



SED 2011

HIGH BUSINESS-TECHNICAL SCHOOL OF UZICE, SERBIA

4<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
"SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN FUNCTION OF  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

SED 2011

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, Uzice, Serbia

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**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN  
MORAVICA REGION**

**Miloje Ostojic<sup>1</sup>**,

<sup>1</sup>Tourism Organisation of the Municipality of Ivanjica, Milinka Kusica 47, 32250 Ivanjica, E-mail:  
ostojaiiv1@gmail.com and E-mail: tooivanjica@eunet.rs

**Ph D Svetislav Lj. Markovic<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Advanced School of Technical Vocational Studies , Svetog Save 65, 32000 Cacak, E-mail:  
svetom@open.telekom.rs

**Abstract:** Tourism industry is an activity which brings growth and positive effects to rural areas. Dealing with tourism contributes to the changes of social, economic and political life of the villages. Sustainable development of tourism in rural areas implies using tourist areas in such a way so as to avoid their destruction and to keep them usable for future generations. Therefore it is necessary to undertake certain measures aimed at implementing the programmes of sustainable tourism development. Tourism is an important factor in the revitalization of villages in the municipality of Ivanjica, for it provides economic and social welfare of the rural households by: slowing down the migrations towards urban areas and return to the village of those who have previously left it, increasing production and enabling better placement of agricultural products, home-made items and products of old crafts, through board spending and additional spending by the tourists, preventing the disturbance of the natural environment of villages and preserving the traditional folk architecture, a distinctive way of life and work, the customs, folklore ...

**Key words:** Ivanjica ,rural tourism, sustainable development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Moved aside from the main courses of economic growth due to its remoteness and the lack of transportation lines, the region of Moravica has had to use the existing resources. The main resources used to be pastures, forests and above all, clever and agile people, who knew how to take advantage of that.

Many of the villages of Moravica region are abandoned. The people of this hilly-mountainous region are migrating to towns and more fertile areas. One of the important consequences is reduction in agricultural production, especially in cattle breeding. Development of tourism, especially rural one, whose origins lie in these areas, can be an encouragement for decreasing migrations from the villages of Moravica region. A well-organized tourism can lead to a considerable level of construction of infrastructure facilities in this wonderful areas and in that way to the improvement of the living conditions of hard-working people of Moravica region.

Up to half a century ago, this area was a typical rural area, isolated in terms of transport and insufficiently developed. Strengthening of catering industry and transport in the last few decades has brought about the development of tourism, especially rural one.

Ivanjica and the whole region, due to their favourable natural-healing qualities, which have beneficial effect on people suffering from anemia and respiratory disease, have become an attractive and favourite place for spending summer holiday, rehabilitation and rest, and due to the aforementioned they have been ranked the spa-climatic resorts of Serbia. Thus on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2000 Ivanjica was proclaimed an air spa covering the area of 2165,5 hectares following the enactment of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

Clear, fast and unpolluted rivers, small rivers and streams, abounding in trout, gudgeon, cub and other kinds of fish, clean and bracing mountain air, huge and picturesque mountains, covered by untouched forests rich in different kinds of game and birds, plenty of beautiful water sources and mineral springs, frequent cultural-historical monuments and other natural beauties are a vast and little used tourist potential of Moravica region.

Going upstream the Moravica river , 15 km from Ivanjica, one comes across the mountain Golija - a biosphere nature reserve , given that title by the MAB/UNESCO Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2001. This reserve , which is a unique one in our country and among the 211 nature reserves in Europe , lies within the Park of nature and covers the area of 53,804 hectares. It would take a lot of space to describe all the characteristics of this mountain beauty , but what should certainly be mentioned is the untouched nature with dense forests, Tičar Lake on Dajica hill at the altitude of 1,500 m, the lake at Okruglica and Košanin Lake which has been covered by vegetation. By the way, this lake is a real natural phenomenon for it almost disappears during rainy days, and it surges during the dry period. There are also fascinating waterfalls on the river Izubra which engaging with their beauty. From the top of Golija there is such a view that a half of Serbia can be seen and one can easily observe that it is a mountain which dominates the other Old Wallachian cliffs as an island in the tempestuous sea. Its marvelous terrains with plenty of snowy days in a year are ideal for development of winter sports as well as for the overall development of the mountain Golija. We should not forget to mention numerous springs with clean mountain water , over 100 species of herbs , plenty of game, but also rivers and streams full of noble fish(stream trout, gudgeon...). Javor is a mountain which is historically famous. For almost a century the border between Serbia and Turkey went along it (till 1912). By its natural beauties it's not lagging behind Golija. It is covered with deciduous forests and is famous for common springs of clear water. The highest peak is Vasilije's peak (1,520 m) under which is a monument to Major Ilic, the hero from Javor war. Amidst the vast pastures even nowadays one can notice the traces of the frontier posts and huge walls of the customs house.

## 2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN IVANJICA REGION

The villages of Ivanjica are founders of rural tourism in Serbia at the beginning of the 8th decade of 20th century. And it is not by chance. It was said a long time ago that "Ivanjica region is an extraordinary combination of natural beauties and human kindness". Unspoiled natural treasure and traditional man's hospitality have been present here for centuries.

By the way, the joint characteristics of the villages of Moravica region have been anything but bright:

- Depopulation –extreme demographic movements of rural areas,
- Disturbances in the social structure of the population,
- Considerable backwardness in being equipped with physical, social and computer infrastructure ,
- Disturbances in spatial structure of the settlements ,
- Lack of institutional and organizational support,
- Stagnation of economic competitiveness, ,
- Lack of the plans of sustainable development ...

Wise local people from the village Devići decided to take a daring step and laid the foundations of the rural tourism in Serbia. Carried by enthusiasm and a wish to attract as many visitors as possible to Devići, they made great efforts to turn a deserted village into a place where tourists came almost every summer asking for an additional bed.

The movement of people in the direction town-village arose out of the need to make the natural life of Moravica region closer to a man from urban industrial places, to provide him with the necessary tranquility, healthy food and socializing with people of open soul, spontaneous and inquisitive, and above all hospitable. That meant the birth of a new tourism category-rural tourism. The risk was too big, for there were very few favourable conditions, and too many shortcomings. However, perseverance of hosts and patience of guests set the flywheel of further activities in motion.

An idea that young men and women invite their friends and acquaintances to stay with them was born in 1972. They wanted to offer them delicious food, fresh air, nicely furnished room, cozy atmosphere. This idea was created and practically implemented by the farmers from Devići led by Milivoje Raicevic. They had found out that rural tourism in Scandinavian countries was extremely profitable. And they made it! They were the first in former Yugoslavia.

In the first year Devići had about 40 guests. The following year 1973 120 guests arrived in Devići and stayed in 6 households. The same year the first cottage made of wood was built in Koritnik. In that way "the sound wall" was broken, and the number of guests increased over the years. As early as 1974 there were about 250 visitors and in 1980 over 800 visitors in the winter and summer season. The record was broken in 1976 with 9,000 overnight stays in 30 households which had 180 beds. In that year the demand was higher than supply, and some households on standby were included.

An illustrative example is the one which tells of a poor household in Devići , which made the hardest efforts and helped by the Tourist Association managed to provide equipment and had 12 beds , becoming a rich household. All this was achieved with the profit obtained from the tourism activity .<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Milivoje Raicevic the founder of rural tourism in Serbia.

The best indicator of the equality of services is the fact that the same guests kept coming for five successive years. Here guests were friends, and not tourists. That's why those who would come once came again.

Thanks to tourism in Devići and wider surroundings new services and cultural activities were initiated, so that the village experienced its revival. Development of infrastructure was accelerated in the local community, which was the main prerequisite for development of tourism. In cooperation with the Academy of Applied Arts from Belgrade manufacturing of woven products for domestic market was started. All the items exhibited at the Display of home-made items in the Cultural Centre of Belgrade were sold and new business deals were made. Cooperation with the Cultural-Educational Association of Serbia was established as well as cooperation with the team "Visiting villages" (it was a guest for the first time in 1973). Excellent cooperation was achieved with the press, radio and television. The factory of ready-made clothes "Javor" from Ivanjica built the first plant in Devići with the purpose to employ female workers and stop migration of young people from villages, as well as to increase the income in farming households. Cooperation with PKB Belgrade was achieved and they built a dairy plant for production and processing of milk and dairy products.

A cultural-artistic association and a female folklore group were set up. There was a successful performance which took place in the Sports hall in Belgrade named "Golija evening", as a result of cooperation with the First channel of Radio Belgrade and the team "Visiting Villages". Together with the Association of agricultural cooperatives of Serbia some programmes for development of agriculture and rural tourism were created.

A specialized agricultural cooperative "Golija" for rural tourism and hand-made items was founded in 1977. Milivoje Raicević was appointed the director of the Cooperative, and soon there were over 150 members of the cooperative. Apart from the rural tourism and home-made items, the cooperative dealt with development of craftsmanship (old blacksmiths, carpenters), bee-keeping, processing of herbs and forest fruits. Several machines for the final processing of wood were purchased and they were used for making souvenirs, cottages, pieces of furniture...

All aforementioned has been achieved due to rural tourism, that is the contacts made with people and enterprises, from all spheres of social life, who paid visits and spent their holidays in the country. Tourism in the village started various campaigns, from the foundation of "weaving cooperative" to the campaign of building the Cultural centre in the village of Devići.

Following the example of Devići, other villages of the municipality of Ivanjica also turned towards tourism: Maće, Katići, Medjurecje, Lisa, Opaljenik, Kušići, and Bele Vode. The households in these villages opened their houses to people willing to take an attractive holiday.

Another village from Ivanjica municipality which chose rural tourism is Mace. The first tourists arrived in the summer of 1975 from Belgrade and Novi Sad. A dozen households provided 25 beds in the rooms of the first category (with electricity, water and bathroom). The climatic conditions in Mace are considered favourable for rest and recreation, but also for curing bronchitis, anemia, infectious diseases, pneumonia, thinness etc.

The first experiences were an encouragement to the other parts of Ivanjica municipality to get involved in this new type of tourism. Soon after Devići and Mace, the hosts from Katići and Medjurecje opened their doors to tourists. So for the summer season 1977 there were 336 beds in well-furnished rooms. Devići, Maće and Katići were sold out in advance at a very popular price (the full-board cost 110 dinars) it was cheaper in Bele Vode (80 dinars), where there was no electricity and petroleum lamps were used for lighting. The accommodation itself was much cheaper, 34-38 dinars. In the same year building a hotel was started in Kusici. The hotel "Park" in Ivanjica (136 beds), Rest centre of the disabled veterans (200 beds) and the Institute for Anemia were also available to tourists. The best proof of the popularity of rural tourism from that period is the fact that in 1977 in Medjurecje there were 13 guests from Belgrade staying in a dozen houses, and among them were the writers Desanka Maksimović and Slavko Vukosavljević, a prominent sculptor Stevan Bodnarov, a Soviet writer Boris Dubrovin, actors, singers as well as artists from Uzice region.

The following year hosts from Kušići received guests from big cities, and in 1979 Lisa became involved in rural tourism. The interest of tourists was above all expectations. Wise people from Moravica region kept the prices under control (in 1979 full board cost 150 dinars), enhanced the quality of services by equipping all the rooms with bathrooms and electrical appliances, and as for food they offered home-made specialties: cottage cheese, corn bread, kaymak, trout, roast lamb and chicken without "additives". In 1979 the accommodation facilities in the villages of Ivanjica were increased considerably by opening a hotel of "B" category on Javor (The Old Wallach), which had 57 beds in single and double rooms.

There is information that in 1982 there were 400 beds available to tourists in the rural households in Devići, Maće, Katići, Medjurecje and Lisa and that all the capacities were occupied. In that year full board cost only 300 dinars.

Flourishing of rural tourism was an incentive for the governing bodies of the economic and political life of Ivanjica to start with bigger investments in villages. Asphalt roads replaced macadam ones, electrical network was replaced and reinforced, telephone switchboards were built in all villages, and the rural settlements themselves got a new appearance. Simply, tourism changed life completely and broke the monotony of the village. Alongside these changes, agriculture as the main occupation of the people of this region, got a new

dimension of development. With the arrival of tourists agricultural products got new consumers, and at the same time production was raised on a higher level. Apart from the agricultural production, the village had some other leisure activities as an integral part of its tourist offer. Culture centres were adapted, sports grounds built, institutions of health and schools reconstructed.

Stagnation in development of rural tourism was caused by the fact that at one moment it was at the boundary of two associations (Municipal Tourism Association-Ivanjica and Tourism Cooperative "Golija"-Devici), each of which

thought their activities were sufficient. In reality- that was insufficient.

Happenings on the territory of our country in 1990s, slowed down development of rural tourism in the municipality of Ivanjica.

There aren't precise records of the number of households which have been offering catering-accommodation services during all these years. However, staying within private households has existed and it has been organised by the guests themselves.

The fact that the hotels were built on Golija, Javor and Mucanj is a proof that not only was rural tourism developed but tourism in the country. So on Golija, in Golijska Reka, there is a mountain lodge with 90 beds. There are also sports grounds, a ski lift and other complementary facilities intended for the athletes and sport lovers. This tourist facility lies at the altitude of 1,400 m. On the mountain Javor, in the village of Kušici, at the altitude of 1,000 m, there is a hotel which can accommodate 100 guests. At the foot of the mountain Mučanj, in the village of Katići, a hotel with 90 beds was built ("Logos") with all the complementary facilities.

### 3. AIMS OF RURAL TOURISMS DEVELOPMENT

Rural tourism is developed within the areas with preserved natural environment, which are rich in flora and fauna, where there is a local community with all its culture, heritage and gastronomy. In other words, versatile natural and social-cultural surroundings make different forms of tourism activities available to tourists, as well as a unique experience through diversification of touristic products within rural areas. Tourism in villages is highly suitable for diversification of the national rural economy. It must serve the function of life, art, cultural and architectural heritage of the rural area.

Rural areas of Ivanjica region are landscape of exquisite values, real ecological oases. They are characterized by traditional culture and diversity of ethno-cultural heritage. Tourism is one of the main activities which can have impact on the economic, social, functional and physiognomic structure of the areas on the slopes of the mountains of Golija, Javor and Mucanj. Nowadays rural tourism has become reality, a need and wish of tourists, but also the bearer and driving force of development of rural areas. The village has got the facilities which are an integral part of a tourist offer: culture centres are reconstructed, sports grounds are built, health institutions and schools are rebuilt.

Remote rural areas have been affected by the intensive process of "movement" and "dying out of villages". They require very intense, sustainable, encouraging measures. There is an entrenched opinion that the drama of disappearance of a traditional village is a historical necessity that no one can fight against and that it is the consequence of development of modern technologies. However, it's rather Serbian negligence in one place, forgetting the roots, origins, what is important and essential. It seems to be a forgotten fact that our state, as well as the church, was born in a village. And while a peasant keeps wondering how to preserve his rich spiritual heritage and his healthy way of life, the urban industry of culture and the mass media is downgrading the village to the level of imitation.

There are numerous aims of development of rural areas, the most significant of which are:

- More equitable development of the state,
- Stopping the depopulation process,
- Preserving the social and economic vitality of the villages and rural areas,
- Increasing the income obtained by agricultural production,
- Development of organic agriculture,
- Providing competitiveness of the rural areas,
- Increasing the participation of rural areas in the overall economic development of the state,
- Preserving the natural environment,
- Affirmation of the cultural heritage of rural areas,
- Creating such an atmosphere so that rural households can reach the standard as the urban ones,
- Preventing "the aging" of the villages and other negative demographic phenomena (primarily the unfavorable age and educational structure of the population),
- Creating new opportunities for employment of the rural population by introducing and prioritizing the complementary activities,

- Development and diversification of the economic function of the villages (rural farming tourism, eco tourism, ethno tourism...),
- Cherishing and protection of the natural environment and traditional way of life,
- Strengthening and development of infrastructure,
- Development and spreading of new and conventional communication technologies,
- Availability of information from the whole world,
- Decreasing the remoteness from the sources of information and spatial remoteness from the big centres,
- Development of consciousness of farmers about the protection of the environment (sustainable use of waters, soil, forests, protection of the environment, preservation of biodiversity, protection from natural disasters-floods, land slides, fires, earthquakes, using the renewable energy resources).

All aforementioned has a common purpose: enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and reducing the differences in the quality of life between urban and rural areas. Rural tourism,(more precisely tourism in the villages)is a big opportunity for everything that is valuable in villages to be protected, kept to survive and continue life in the country.

It is obvious that the old age households cannot be the basis of tourism development in villages. That is an activity anticipated for the young. That's why rural tourism is a chance to stop the process of migration of the young from the villages, which is invaluable for survival and revival of Serbian villages. At the same time , return of a part of the migrants could be influenced, since rural life would get an economic base which would at the same time be different in terms of quality. Apart from the development of rural economy, of social activities and crafts, rural tourism would be an initiator of a quality revival of villages. It would start the journeys to the village which is being renewed and in growth. In that way work, healthy food and the needs of people for intellectual, complete rest with a riches of almost forgotten rural tradition: gurgling of the streams and singing of the birds, bountiful barns and rich dining tables, to the intoxicating tranquility and ancient rural way of welcoming guests.

The young in villages should be let take the initiative and offered all social incentives. This implies getting to know the best experiences of the rural tourism industry in our country and abroad. As in other places, knowledge has to be a production force.

The aim of enhancing rural tourism has to be comprehensive development of authentic human needs, high quality of man's life, renewal of material and spiritual resources of the villages, having understanding for a man's need to have a rest, growth of creativity and communication which enrich a man's personality.

Economic sense of rural tourism is expressed in a bigger activating of agricultural population, linking of agricultural production and tourism, meeting the needs of the guests by selling the produce to them. Besides, rural tourism affects decrease of migrations of people in villages. Tourism encouraged construction of roads, water supply network, electrical network, providing more comfortable accommodation for visitors. Good rural tourism cannot be imagined without technical equipment in the households. Unsatisfactory conditions regarding cultural-entertainment activities in the villages have a particular effect on tourists who stay there for longer periods. By improving cultural activities the stay of guests would be more pleasant and more attractive. In order for a village to get engaged in tourism , apart from the natural conditions , it must have a developed material basis, social as well as the individual one.

Based on almost 4 decades of experience, it can be concluded that rural tourism means the following:

- An opportunity for diversification of activities and consolidation of one area,
- An important element of the complementarity , which is based on the equable growth of rural and urban areas and utilization of spatial potentials , ,
- "Product" typical of the territory,
- A very significant and often the main complementary activities of the inhabitants,
- A possibility of creating new jobs and making profit,
- An opportunity for making profits which remain within the local and regional community ,
- Driving force for the production of foodstuffs which would have placement on the spot,
- A way to provide a bigger level of environmental protection , enabled by a bigger interests of the society for its arrangement ,
- A possibility of revitalizing the cultural and architectural heritage,
- A chance for establishing permanent relations between local-rural areas and domestic and foreign market.

Surely some negative impacts appear as well, such as :

- Conflicts between certain activities performed by the rural population ,
- Increase of the costs of living of the rural population,
- Commercialization of rural areas and changing the living habits of the people,
- Emergence of conditions for creating the local pseudo heritage and culture ,
- Creating ecological problems due to a more intensive utilization of the untouched natural resources.

Rural tourism in Moravica region offers a big number of specific tourist forms: tourism at farms (agricultural tourism), hunting and fishing tourism, health tourism, eco tourism, sports-recreational tourism, adventure tourism, adrenaline tourism, cultural tourism, events tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, bird-watching, paragliding and flying a kite with and without motor. The product of rural tourism is active holiday in preserved areas, which enables full enjoyment of tourists and all his senses with constant stimulations, esthetic as well as psychological and physical ones.

#### 4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM

The whole world is turning towards the so called eco destinations. This is where the chance of Serbia lies, for it abounds in exceptional natural resources. Serbian spas and villages are in real green oases, in healthy nature, and that's exactly what makes them interesting and attractive. Besides the natural beauties, the main challenge for guests is the proven program of healthy diet.

Counties that wish to establish balance of their development, with the aim of further tourism development, make strenuous efforts to develop sustainable tourism.

Serbia is a country with numerous natural beauties, pleasant climate, moderately developed transport on the route town-village, it has a lot of important cultural-historical monuments in rural areas. All these are very favourable prerequisites for development of rural tourism. The concept of sustainable, equitable, universal development of rural areas implies, apart from the development of agriculture, development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas. These are primarily the following: development of small industrial facilities for servicing agricultural machinery, trade, rural tourism, service trades, home-made items... Without sustainable development there won't be any resources kept for the future generations, since sustainable development meets the needs of the present tourists and hosts, protecting and increasing the favourable characteristics for the future. Sustainability of tourism is especially needed by undeveloped areas, for the sake of their preservation. Development without sustainability will seriously be reflected in the future, and the destination will become unattractive.

The effects that rural tourism development might have are numerous and very important, and they mostly refer to the following:

- Considerably higher possibility of employment, especially of female work force, that is employed when preparing accommodation for tourists;
- More direct and easier placement of agricultural products, since customers come to villages, to the households involved in production;
- More intensive agricultural production and orientation towards producing specific kinds of fruit, vegetables and products of cattle breeding—meat and milk;
- Arrivals and stays of foreign tourists make for the realization of the export part of agricultural products.

The above mentioned effects are of special importance for the sites in hilly-mountainous areas. By providing additional income from tourism industry, one category of households increases its overall income and in that way achieves better quality of living for the rural population.

Sustainable tourism development implies the three main principles, and these are:

1. *Ecological principle means such tourism development which is not opposed to ecological processes and biological growth of the area.*
2. *Social-cultural principle indicates that there is higher involvement of the local community and local inhabitants in decision making and planning of development. This principle is compatible with the efforts made to preserve and develop the region.*
3. *Economic principle implies investments in the proper development of the region with the purpose of proper management and creating conditions for survival of the future generations.*

Only by sustainable development can we avoid further erosion of villages, reduce the number of hearths which are fading, prevent aging of the rural households to a certain extent and stop unnatural migrations from villages to towns. In that way separation of towns from villages would be avoided as well as the function of villages as food providers. Danger of abolishing rural communities as a modern foundation of a nation and state would also be abolished. Return of unemployed urban population to villages could be initiated by projects and investments. This primarily refers to rural and agricultural tourism.

In order for rural tourism to develop and become the backbone of sustainable development of Ivanjica municipality one must bear in mind the following: value of the preserved nature for development of rural areas; importance of authentic space for rural tourism development; role of the local population in arranging the appearance and development of rural destinations; participation of the local society in the policy of development of a destination of rural tourism, since it is the main driving force; rural tourism contributes to preservation and arrangement of a destination if local population gets involved in its development according to a

plan; indispensability of joint work and appearance of the conservationists and tour operators regarding the activities of promotion and valorization of natural resources of the destinations...

Rural tourism of Moravica region has been developed on the basis of sustainable tourism. Development of this activity has not in the least endangered the resources it is based on, so that they have remained for the future generations. New generations can also satisfy their tourism needs at the same or a higher level. Organized in this way, it distinguishes and reconciles the interaction between tourism industry, guests-visitors, the environment and local communities, including a long-term concept of development of natural and man-made resources. At the same time it insists on recognition of limited development. Managing the resources must be done in such a way to meet the social, economic, ergonomic and esthetic needs, providing the ecological characteristics, cultural identity and biological diversity of a rural area.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Tourism in villages is cherished with care in Ivanjica municipality, relying on the landscapes of divine beauty and people ennobled by a sparkling folk spirit, ready to welcome everybody, even a chance guest who has lost his way along these paths of health.

The concept of tourism development in villages has not been designed in the proper way and to a sufficient degree. The overall society, and particularly municipalities via their tourism organizations, have to pay more attention to development of this activity. The overall economic and social development of rural areas, especially hilly-mountainous ones depends on these activities to a great extent. Tourism organizations should develop the interests for performing and organizing tourism activities in rural areas.

The municipal tourism organisation must take the role of a host, take care of the guest, design the itinerary of his stay and secure full protection of the package tour, since staying in nature carries higher risk. Its responsibility is to provide guests with information about the cultural-historical heritage of Moravica region, to provide guides, to see to that everything functions well during the whole stay of the guests in rural households. Tourists have to be acquainted with the features of the local community, the customs, culture, behaviour and handling of guests by the local people, as well as their everyday way of life. The guests must also be informed about all the positive and negative trends in the life of local people, so as not to put themselves in dangerous situations or to harm the others.

It is essential to perform and renew education of all household members that have been engaged in tourism permanently, and also of those that are just beginning or wish to start with this type of tourism, bearing in mind modest experience and the fact that these are new, often unknown tasks for rural households.

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