

Plitvička jezera National Park - outdoor recreation possibilities and conflicts

Krešimir Čulinović, Plitvička jezera National Park, Croatia, kresimir.culinovic@np-plitvicka-jezera.hr

Plitvička jezera National park is one of the oldest and the most visited protected areas in Croatia. This unique protected place celebrates in 2014, 65th anniversary of National park establishment (established on 8th of April 1949) and 35th years of entry to the UNESCO

World Heritage List as a Nature protected area (registered on 26th of October 1979). Within the framework of the Ecological Network Plitvička jezera National Park has been designated international importance and from September 2013 it is the area of Natura 2000 Ecological Network.

The Plitvice Lakes are has specific geological and hydrological karst phenomena consisting of lakes and waterfalls created by the biodynamic process of tufa development and remarkable biodiversity of flora, fauna and fungi. The park is situated in the mountain region of Croatia relatively close to the Adriatic coast and most developed areas of tourism.

Outdoor recreation in Plitvička jezera National park

The term of outdoor recreation is not used in the existing literature about the Plitvička jezera National park, there are only fragmentary articles more connected to the marketing of tourism industry than to the scientific research. This article attempts to make a short resume of exiting outdoor recreation possibilities developed by national park authorities, potential possibilities and outdoor recreation in the Park's surrounding municipalities and conflicts in outdoor recreation. The outdoor recreation in Plitvička jezera NP is closely tied with tourism but it's organization is incorporated into different organizational structures of Plitvička jezera NP. Possible activities in the Park include trekking and sightseeing as most represented and most acceptable for the national park as a protected area. Some outdoor activities inside the Park like swimming, snorkeling, canoeing, rock climbing, canyoning are not allowed due to its fragile nature and wildlife. Others like rowing, horseback riding and bicycling are allowed just in some zones according to zonation in Management Plan.

There are 7 different visitor programs mostly including trekking around lakes, electro boat and panoramic vehicle ride and they are tied to the Park's lake zone. Other two programs are found in forest ecosystems of the Park.

The camping facilities of the Park include two campsites: Borje on eastern park border and Korana on north west park border.

Educational and recreational trails of forest ecosystems - New trekking possibilities in Plitvička jezera National Park

With more than one million visitors every year Plitvička jezera National Park is one of the most visited places in Croatia and the most visited of eight national parks in this country.

There are around 70 km of marked trails in Plitvička jezera NP. Beside 24 km of trails in visitor system where visitors can use an electric boat and ride a panoramic vehicle, there are 14, 6 km of educational and recreational trails of forest ecosystem in hiking trail “Medvedak” and 30 km of educational and recreational trails of forest ecosystems inside the “Čorkova uvala” trail (21 km) and “Plitvica” trail (9km).

Special events of outdoor recreation in Plitvička jezera National Park

One of special events of outdoor recreation which is very popular among park’s visitors is a traditional Plitvice Marathon race organized during the first Sunday in July every year. During the last 29 years it has been one of the most visited events during the tourism season. Occasionally there are some orienteering competitions like in 2006 and 2007 as the Park area is very attractive for this kind of nature friendly outdoor activity which.

Possibilities of outdoor recreation out of borders of Plitvička jezera National Park in the municipalities around the Park

Beside the outdoor recreation inside Plitvička jezera National Park borders there are possibilities for outdoor recreation in the surrounding municipalities. The Plitvička jezera NP is circled by four municipalities: Plitvička Jezera, Vrhovine, Rakovica and Saborsko situated in two counties. Every municipality has different options for outdoor recreation facilities like trekking, mountain biking, adventure parks, sport fishing, kayaking etc. which are more or less developed according to the data of local tourism boards.