CROATIA: TOURISM AS A PILLAR OF THE ECONOMY

Currently the newest member of the EU, Croatia is an anchor of stability between Central and South-East Europe. A high youth unemployment rate and the necessary reforms still pose big challenges for the country. However, tourism is a beacon of hope which successfully cushioned the blow of the recession following the financial crisis.

“Tourism in Croatia has a 170 year-old tradition. This is one of the reasons why Croatia is so hospitable and cosmopolitan. It is certainly also because my country was a melting pot of different cultural circles over the course of its history and because our roots are just as diverse as those of our guests.

Most holidaymakers come to the coast in the summer to enjoy the sun, sea and beach. However, visitors to Croatia will also be won over by its rich cultural heritage, mountains and national parks. Tourists can visit prehistoric sites as well as ancient and medieval cities, and enjoy the varied nature and gastronomy.

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Croatia – not least thanks to its positive effects on other branches of the economy. Because the transport, building and communication sectors profit just as much from tourism as agriculture. As one of the largest tourism companies, TUI has long been active in Croatia and is a welcome employer and partner. We look forward to expanding our cooperation with TUI.”

Ranko Vilović, Ambassador for the Republic of Croatia in Germany

Tourism as an economic driver in the recession

The effects of the financial crisis in 2008/9 didn’t spare Croatia. They drove the country into a recession that lasted for six years. The gross domestic product (GDP) only began to grow again in 2015. But Croatia’s economy could count on its continuously growing tourism sector during this difficult phase. The number of overnight stays in Croatia increased by over 30 percent over this period. 12.7 million tourists visited the country in 2015, which amounts to three tourists for every resident. Among them were over two million holidaymakers from Germany – a rise of 6.8 percent. This makes them the numerically largest contingent.

Prospects for the people

This growth is good. The travel industry alone generated around 18 percent of the GDP. Tourism also creates jobs in the process. 130,000, or ten percent of all jobs in Croatia, stemmed directly from the tourism sector.

Zadar – A symbol for growth

The city of Zadar, which has 75,000 inhabitants, is a good example of Croatia’s development. During the Croatian War of Independence, this port city on the Adriatic was under siege for almost four years. In 2016, Zadar was voted Europe’s most popular travel destination in an online poll and welcomes around half a million guests every year. This 3,000-year old city sets an example for how reconstruction and tourism development can mutually reinforce one other.
If we take into account the positive effects on other sectors, such as agriculture, tourism provides an income for 300,000 people — which equates to every fourth job. The forecast looks bright thanks to further investment. Around 800 million euros should flow into the tourism sector in 2017.

**TUI expands its commitment**

The TUI Group is a key partner in tourism development. The TUI Blue Jadran, a four-star hotel on the Makarska Riviera, will open this summer. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of tourists will use the comprehensive travel options offered by TUI in Croatia in 2017:

- **TUI Airlines**: The airlines offer 44 weekly flight connections across Europe to Dubrovnik, Pula and Split.
- **Cruises**: TUI Cruises and Hapag-Lloyd Cruises dock at Dubrovnik, Hvar and Rovinj. Thomson Cruises also stops in Zadar, Rijeka and Split. TUI Cruises is planning to further expand the Croatia programme of the Mein Schiff fleet in 2018.
- **Individual travel**: Those travelling individually to the country will also find a comprehensive choice from TUI. The travel group currently has over 62,000 holiday homes and around 450 hotels in its programme in Croatia.