to join the organizers in actively repairing drystone walls and huts in the field. Although a few tourists also take part, the fact remains that this activity is poorly utilized in creating a special-interest form of tourism. A much larger number of tourists, interested in helping to reconstruct drystone walls and huts and actively contribute to protecting Istria's traditional heritage, could be attracted through better organization, promotion and information.

**Oldtimer tourism** is another segment of theme tourism in Istria that could become very appealing. Istria has several oldtimer clubs, such as *Histria* in Pula, and the motorcycle clubs *Vespa klub Parentium*, *Vespa klub Medulin* and *Vespa klub Istra*, and the recently established oldtimer club *Eppur si muove*, with members throughout Istria. These clubs organize annual international rallies, such as the Vespa Meeting – Rally held in August in Medulin, the Histria Oldtimer Rally held in June in Medulin and the Buzet Classic Car Rally in August in Buzet. During these rallies, the vehicles are driven around most of Istria and wherever the convoys stop, they attract many visitors and passers-by.

A good idea for these rallies would be to charge a fee to tourists and visitors to drive oldtimer vehicles along a designated route under the supervision of the rally's organizers. This would certainly make the Istria destination even more attractive not only to the market niche of oldtimer enthusiasts, but to other guests as well.

Clearly, if this segment of the offering is to develop, it needs to be effectively promoted on outbound international tourist markets.

To make diving all the more attractive, dive centres along the Istrian coast – or at least some of them – could offer *Diving in Vintage Suits*, which is about diving using vintage suits and gear. Even veteran divers would find this to be a new experience, taking them back to the old times when the pioneers of diving were taking their first steps in underwater activities.

*Dinner in the Sky* is the latest world-class event that consists of a “celestial” dining experience 50 metres above the ground. A specially designed apparatus suspended on a crane holds tables and chairs. It can seat 22 persons and four staff members serving the guests (the chef, two waiting staff and a technician). This unique experience can be organized as lunch, dinner, a cocktail party, a news conference, a road show, a talk show or any other activity that can take place around a table. All participants are securely fastened into their seats and security measures are at a high level. The structure can also be used for wedding ceremonies - *Marriage in the Sky*. This type of offering would certainly help to additionally promote and enrich Istria’s tourism product.

## Conclusion

Tourists are becoming increasingly more discerning and are looking for a variety of different experiences in their travels. The quality of a tourism product can be seen as a jigsaw puzzle with many equally important but different sized pieces that must fit together perfectly to satisfy tourists. While nature, cultural and historical heritage, architecture and other attractions make up the tourism resources of every destination, together they constitute the authenticity of a given destination, making it different to and competitive with other destinations. By developing various forms of special-interest tourism and implementing total service-quality management, it is possible to improve the competitive position of Istrian tourism and maintain its competitiveness over a longer period, while restructuring the region’s current mass-tourism offering. New forms of tourism can help to bring about substantial change in the existing mass-tourism oriented structure of the offering. They have a clearer focus on meeting the individual requirements of tourists and can become one of the most appealing areas for fostering the market development of tourism in Europe and the Mediterranean. It must be kept in mind, however, that according to today’s tourists key resources and challenges include not only a high-quality and diverse offering but concern for the condition and preservation of the environment; the need to strike a balance between ecological, economic, socio-cultural and technological sustainability; the need to ensure optimum carrying capacity, etc.

By developing and implementing the new special-interest forms of tourism proposed above, it would be possible to substantially enrich and improve the tourism product of the Istria destination. This would help to additionally diversify Istria’s special-tourism offering, enhance the appeal of

its product on the tourist market, more-effectively tap into the underutilised or unutilised tourism potential of the destination, and ensure economic benefits in the form of additional income for all stakeholders involved in providing new special-interest forms of tourism.

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