

# Profile characteristics and satisfaction of Kornati National Park visitors

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## Introduction

The Kornati Archipelago is situated in the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea. It stretches over an area of 320 km<sup>2</sup> and includes 149 island, isles and reefs. Part of the Archipelago encompassing 89 land units and adjacent marine area with total 217 m<sup>2</sup> was proclaimed National Park in 1980 due to exceptional geomorphological features, anthropogenic terrestrial vegetation, rich marine biodiversity and oceanographic specificities.

Tourism was gradually introduced in the Kornati Archipelago in the 1970s. This was the period of the major changes in the lives of the local people up to that time, which had a strong impact on the overall appearance of the Archipelago. The development of tourism activities was made possible with the appearance of fast-motorized boats, making the Archipelago more accessible. The local people turned to tourism and adapted their small houses for tourist accommodation and opened taverns and restaurants.

The predominant form of tourism is boating and sightseeing with short or long stays, adhering, however, to the rules of the protection and conservation of the natural and cultural values. Other forms of tourism pertain to diving visits, hospitality and catering (restaurants and taverns) and accommodation in small houses.

The Kornati Archipelago is visited exclusively by boat. Visitors of Kornati National Park (Kornati NP) can be divided into two basic groups: visitors in individual arrivals (own or a rented boat) and group visitors (visit organized by a legal or natural person). To enter Kornati NP a ticket is paid per boat, regarding of its length (individual visits) or its capacity (group excursion visits). According to tickets sold in 2015, majority of visits are individual (13.846 boat tickets) while group visitors (excursion boats) are represented with 720 group visits.

In 2015, after process of *Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the Broad-er Kornati National Park Area and Action Plan* development made in close cooperation with 40 local, regional and national stakeholders, Kornati NP was awarded with European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for a 5-years period.

Lack of knowledge about Kornati NP visitor's structure and their satisfaction with quality of services provided by Public Institution "Kornati National park" and other stakeholders was identified by using SWOT analysis during Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan development process.

## Aim of the research

Aim of the research is to identify structure of visitors in individual arrivals and group visitors as well as to assess their satisfaction with different elements of visit and offer in order to define measures for its improvement.

## Method

Research was conducted by Polytechnic in Šibenik from June until September 2015. by using a structured questionnaire prepared in five languages. The sample includes two profile visitors: group visitors (visitors on excursion boats) and visitors in individual arrivals. The survey was conducted by using a self-filling questionnaire under the supervision of interviewers on several locations in Murter and Kornati NP and online. The research content was defined based on review of domestic and foreign literature. This includes sociodemographic characteristics of visitors; visitors' motivation, loyalty and sources of visitors' information; visitors' expenditure; visitors' satisfaction; intention on revisiting and recommendations. Visitors' satisfaction was analyzed for 13 different categories: park information availability, usefulness of guides and maps for visitors available in the park, usefulness of information on biodiversity, staff professionalism and kindness, quality and maintenance of pathway and tracks, possibility to enjoy in nature, availability of local products, range of available activities, number of other visitors in the park, value for money, availability of contents to persons with special needs and older generations, satisfaction with means of transport to the park and overall satisfaction with the park. Furthermore, recommendations for the improvement were also included in the questionnaire. The sampling was conducted by using a stratified random sampling.

## Results

Analysis of 349 filled questionnaires showed that the overall structure of the visitors is dominated by highly educated visitors of middle age, with a monthly income of up to 2,000 €. The largest number of visitors were Germans (19.1%) followed by domestic visitors (17.6%). The primary motivation for visitors' arrival is resting and relaxation (62.9%) and enjoying the nature (60.6%). Visitors are mostly in their first visit to the Park (the share of group visitors that were in their first visit to the park is significantly higher (81%) compared to visitors in individual arrivals (44%)). More than half of the respondents have intention of revisiting (61% of individual visitors largely express intention of revisiting the Park compared to 43% of group visitors). The main source of information about the park is the word-of-mouth marketing (for visitors on excursion boats 34.8% and for visitors in individual arrivals 41.4%), followed by the internet/web pages and travel magazines.

Visitors' satisfaction by categories is shown in Table 1. Visitors are extremely pleased with the total stay in the Park, especially with the means of transport to the park, the opportunity to enjoy nature, staff professionalism as well as with value for money. More than 70% of visitors rated their satisfaction with aforementioned elements as high or very high. Furthermore, visitors are critical to the usefulness of maps and guides, range of available activities, the availability of local products and the number of other visitors to the park. Their satisfaction is extremely low

on the availability of contents to persons with special needs and older generations and usefulness of information on plants and animals in the park.

**Table 1.** Visitors' satisfaction by categories  
(Very high – 5, High – 4, Medium – 3, Low – 2, Very low – 1)

Category	Group visitors	Individual arrivals
Means of transport to the park	5	5
Overall satisfaction	4	5
Possibility to enjoy in nature	4	5
Staff professionalism and kindness	4	4
Value for money	4	4
Park information availability	2	4
Usefulness of guides and maps	2	4
Range of available activities	1	4
Quality and maintenance of pathway and tracks	3	3
Availability of local products	1	3
Usefulness of information on plants and animals	1	3
Number of other visitors in the park	1	3
Availability of contents to persons with special needs	1	2

## Conclusion

The results of this research confirmed heterogeneity in visitors' profile characteristics and indicated strengths and weaknesses of Kornati National park authority and other stakeholders in terms of visitor's satisfaction with different elements of visit and offer. This research has provided valuable information needed for improvement of Kornati National park visitor management system as well as management in general. We believe that method used to assess structure and satisfaction of visitors will be recognized as efficient tool for other protected areas on their way toward creating sustainable tourism development.