

# The Role of Natural Heritage in the development of Croatian tourism product

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**Kolić, Ivana**

**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2020**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics and Business / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Ekonomski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:148:384499>

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University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Economics and Business – Zagreb

**ROLE OF NATURAL HERITAGE IN DEVELOPMENT OF  
CROATIAN TOURISM PRODUCT**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

**Ivana Kolić**

Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Vanja Krajinović

Number of index: 0067561472

Zagreb, September 2020

## **Abstract:**

In the Republic of Croatia, tourism is among the most important activities that helps in the further development of the country. Undergraduate thesis analyses the development of tourism in natural protected areas that enrich the beauty of Croatia. Natural protected areas such as National Parks and Nature Parks in Croatia are listed. Different analyzes revealed which Croatian natural areas are more visited and which are less, the provision of different accommodation and which additional services they provide to visitors. The importance of ecotourism in the area of protected areas is also of great importance, and the reasons for the poor development of ecotourism in Croatia are stated. Areas protected under UNESCO protection are also mentioned, the importance of UNESCO protection and possible negative consequences. In order to better explain the importance of developing tourism in the area of natural protected areas, the Swot analysis is also cited which points to all the advantages, disadvantages, challenges and opportunities they face. It is very important in Croatia, and thus in the world, to follow the trends, wishes of visitors and strive for further development of tourism.

**Key words:** tourism, Nature park, National park, nature protected areas, ecotourism, UNESCO

**IVANA KOLIĆ**

## **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I hereby declare and confirm with my signature that the “Rule of natural heritage in the development of the Croatian tourism product is exclusively the result of my own autonomous work based on my research and literature published, which is seen in the notes and bibliography used. I also declare that no part of the paper submitted has been made in an inappropriate way, whether by plagiarizing or infringing on any third person's copyright.

Finally, I declare that no part of the paper submitted has been used for any other paper in another higher education institution, research institution or educational institution.

In Zagreb, 16 September 2020

Signature: Ivana Kolić

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. The subject and purpose of undergraduate thesis**

The subject of the undergraduate thesis is the analysis of the role of natural heritage in the development of Croatian tourism product. The aim is to explain the optimal path of tourism development in natural protected areas. The thesis analyses chosen natural protected areas in Croatia, their potentials for the development of ecotourism, and it also analyses challenges and potentials of future tourism development.

## **1.2. Sources and methods of data collections**

In order to conduct a thorough analysis of the research topic in this thesis, all collected data are gained from scientific and professional literature, numerous Internet sites, articles, and various additional information obtained during the process of writing this thesis.

## **1.3. The content and structure of the thesis**

The undergraduate thesis is divided into 5 chapters. It begins with an Introduction, while the second part analyses the importance of protected areas in Croatia. The meanings of the terms National and Nature parks are explained, as well as other protected areas in Croatia. All areas under the UNESCO protection and their role are listed. In the third chapter, all the analyses that were processed in this final paper begin, as well as the specifics of the Brijuni National Park and the Telašćica Nature Park. Statistical data on the number of visits, accommodation offers, and analysis of additional services are presented. The fourth chapter examines the potentials for further development of tourism, the many challenges and opportunities faced by the Brijuni National Park, and the Telašćica Nature Park. Various SWOT analyzes and their importance are presented. This thesis ends with a Conclusion, a list of references, and a list of figures and tables.

## 2. IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS IN CROATIA

Protected areas are very important for biodiversity conservation.<sup>1</sup> With their beauty, landscape and diversity, they represent one of the most significant natural resources of Croatia. Today, 408 areas are protected on a total of 7529.64 km<sup>2</sup>, which makes a total of 8.55% of the territory of the Republic of Croatia. There are 9 categories of protection in Croatia, including Strict reserves, National Parks, Special reserves, Nature parks, Regional parks, natural monuments, significant landscape, forest parks, and monuments of park architecture.<sup>2</sup> Nature parks occupy the largest part of the protected area of the Republic of Croatia, as much as 4.90%.<sup>3</sup> The protected area is declared by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Parliament, or a representative body of the competent unit of regional self-government. Protected areas are managed by public institutions that take care of their protection and preservation. Public institutions manage protected areas on the basis of management documents. The Government of the Republic of Croatia establishes public institutions of national parks and nature parks. While public institutions for the management of other protected areas and other parts of nature that are protected are established by the representative bodies of the unit of regional or local self-government, by making a decision. The head of public institutions is the director, and the work is managed by the administrative council. Among the most important services in terms of nature protection are: the expert service that performs professional tasks of managing protected areas in ecological network areas and the service of nature conservationists that performs direct supervision in protected areas and ecological network areas. There are currently 19 public institutions in Croatia at the state level, 21 at the county level and 6 at the local level.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zakon o zaštiti prirode: Članak 9. („Narodne novine“ broj 15/18, 14/19) Available at: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/403/Zakon-o-za%C5%A1titi-prirode> [14 August 2020]

<sup>2</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo gospodarstva i održivog razvoja (2020) Zaštićena područja. Available at: <https://mzoe.gov.hr/o-ministarstvu-1065/djelokrug-4925/zastita-prirode/zasticena-podrucja/1188> [10 August 2020]

<sup>3</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo zaštite okoliša i energetike, Zavod za zaštitu okoliša i prirode: Zaštićena područja u RH, (1 May 2020), available at: <http://www.haop.hr/hr/tematska-podrucja/zasticena-podrucja/zasticena-podrucja/zasticena-podrucja-u-rh> [11 August 2020]

<sup>4</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo zaštite okoliša i energetike (2020) *Upravljanje zaštićenim područjima*. Available at: <http://www.haop.hr/hr/tematska-podrucja/zasticena-podrucja/upravljanje-zasticenim-podrucjima/javne-ustanove-za> [15 August 2020]

Of great importance in the preservation of protected areas are people, their behavior, and adherence to the prescribed rules for their protection. It is very important to act in accordance with the prescribed laws in order to maintain the beauty of protected areas for as long as possible.

## **2.1. National parks**

National Parks are vast and enriched areas of land and/or sea with unique and multiple natural values that include one or more preserved ecosystems. They have scientific, cultural, recreational, and educational purposes. They are intended to preserve the original natural and landscape values.

Only activities that do not endanger the originality of nature are allowed in the National Parks, and all economic use of natural resources is prohibited. A total of 8 national parks are protected in Croatia, as follows<sup>5</sup>:

- Brijuni National Park
- Krka National Park
- Kornati National Park
- Mljet National Park
- Paklenica National Park
- Plitvice Lakes National Park
- Risnjak National Park
- Northern Velebit National Park

Brijuni National Park is a beautiful island enriched with flora and fauna. It is located a few kilometers west of the Istrian coast and opposite the small town of Fazana. They consist of 14 islands and islets. The length of the coastline of all islands is as much as 46.8 km. The most indented islands are Veliki Brijun (25.9 km) and Mali Brijun (8.3 km). On Veliki Brijun there

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<sup>5</sup> Vidaković, P. (2003) Nacionalni parkovi i zaštićena područja u Hrvatskoj, p. 256



are hotels, tourist beaches, safari park, museums, tourist sightseeing by train, sports and recreational grounds, the famous old olive tree and the like. It is very important to note that as much as 80% of the protected area of the Brijuni National Park is located in the sea and contains all the original elements of the marine ecosystems of the Adriatic.<sup>6</sup>

Krka National Park is a famous national park known for a large number of lakes and waterfalls. It is located in the Šibenik-Knin County and covers an area of 109 km<sup>2</sup> of the most beautiful course of the river Krka and the lower course of the river Čikola. The river Krka has 7 travertine waterfalls and thus represents a natural and karst phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Krka National Park is also recognizable for the diversity of fauna and flora, full of endemic, rare and endangered species.

Kornati National Park is very recognizable for the Kornati archipelago, which includes a group of 89 islands, islets and reefs. The seas of the Kornati have a large number of NATURA 2000 species as well as habitats that ensure the place for the islands in the European network of nature protection areas - the NATURA 2000 network.<sup>8</sup> Natura 2000 is an ecological network of the European Union that includes internationally important areas, it is important for the conservation of endangered species and habitats.<sup>9</sup> A very important role of the mainland Kornati is played by the population of 10 different species of bats.

The southernmost National Park of Croatia is the island of Mljet with its two lakes created by the penetration of the sea through a narrow valley gate, surrounded by coastal pines and other lush vegetation.<sup>10</sup>

Paklenica consists of two canyons of the Velebit mountain with diverse relief and with distinctive flora and fauna. It is necessary to note that the Paklenica National Park is important

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<sup>6</sup>Nacionalni park Brijuni (2020) Sklad prirode i čovjeka: bioraznolikost. Available at: <https://www.np-brijuni.hr/hr/brijuni/opci-podatci-1/brijuni-u-brojkama>(25 August 2020)

<sup>7</sup> Čatlak, Z., Jurić, T., Župan, K., (2019) Nacionalni park Krka-otkrijte neponovljivu moć prirode: prirodna baština. Šibenik: Javna ustanova „Nacionalni park Krka“, pp. 37-39 available at: <http://www.np.krka.hr/upload/stranice/2019/06/2019-06-10/420/mpkrkaibrosura26.pdf> [12 September 2020]

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2008) *Environment: Nature and biodiversity*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm) (2020) [12 September 2020]

<sup>9</sup> Nacionalni park Brijuni plan upravljanja (razdoblje provođenja plana 2016. - 2025.) *Uvod i kontekst: Natura 2002*. Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Brijuni, Brijuni, listopad 2016., p.9

<sup>10</sup> Držić M., Marasović, T., Mohorovičić, A., (1993) *Hrvatski jadranski prirodnost: prirodna baština*, p.18

because of its highest peaks where the pine juniper forest community stretches. It is the most compact and largest pine juniper forest in Croatia.<sup>11</sup>

A series of 16 lakes implies the name for Plitvice Lakes National Park. The total lake area spreads on about 2 km<sup>2</sup>, while the area of the entire National Park is 2000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that the lakes are interconnected by numerous waterfalls which gives people a special atmosphere when visiting the National Park. More than ¾ area is covered by well-preserved forests.<sup>12</sup>

As a mountain of the Dinaric web of highly dissected relief, Risnjak represents a wealth of limestone and dolomite rocks, forests, and the diversity of the animal world. Risnjak is known for its rich flora, as many as 1148 species and subspecies. It is interesting that in the area of Risnjak there is a home for three large European predators (wolf, bear and lynx). The name of the national park was significantly contributed by the animal lynx which is the rarest and most hidden beast in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

And the last National Park is Northern Velebit, a cult and mythical Croatian mountain, "holy mountain", a symbol of national identity.<sup>14</sup> Velebit is certainly the most important and most interesting Croatian mountain with its position, size, natural features and values. In the central part of the national park there is the Rožanski and Hajdučki kukovi Strict Reserve, a little further north the Velebit Botanical Garden, around it the Botanical Reserve, and even further north the Visibaba Botanical Reserve. The proclamation of Northern Velebit as one of the national parks highlighted the great natural values of the area, it is important to note that it is located near the tourist coastal belt and the Adriatic Highway, which greatly helps the better development of the coastal hinterland.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>National Park Paklenica (2020) *šume*. Javna ustanova Nacionalnog parka Paklenica. Available at: <https://www.np-paklenica.hr/hr/park-hr/prirodna-ba%C5%A1tina/%C5%A1ume> [14 August 2020]

<sup>12</sup> Držić M., Marasović T., Mohorovičić A., (1993) *Hrvatski jadranski prirodnost*, p.21

<sup>13</sup> National Park Risnjak. Available at: <http://np-risnjak.hr/fauna/sisavci/> (15 August 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Šikić, Z., Gurlica, D., and Šarić, T.,(2016) *Velebit i zaštita prirode*. Zadar, Sveučilište u Zadru, odjel za ekologiju, agronomiju i akvakulturu, p. 17. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329958657\\_Velebit\\_i\\_zastita\\_prirode](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329958657_Velebit_i_zastita_prirode) [15 August 2020]

<sup>15</sup> Vidaković, P.,(2003) Nacionalni parkovi i zaštićena područja u Hrvatskoj. Zagreb, pp. 289-290

**Figure 1: National parks in Croatia**



**Source:** Bučević, N. (2018) Profimedia, tportal.hr, <https://www.tportal.hr/lifestyle/clanak/istrazili-smo-koliko-kostaju-ulaznice-za-najrazvikanije-hrvatske-prirodne-i-povijesne-ljepote-a-cijene-vam-se-nece-svidjeti-foto-20180428/slika-b76b563870cb33ec926a9a4ac00180b3>

The locations of the National Parks in Croatia are shown in the Figure 1. Three National Parks are explicitly islands (Brijuni, Kornati, Mljet), two represent a wealth of karst hydrography (Plitvice Lakes, Krka), and the last three clearly indicate mountain national parks (Risnjak, Northern Velebit, Paklenica).

## 2.2. Nature parks

The richness of Nature Parks clearly reflects the wealth and diversity of Croatia's nature. Nature Parks are natural and cultivated areas of land and/or sea with great biodiversity, with valuable ecological features, and cultural and historical values. People visit them for scientific, cultural, educational, and recreational purposes.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Vidaković, P. (2003) Nacionalni parkovi i zaštićena područja u Hrvatskoj, p.256

It is very important to behave in accordance with the permitted rules so as not to jeopardize their essential characteristics and role. There are 11 nature parks protected in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>17</sup>

Among nature parks six belong to mountains; Velebit, Biokovo, Papuk, Učka, Žumberak, one of them is situated on the island (Telašćica). Two are representatives of the biological wealth of the lowland flood areas; Kopački rit and Lonjsko polje. The last one covers the greatest natural lake in Croatia, Lake Vransko.

**Figure 2: Nature parks in Croatia**



Source: Bučević, N. (2018) Profimedia, tportal.hr, <https://www.tportal.hr/lifestyle/clanak/istrazili-smo-koliko-kostaju-ulaznice-za-najrazvikanije-hrvatske-prirodne-i-povijesne-ljepote-a-cijene-vam-se-nece-svidjeti-foto-20180428/slika-d67a8c22a13312456e6a52e53993213c>

### 2.3. Areas under the UNESCO protection

UNESCO World Heritage consists of World Cultural Heritage and World Natural Heritage.

<sup>17</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo gospodarstva i održivog razvoja (2020) *Parkovi prirode*. Available at: <https://mzoe.gov.hr/o-ministarstvu-1065/djelokrug-4925/zastita-prirode/zasticena-podrucja/parkovi-prirode/1196> [10 August 2020]

A UNESCO sub-organization, the World Heritage Committee, supports the protection and / or restoration of listed sites by providing professional and material assistance. The Committee maintains a World Documentary Heritage List, which consists of specific books, manuscripts, scores, uniques, and pictorial, audio and film documents. The World Heritage Convention - the most significant feature of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that it links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. Strategic objectives are: credibility, conservation, capacity-building, communication and communities.<sup>18</sup> Once a country signs a World Heritage Convention and has sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, it raises awareness of heritage conservation. The advantages are that the state can receive financial assistance and expert advice from the World Heritage Committee to support the preservation of its sites. All sites under the protection of UNESCO become recognizable and thus more easily promote their natural, cultural and historical heritage on a world scale<sup>19</sup>. Perhaps the consequence of being inscribed on the UNESCO-protected list could be cited as over-attendance at a particular national park, such as the Plitvice Lakes National Park, so there is less success in protecting the area. On the other side, other National Parks have less attendance and perhaps the possibility of better nature conservation. The walls in Dubrovnik, which have too many visitors during the season, can be mentioned as a protected cultural heritage, and the question arises: "Is everyone aware of the importance of cultural heritage and its preservation?" But certainly, protection under UNESCO has many more positive sides than negative ones. The natural heritage under the protection of UNESCO represents unique values and beauties. In order for a natural attraction to be included in the list under UNESCO protection, a rigorous process consisting of several criteria must be passed.<sup>20</sup> Natural heritage should be a masterpiece of human creative genius or a natural phenomenon of extraordinary beauty and aesthetic value, it can also represent a significant continuous ecological and biological process in evolution and development and have a natural habitat to preserve natural diversity in the locality.

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<sup>18</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre – About World Heritage. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/> [12 September 2020]

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre – Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/> [12 September]

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2005) *Basic Texts of the 1972 World Heritage Convention*, p.34. Available at: [http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi\\_basictexts\\_en.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_basictexts_en.pdf) [12 September 2020]

Croatia boasts 10 cultural, historical, and natural beauties that are included in the list of protection under UNESCO. The most famous natural heritage of Croatia under the protection of Plitvice Lakes National Park, which became one of the first in the world, as early as 1979. Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe were also included under the UNESCO protection in 2017.

**Figure 3: UNESCO World Heritage List**



**Source:** UNESCO World Heritage Centre

#### **2.4. Potentials of developing ecotourism within protected natural areas in Croatia**

Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.<sup>21</sup> Ecotourism is the goal of community protection, for those who participate in ecotourism activities should adopt the following principles of ecotourism:<sup>22</sup>

- minimize physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts
- build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts

<sup>21</sup> The International ecotourism Society (2019) , available at: <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/> (13 September 2020)

<sup>22</sup> Tour guide central (2018) Principles and best practices of Ecotourism. Available at: <https://tourguidecentral.org/en/ecotourism-3/> (13 September 2020)

- provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry
- deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.
- recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in your community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

The Republic of Croatia is among most successful countries in terms of conservation of nature and natural resources, but its ecotourism is poorly developed. In 1997, a survey was conducted on the tourist offer and the level of devastation of protected natural areas in Croatia. In this research, obstacles to the intensive development of ecotourism were found, which are in a somewhat weaker form today, but unfortunately, they are still persistent. The most common obstacles are:<sup>23</sup>

- inappropriate protection of nature and control of the visitors within the park
- insufficiently developed infrastructure
- the lack of a systematically created tourist offer in the protected areas and the lack of cooperation with local and county officials
- problems with ownership laws and the privatization process
- a flawed zoning concept
- urbanization and illegal construction within the parks
- the lack of human resources
- the lack of financial resources.

The development of ecotourism, ie the economic valorization of natural resources, starts from the spatial possibilities of the development of the offer and the balance of tourism planning with natural and cultural resources.<sup>24</sup> It is very important to create a balance between visitors and the

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<sup>23</sup> Tišma, S. (2006.) *Analysis of ecotourism development potential in protected areas in the Republic of Croatia and recommendations*, Croatian international relations review, vol.12, nb..44/45, p. 109. Available at: [file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/No\\_44\\_45\\_S\\_Tisma\\_Z\\_Kramaric\\_K\\_Ozimec\\_D\\_Demonja%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/No_44_45_S_Tisma_Z_Kramaric_K_Ozimec_D_Demonja%20(3).pdf) [10 August 2020]

<sup>24</sup> Vidaković P. (2003) *Nacionalni parkovi i zaštićena područja u Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb, pp. 246-247

preservation of natural heritage, in order to have as many visits and enjoyment of nature as possible with as few negative impacts on natural areas as possible. For the additional development of ecotourism, it is necessary to eliminate the use of disposable plastic, use only wooden and paper products. Examples include plastic bags made from crude oil as well as other plastics. The website of the Natural Environment states that a plastic bag takes as much as 400 years to biodegrade. In Australia, 50 million garbage bags end up as litter yearly, and the “plastic soup” patch in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to protect the sea and the coast, we certainly help marine and wild animals in this way. An example of this can be found in the Aquarium Pula<sup>26</sup>, where a sea turtle eats paper bags thinking they are jellyfish. It thereby harms her health, and people are so unknowingly disrupting the health of marine animals on a daily basis. People need to be more aware and educated about preserving the environment in order to maintain a better and healthier life, both human and animal. Another interesting fact is that in Croatia, so many plastic bags are used annually that when they are lined up, they connect the earth with the moon.<sup>27</sup>

Kornati National Park contributes to ecotourism by starting to produce different types of natural essential oils. Ingredients are grown in the national park, thus encouraging others to consume exclusively organic products.<sup>28</sup>

By helping to further develop ecotourism, National Parks and Nature Parks seek to enable visitors to use bicycles, electric scooters, and electric cars. People should explore the natural areas as much as possible by walking and using bicycles, thus contributing to as little air and environmental pollution as possible. The benefits of developing ecotourism in Nature Parks are similar to those in the National Park. It certainly helps in the preservation of natural heritage, cultural landmarks, flora and fauna.

Ecotourism is very important for the further development of natural areas. It is very important to try to help the community so that as many people as possible are educated, informed and

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<sup>25</sup> Non plastic beach (2019). Available at: <https://nonplasticbeach.com/blogs/latest/how-does-plastic-harm-the-environment> (14 September 2020)

<sup>26</sup> Aquarium Pula. Available at: <http://aquarium.hr/index-cro.html> [20 August 2020]

<sup>27</sup> Facebook – Greenpeace Hrvatska, Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/greenpeace.international> [12 September 2020]

<sup>28</sup> Salvia Kornati, available at: <https://kadulja.com/> [11 August 2020]



encouraged to behave about preserving them. Participation in ecotourism can significantly contribute to awareness and respect for culture and the environment, as well as to the improvement of the local community around the world.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS IN CROATIA**

The analysis reveals various important data that help in the further development of an area. This chapter analyzes data related to protected natural areas in Croatia. The specifics of the Brijuni National Park (where data were collected through personal experience and interviews with employees of the Brijuni National Park) and the Telašćica Nature Park are listed. The number of visitors in National Parks and Nature Parks, types of accommodation offer and additional services that can be found in natural protected areas of Croatia are analyzed.

#### **3.1. Specific features of chosen protected natural areas**

For the purpose of conducting an analysis in this thesis, the examples of Brijuni National Park and the Telašćica Nature Park were chosen. Brijuni National Park was chosen in this chapter because it has an extremely interesting history, and is one of the few National Parks in Croatia that contains so much richness of flora and fauna, and the possibility of visiting the Safari Park.

Brijuni National Park is an archipelago of natural, cultural, historical and landscape values. The primary role is to maintain protected areas with an organized significant visitor role. In four different areas of the Brijuni National Park, there are dinosaur prints (about 200 of them). Some of the prints are shown in Figure 4.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Nacionalni park Brijuni - Plan upravljanja (2016 - 2025) Javna ustanova Nacionalnog parka Brijuni October 2016, p. 27-28

**Figure 4: Dinosaur paws in National park Brijuni**



**Source:** webpage of National park Brijuni

The specificity of the Brijuni National Park lies in the fact that it does not only contain natural resources and species protection, but it is already known for its historical heritage in which we highlight Josip Broz Tito. In 1983, the Yugoslav monument area "Brioni of Tito" was declared a cultural monument. The former president of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, stayed on the island for a few months a year and enjoyed the White Villa, which became his official residence. He contributed a lot to the development of the island, advocated the preservation of forests, the settlement of animals and their breeding, landscaping of parks, and hotel facilities. Today, there is a White Villa on the island, which is protected and which visitors to the island do not have the right to enter, it is guarded by security guards and is intended for the residence of the President.

It is important to note that the National Park is known for the Safari Park located on the island itself. It attracts visitors with its exotic allochthonous animals. Animals are allowed to be fed, photographed, and touched under the supervision of staff. The national park is known for breeding and keeping animals such as lions, tigers, cougars, and leopards for years. Today, there are somewhat "calmer" animals, such as rabbits, horses, zebras, cows, fallow deer, and the famous parrot called "Koki" who talks to visitors briefly.

It is the only national park in Croatia that offers visitors the opportunity to meet an elephant (Lanka). Her former partner Sony was the largest Indian elephant in Europe, but unfortunately in 2010 he died suddenly. In Figure 5, the life of an elephant of Lanka in the National Park Brijuni is shown.

**Figure 5 - Lanka in National park Brijuni**



**Source:** Private photo

Telašćica Nature Park is located in the southern part of Dugi otok. In 1998 it was declared the only nature park on the sea because of its bay which is part of the natural heritage.<sup>30</sup> It has a lush flora in which more than 500 species grow and the site of the most important Dubrovnik hare (plant), which is a Croatian endemic, can be recognized. Ravens also nest on the island, and there is the largest Croatian owl, a barn whose wingspan reaches about 170 cm. Visitors to the nature park are also attracted by the interesting hydrographic phenomenon of the salt lake Mir. The lake is connected by an underground road to the open sea, so the water in the lake is salty, even saltier than the water of the surrounding sea.<sup>31</sup> It is known for its corals, which are the only ones to form coral reefs in the Adriatic.

One of the most famous phenomena is located in the nature park Telašćica and these are the crowns, known as crowns or rocks, i.e. steep cliffs found on edges on the park. It is a tectonic

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<sup>30</sup> Šafarek G. (2018) *Prirodno bogatstvo Hrvatske: Park prirode Telašćica*. Available: <http://priodahrvatske.com/2018/06/15/telascica> [14 September 2020]

<sup>31</sup> Vidaković, P., (2003) *Nacionalni parkovi i zaštićena područja u Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb, p.367

plane formed by the movement of the African tectonic plate to the north. Thus, a "crown" was found with an altitude of 161 meters.<sup>32</sup>

Many things attract visitors to the bay Telašćica as a nature park and the very realization that the nature park has more than 2500 hours of sunshine a year.<sup>33</sup> In this area is one of the most attractive marine animals, the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), which is shown in Figure 6, which shows the "playing" of dolphins. There is also a sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) that sometimes visits a nature park in search of food.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 6: The bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) in Nature park Telašćica**



**Source:** Indeks.hr, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/foto-istrazivaci-kod-kornata-i-dugog-otoka-vidjeli-cak-pet-skupina-dobrih-dupina/1041689.aspx>

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<sup>32</sup> Nature park Telašćica. Available at: <https://pp-telascica.hr/posjecivanje-strmac/> [14 August 2020]

<sup>33</sup> Nature park Telašćica. Available at: <https://pp-telascica.hr/o-parku/> [14 August 2020]

<sup>34</sup> UNESCO, World Heritage Convention, (2007) *Kornati National park and Nature park Telašćica*. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5106/> [12 September 2020]

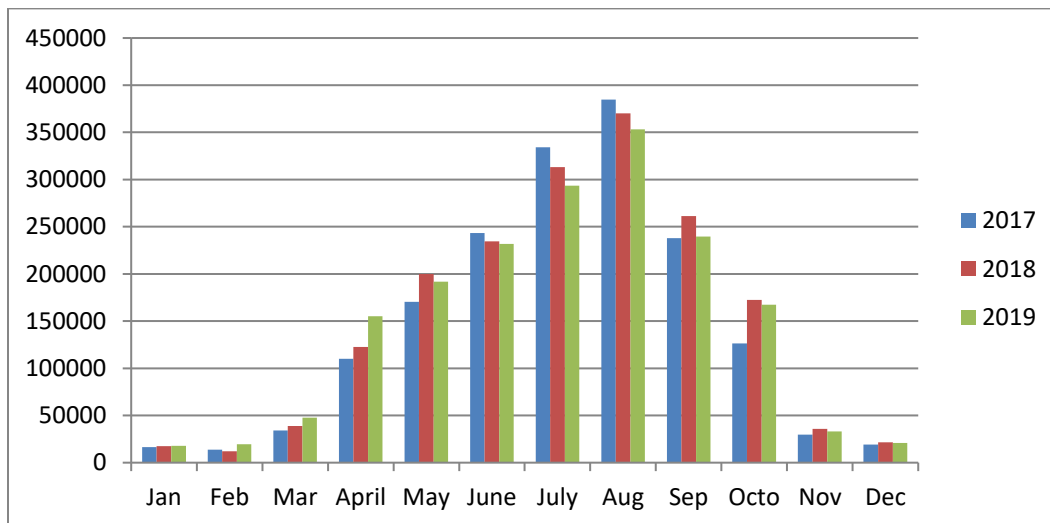
### 3.2. Number of visitors in chosen protected natural areas

The number of visitors to protected natural areas certainly depends on the preservation, advancement, and promotion of the areas themselves. It is very important to strive to maintain natural and cultural values and to introduce new activities and services, in order to attract as many visitors as possible. Visitor satisfaction and happiness is important for improving the economic activity of natural protected areas.

Plitvice Lakes are suitable for tourism in summer and tourism in winter. The number of visitors depends on all countries. Croats make up about 5%, and the largest share are visitors from Germany, France, Poland, and Italy.<sup>35</sup>

In graph 1, the number of visitors in the Plitvice Lakes National Park through the months for 2017, 2018, and 2019 is shown.

**Graph 1: Number of visitors in the Plitvice Lakes National Park through the months for 2017, 2018 and 2019**



Source: author's work according to the Plitvice Lakes Tourist Board website, [https://www.discoverplitvice.com/wp-content/uploads/lzvjesce\\_o\\_radu\\_tzo\\_plitvicka\\_jezera\\_1\\_1\\_do\\_30\\_9\\_2019.pdf](https://www.discoverplitvice.com/wp-content/uploads/lzvjesce_o_radu_tzo_plitvicka_jezera_1_1_do_30_9_2019.pdf) (24.08.2020.)

<sup>35</sup> Plitvička jezera (2019) *Plan upravljanja Nacionalnim parkom Plitvička jezera 2019 - 2028*. Javna ustanova Nacionalnog parka Plitvička jezera, June 2019, p.78. Available at: <https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Nacrt-Plan-upravljanja-NPPJ-2019-2018.pdf?x92898> [11 August 2020]

In Graph 1, it is clear that the highest number of visits is in July and August and slightly less in June and September, during the whole analysed period. The number of visitors at the beginning and the end of the year is significantly lower than in the middle of the year. It is very interesting that the number of visitors in 2017 in August was 384,886, and in 2018 the attendance was 3.8% lower in the same month. Thus, in 2018 there were 261,307 visitors, while in 2019 there were 239,715, which is 8% fewer visitors. While in April 2019, the attendance was 155,088, which is more than 20% higher than in 2018 and about 30% higher than in 2017. It can be noticed that there are big differences in relation to the months of tourist visits. In general, the attendance is the highest in 2018, amounting to 1,799,903 visitors, while it is slightly lower in 2019 by 1,771,542, and in 2017 by 4% less than in 2018. In 2019, attendance was lower due to the fact that they limited the daily attendance of the national park. They also introduced the purchase of online tickets and their reservation. If the visitors came at the time where it is most crowded, it was not possible to visit the national park without buying a ticket in advance. Limiting the number of visitors was introduced solely to protect and preserve the Plitvice Lakes National Park.<sup>36</sup>

The total number of visitors to the National Parks in the period from 2017 to 2018 is shown in Graph 2, which indicates that from 2017, the number of visitors in 2018 increased significantly. The most visited national park is Plitvice Lakes, and the least visited is Risnjak.<sup>37</sup>

In the Brijuni National Park, the number of visits increased compared to 2017, from 169,299 to 171,794 visitors. In the Krka National Park, there is also a growing trend only in a larger number of visits, from 1,284,723 to 1,354,802 visitors. Kornati has a slightly lower growth, 229,061 to 237,435. Mljet achieved a number of visits to 140,329 in 2017, and in 2018 it climbed by approximately 3%. Paklenica has a growth of slightly more than 2%, 140,561 to 144,624. Plitvice Lakes measure a slightly higher number of visits, from 1,720,331 to 1,796,670. Risnjak National Park has significantly lower attendance than other national parks, and lower growth

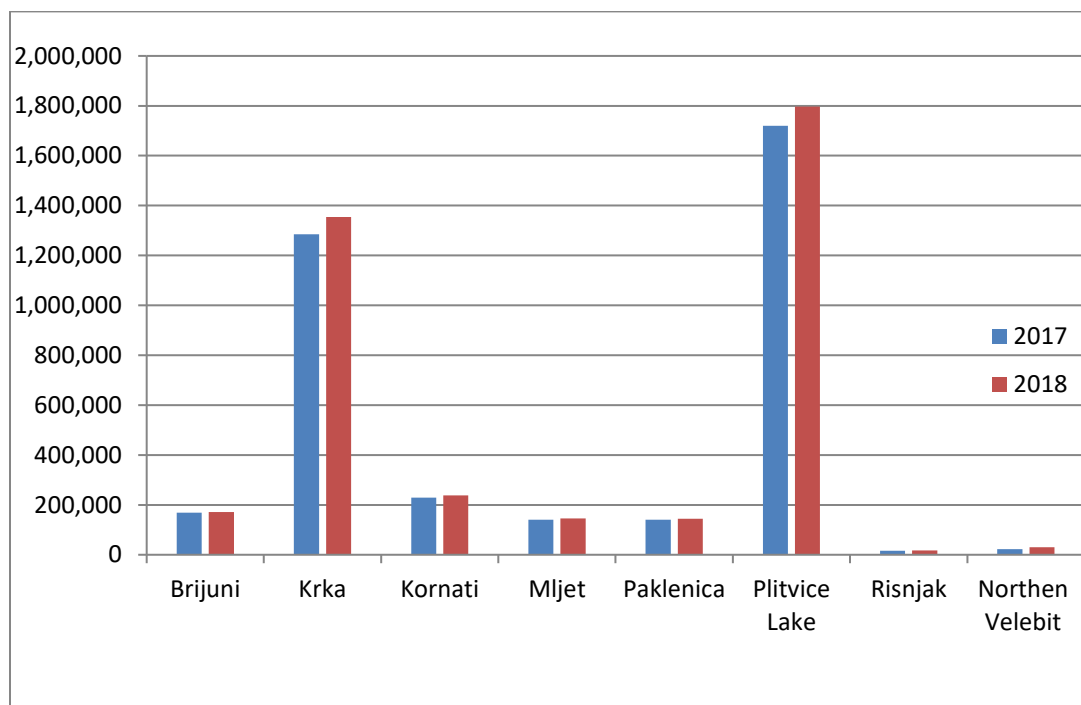
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<sup>36</sup> Plitvičke doline, available at: <http://www.plitvickedoline.hr/np-plitvicka-jezera-uvodenje-online-prodaje-ulaznica/> [12 September 2020]

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (personal contact via e-mail) [20 August 2020]

compared to 2017, 16,575-16,816. The last Northern Velebit National Park has a growth of 33%, in 2017 - 22,919, and in 2018 as much as 30,638.<sup>38</sup>

**Graph 2 – number of visitors in National parks in Croatia in period 2017-2018**



**Source:** author's review according to Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (20 August 2020)

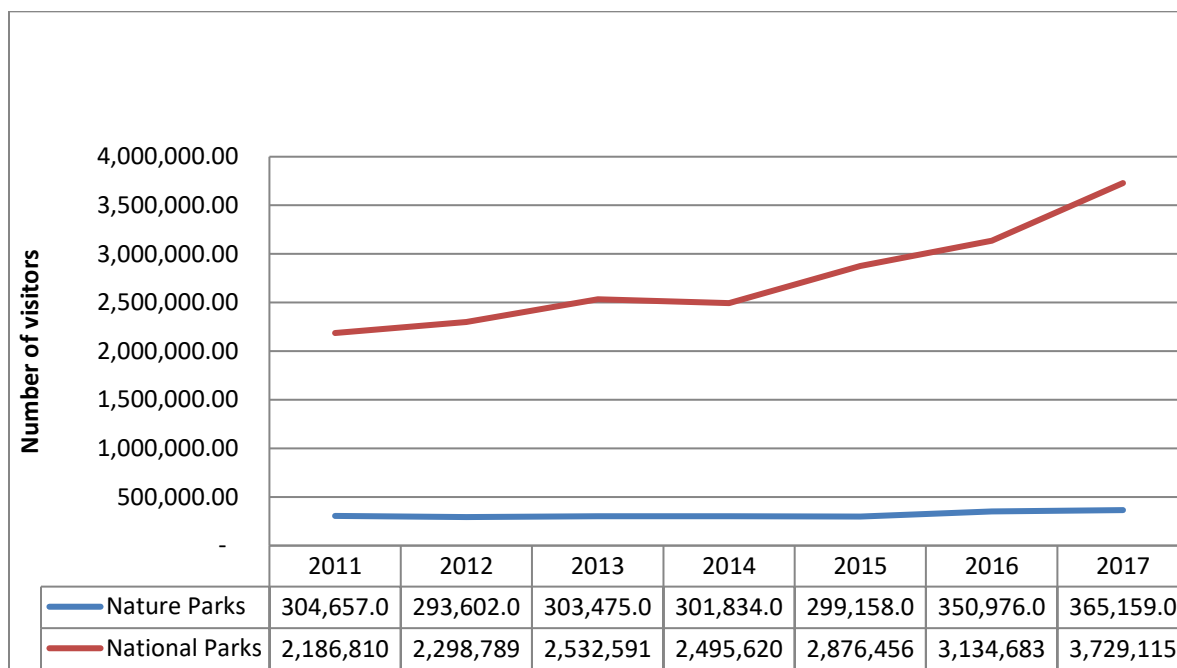
Graph 2 shows a comparison of National Parks and Nature Parks by number of visits in the period 2011-2017. By displaying Graph 2, it is noticed that the number of visitors to the National Parks is much higher than the number of visitors to the Nature Parks. The lowest number of visits to the National Parks was in 2011, only 2,186,810 people, while the largest increase in the number of visits in this period was 3,729,115 visitors (2011). Plitvice Lakes National Park and Krka National Park contributed the most to this result. Nature parks achieved the largest increase in visitors in 2017 with a number of 365,159, and the lowest number of visitors in 2012.

It is important to note that the type of visitors differs in National Parks, including Nature Parks. National parks are most often visited by foreign tourists (as many as 96.6%), while nature parks are most often visited by domestic visitors (80%).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (author's review, contact via e-mail) [20 August 2020]

<sup>39</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo zaštite okoliša i energetike (2018) „Konferencija Parkovi Hrvatske i turizam“. Available at: [https://mint.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/AA\\_2018\\_c-dokumenti/180703\\_i\\_kreitmeyer\\_konf.pdf](https://mint.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/AA_2018_c-dokumenti/180703_i_kreitmeyer_konf.pdf) [14 September 2020]

Graph 3 - Comparison of the total number of visitors in NP and PP in the period from 2011 to 2017



Source: Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy (2018) Projekti u zaštićenim područjima.

Very interesting information related to the Mljet National Park is that their own revenues generated in 2017 amounted to 10,432,680.00, which is as much as 73.2% of total revenues. Of the total stated own revenues, revenues from ticket sales to visitors to the National Park amount to 10,084,065.00, which is almost 96% of the earnings of its own revenues.<sup>40</sup> The rest of their own income is the sale of souvenirs, tourist guide services, and the like.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that some National Parks exclusively generate revenues from ticket sales. Some Croatian nature parks do not charge tickets for visiting at all, and these are: Medvednica, Papuk, Učka and Žumberačko - Samoborsko Gorje. But they have certain locations to visit in the park itself, and various educations that charge.

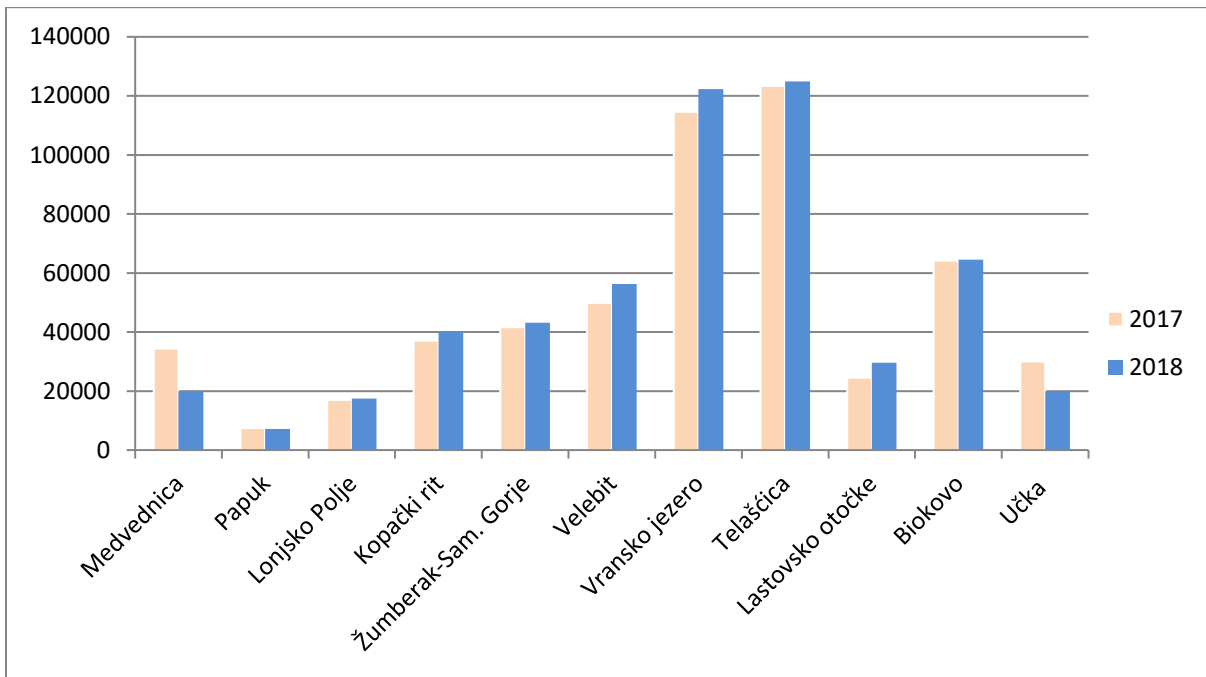
<sup>40</sup> Republika Hrvatska (2019) Izvješće o obavljenoj financijskoj reviziji javne ustanove nacionalni park Mljet za 2017 Split, Državni ured za reviziju, pp. 20-21 Available at: <https://www.revizija.hr/datastore/filestore/190/NACIONALNI-PARK-MLJET.pdf> [12 September 2020]

<sup>41</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Državni ured za reviziju (2019) *Izvješće o obavljenoj financijskoj reviziji javne ustanove NP Mljet za 2017: prihodi*. Split: Područni ured Split, 29. travnja 2019. Available at: <https://www.revizija.hr/datastore/filestore/190/NACIONALNI-PARK-MLJET.pdf> [10 September 2020]



Graph 4 indicates the number of visitors of Croatian Nature Parks for 2017 and 2018.

**Graph 4 – Number of visitors in Nature parks in Croatia for 2017 and 2018**



Source: author's review according to Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (27 August 2020)

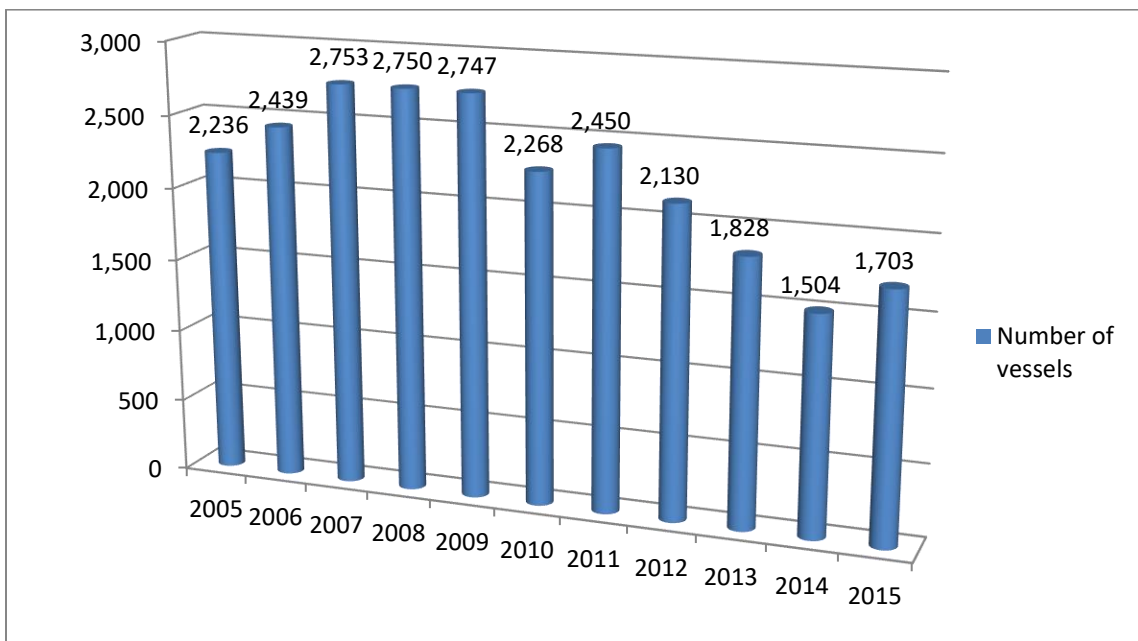
The number of visits to nature parks is higher in most parks in 2018. While the number of visitors to Medvednica Nature Park in 2017 was 34,423, and in 2018 only 20,081, which is a drop in attendance by 40%. Telašćica has the highest attendance among nature parks in 2017 and 2018. While in 2018 it was approached by the Vrana Lake Nature Park, which had 122,256 visitors, and Telašćica 124,841. The nature park with the smallest number of visitors is Papuk (2017 and 2018).

### **3.3. Analysis of accommodation offer within the protected natural areas**

Croatian national parks offer mini-hotels, hotels, private accommodation camps and some also offer villas. In the National Parks located on the coast by the sea (island national parks), the mooring of boats, yachts, and sailboats is allowed. National parks located in the mountains and inland are mostly used for cycling, hiking and recreational activities.

Brijuni National Park offers two hotels and several luxuriously equipped villas. A large number of guests come exclusively with their sailboat, boat, or yacht. By showing Graph 5, the number of vessels in the period 2005-2015 is observed.<sup>42</sup>

**Graph 5 – number of vessels in NP Brijuni in period 2005-2015**

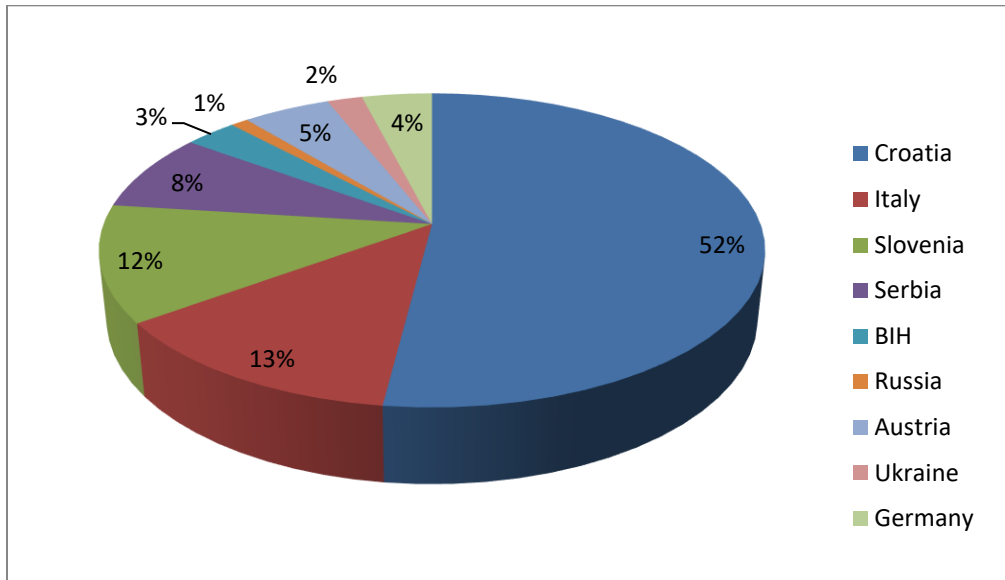


Source: Public Institution Brijuni National Park - Management Plan 2016 (24 August 2020)

It can be noticed that the number of boats decreases from year to year and that more and more guests come to spend the night in the accommodation units of the national park, although certain guests still come with their boat. The largest number of visitors to the Brijuni National Park is from Croatia, but Italians, Slovenes, Serbs, and others also like to visit the island. That is shown in more detail below (Graph 6).

<sup>42</sup> National park Brijuni (2020) *Smještaj na Brijunima*. Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Brijuni. Available at: <https://www.np-brijuni.hr/hr/smjestaj> [18 August 2020]

Graph 6 - structure of overnight stays by countries in 2015 in National park Brijuni



Source: Public Institution Brijuni National Park - Management Plan 2016 (24 August 2020)

Plitvice Lakes National Park has a developed accommodation offer, which includes 4 hotels and 2 camps.<sup>43</sup>

By showing Table 1, the arrival of visitors to the Plitvice Lakes National Park and their overnight stay is noticed, considering the type of accommodation unit in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>43</sup> National park Plitvice lakes, available at: <https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/planirajte-posjet/hoteli-i-kampovi/> [14 August 2020]

**Table 1: Number of nights and arrivals with regard to the type of facility in the period from 1 January until 30 September 2019**

<b>Type of accommodation</b>	<b>Arrivals 2019</b>	<b>Arrivals 2018</b>	<b>Nights 2019</b>	<b>Nights 2018</b>
Household facilities	140.087	132.473	227.626	213.168
Hotels	121.775	124.095	145.206	145.878
Tourist resort	10.564	1.739	13.597	3.566
Other catering facilities for accommodation	16.439	21.596	24.858	30.678
Camps	12.682	14.711	20.905	24.472
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>301.547</b>	<b>294.614</b>	<b>432.192</b>	<b>417.762</b>

Source: author's work according to the website of the Plitvice Lakes Tourist Board, [https://www.discoverplitvice.com/wp-content/uploads/Izvjesce\\_o\\_radu\\_tzo\\_plitvicka\\_jezera\\_1\\_1\\_do\\_30\\_9\\_2019.pdf](https://www.discoverplitvice.com/wp-content/uploads/Izvjesce_o_radu_tzo_plitvicka_jezera_1_1_do_30_9_2019.pdf)

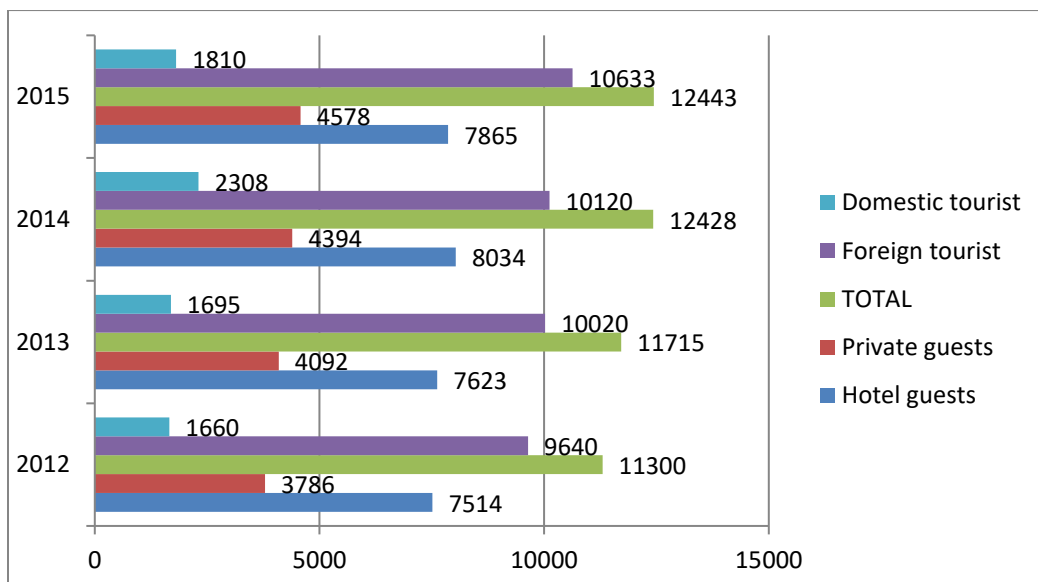
By studying Table 1, it is clear that the number of visitor arrivals is the highest in the "household facilities" category, for 2019 and 2018. For the arrival of both years is recorded at least in the tourist resort. An interesting fact is that the number of visitors in 2019 to the tourist resort increased significantly compared to 2018. While in 2018 there were more guests who stayed in hotels, other catering facilities, and camps. It is a very important fact that the total number of visitors and the total number of overnight stays in 2019 increased compared to 2018, which means that there is a continuous growth.

Mljet National Park offers a somewhat narrower offer of accommodation, they currently have one hotel, and the hotel is located in the village of Pomena next to the national park. Various private accommodations are offered which are next to the national park. It can be sailed by yachts and sailboats because they have the possibility of mooring. Those guests who stay in

hotels or in private accommodation are also offered the possibility of sightseeing the park on bike paths.<sup>44</sup>

Graph 7 indicates data on accommodation units in the Mljet National Park. It also emphasizes how many tourists are international guests and how many are domestic. It is clear that the number of overnight stays is increasing from year to year, and this is due to foreign tourists in a much larger number than domestic ones. In 2015, as many as 85% were foreign visitors, as compared to domestic ones. The same can be noticed that the attendance of guests in hotel accommodation is much higher compared to private accommodation. In 2014, as many as 65% of guests preferred hotel accommodation instead of private accommodation.

**Graph 7 - statistics of arrivals in hotels and private accommodation and the share of domestic and foreign tourists in the period 2012-2015 in NP Mljet**



Source: Public institution Mljet National Park - Management plan 2017-2026

Risnjak National Park offers mini accommodation Pension NP Risnjak of several rooms and Mountain Lodge Josip Schlosser Klekovski with 43 beds.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Nacionalni park Mljet - Plan upravljanja (2017) *Dosadašnje korištenje prostora: Turizam*. Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Mljet, pp. 55-56. Available at: [https://np-mljet.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/dokumenti/Plan-upravljanja\\_2.pdf](https://np-mljet.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/dokumenti/Plan-upravljanja_2.pdf) [24 August 2020]

<sup>45</sup> National park Risnjak, available at: <http://np-risnjak.hr/posjecivanje/smjestaj-i-prehrana/> [15 August 2020]

Kornati National Park offers a slightly different offer. Reservation and organization of accommodation is done by private renters and travel agencies with which the public institution "Kornati National Park" concludes a contract for accommodation for visitors to the national park.<sup>46</sup> Tourists visit the Kornati National Park with their own boat or with an organized agency.

In the Paklenica National Park, locals offer their stone houses for the needs of accommodation to visitors, even though they are located 7km from the national park.<sup>47</sup>

Krka National Park and Northern Velebit National Park do not offer accommodation. However, not far from the national parks there are smaller towns/cities that offer catering and tourist offers.

Accommodation offer in nature parks differs significantly from the accommodation offer in National Parks. In some Croatian nature parks, it is not even enabled. Nature parks generate less revenue per year than National Parks. One of the reasons is that the attendance of Nature Parks is significantly lower than the attendance of National Parks, which is shown above in Graph 3. Some of the nature parks do not even charge tickets (Medvednica, Papuk, Velebit, Učka, Žumberak), so the exact number of visitors cannot be determined.

One of the nature parks that offer accommodation is the Lastovo archipelago. It is possible to book an overnight stay in private holiday homes, rooms, and apartments, accommodation at the campsite, in a hotel, or at lighthouses.<sup>48</sup>

In the Papuk Nature Park, there is a mountain lodge Jankovac which offers gastronomic offers and the capacity of the restaurant has 72 seats.<sup>49</sup> There are 11 rooms in the house.

There are various mountain lodges in the Žumberak Nature Park. Can also spend the night in rural households, in a renovated old mill or in an area intended for Robinson Crusoe tourism.<sup>50</sup>

Biokovo Nature Park offers five mountain houses (Bukovac, Toni Roso, Slobodan Ravlić, Pod

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<sup>46</sup> National park Kornati, available at: <http://np-kornati.hr/hr/turizam/smjestaj> [19 August 2020]

<sup>47</sup> National park Paklenica, available at: <https://www.np-paklenica.hr/hr/posjetite-nas/ugostiteljska-ponuda> [14 August 2020]

<sup>48</sup> Turistička Zajednica - Lastovo, <https://tz-lastovo.hr/smjestaj/>

<sup>49</sup> Nature Park Papuk, *restorani*. <https://pp-papuk.hr/restorani-i-smjestaj/> [12 August 2020]

<sup>50</sup> Nature Park Žumberak Samoborsko gorje, [http://www.park-zumberak.hr/ugostiteljska\\_ponuda\\_i\\_smjestaj.html](http://www.park-zumberak.hr/ugostiteljska_ponuda_i_smjestaj.html) [11 September 2020]

Jurom, Academician Josip Roglić) and one-holiday house (Biokovo Gate). In the Velebit Nature Park, visitors can spend the night in mountain houses, mountain lodges, mountain shelters, camping accommodation and a hostel.

Lonjsko Polje Nature Park offers different types of accommodation offers such as:

- Catering trade tradition Čigoč
- Rooms in the household
- Rural tourism Stara Iža
- Rural tourism Ravlić and many other facilities.

Most often, these are facilities that offer only beds. Vrana Lake Nature Park does not contain accommodation, nor does the Telašćica Nature Park. The sea makes up 64% of the Telašćica Nature Park, so people come by their own boat/sailboat or with the help of travel agencies.<sup>51</sup>

**Figure 7 – Nature park Telašćica**



**Source:** Nature Park Telašćica

Other nature parks are Medvednica Nature Park and Učka Nature Park, which offer various mountain lodges, houses, holiday homes, smaller hotels, and apartments to accommodate visitors.

### **3.4. Analysis of additional tourism services within the protected natural areas**

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<sup>51</sup> Nature park Telašćica, available at: <http://pp-telascica.hr/?lang=en> [21 September 2020]

A large number of visitors to National Parks and Nature Parks are attracted by close contact with nature, sightseeing of natural and cultural heritage, knowledge of culture, art and tradition, and certainly an important factor is "vacation" at the chosen destination. Natural protected areas should definitely work on the stronger promotion of the destinations themselves.

Every National Park, including the Nature Park, has some unique services. Each of them is enriched with natural and cultural beauty that attracts tourists/visitors from all over the world on a daily basis. In order to maintain a certain number of visitors, and the annual success of all national parks and nature parks, it is necessary to invest every year in the area and in the people who work for the area. Adventure tourism is divided into two types, and they are: "soft" and "hard" adventure.<sup>52</sup> Some of them are: hiking, camping, cycling, kayaking, hunting and spearfishing, horseback riding, rafting, free climbing and mountain biking. Some of these activities already exist, and some of them will be realized in the future. The most common are hiking, biking, mountaineering, and scuba diving. Additional services that would surely attract a large number of visitors are: various workshops for children, education for adults, gastronomic education (depending on where the protected area is located, cooking traditional dishes in the homeland), various quizzes where visitors could get a pendant, magnet, a bottle of oil, a bottle of wine and the like.

Brijuni National Park is known for offering a Safari Park where there are many animals, which is listed in Title 3.1. In addition to many animals, there are also recreational courts, such as tennis courts and golf courses. They offer a tour of the entire national park with a train in which there is a guide who speaks a foreign language chosen by a particular tourist. The train tour visits all significant and historical places, from time to time. In the bay of Verige, they offer the possibility of scuba diving and below sea level, there are destinations of marine plant and animal species, with headphones on which tourists are educated about these plants and animals next to which they dive. Brijuni National Park also has large rooms for various conferences, gatherings, meetings. These rooms can also be used to hold all kinds of events, such as weddings. The island also contains a small church where people perform weddings.

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<sup>52</sup> Tourism notes (2018) Adventure tourism. Available at: <https://tourismnotes.com/adventure-tourism/>



Paklenica National Park is known for the most attractive destination for mountaineering. It offers visitors the opportunity to see:

- Manita Peć Cave (the only cave in the Park area where sightseeing is allowed)
- Lugarnica (catering facility)
- Various educational trails such as: Velika Paklenica, Paklarić with a lookout and "a short journey through the past"
- Hiking trail Pjeskarica.

All trails are equipped with educational boards located at specific destinations, showing the history of this area from prehistory to the present day: Paklenica mill, Ethno house Marasović and Camp "National Park". The camp is located on the beach, and is most often used by hikers, climbers and visitors. The place is suitable for camping because it contains a restaurant, toilets, and electricity, which is for people who otherwise like to camp a very tempting place, with a beautiful view and position in the National Park. It attracts people who climb because it has been declared one of the most important climbing centers in Croatia. The combination of sea and mountains gives the special features of the national park. International climbers' meetings are also held. It gives visitors the opportunity to participate in competitions intended for climbing, such as: „Big Wall Speed Climbing“, „Kids speed“, „Youth speed“, „Climbing marathon“.<sup>53</sup>

Krka National Park offers various activities to visitors. Hiking trails that visitors are happy to visit, photography, the possibility of swimming in the river, recreation in nature, picnics, nature education, studying interpretation boards, and cycling.<sup>54</sup> These are all possibilities that can be done in the Krka National Park. All trails and lookouts have educational boards where people stop and educate about the national park, its features, and flora and fauna.

According to the survey conducted by Kontić P. Šibenik, 2018 (Market research and study of monitoring and improving the quality of services through the analysis of survey results of visitors to the National Park "Krka"), clearly shows data and percentages of how many people

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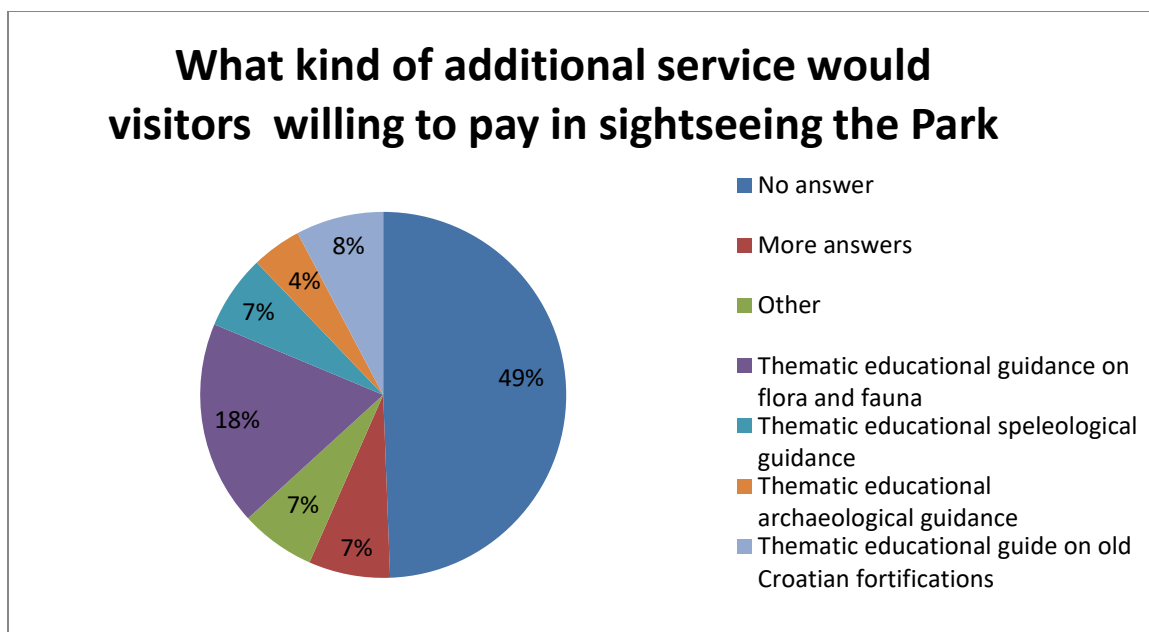
<sup>53</sup> National park Paklenica: <https://www.np-paklenica.hr/hr/penjanje-hr1/me%C4%91unarodni-susret-penja%C4%8Da/big-wall-speed-climbing> [14 August 2020]

<sup>54</sup> Kontić, P. (2018) *Istraživanje tržišta i izrada studije praćenja i unapređivanja kvalitete usluga kroz analizu rezultata anketa posjetitelja Nacionalnog parka „Krka“*. Šibenik, pp. 32-33

would pay extra for better services, a visit to the national park, and what additional services they would like. Some have stated that they would like additional education on flora and fauna, historical sites, speleological research, sightseeing of other parts of the park, use of kayaks, geology research, and the like. In the survey, 630 (18%) people indicated that they would like an additional service of education on flora and fauna, 270 (8%) people education on the management of old Croatian fortifications, 229 (7%) would have thematic educational speleological guidance and 153 (4%) thematic educational archaeological guidance. There are people who answered that I would like "other" services, there are 231 of them, which is 7%.<sup>55</sup>

All data are shown below, Graph 8.

**Graph 8 - Possibility of additional services in NP "Krka"**



Source: (author: Kontić, P. (Šibenik, 2018), Istraživanje tržišta i izrada studije praćenja i unapređivanja kvalitete usluga kroz analizu rezultata anketa posjetitelja Nacionalnog parka „Krka“, p.35

Mljet National Park offers visitors activities such as:

- Cycling (long trails with signposts with a beautiful view)
- Walking and hiking

<sup>55</sup> Kontić, P. (2018) *Istraživanje tržišta i izrada studije praćenja i unapređivanja kvalitete usluga kroz analizu rezultata anketa posjetitelja*. Šibenik: Nacionalni park Krka, p. 35.

- Kayak and Canoe (Kayaking and canoeing in Big and Small Lake)
- Diving
- Beaches and beautiful bays

People visit the Kornati National Park exclusively by boat or have their own boat/sailboat, and you can also visit with an organized agency. One of the preferred activities allowed in the national park is sailing or boat cruising in areas where it is allowed. They offer autonomous diving to 9 different destinations, swimming from 50 meters from the shore, hiking on groomed trails, and certainly offer catering facilities such as taverns and restaurants.

Plitvice Lakes National Park is the most visited national park in Croatia for a reason. They offer a large number of opportunities to make good use of time with a range of activities. And one of the few national parks that offer a wide range of accommodation in the national park only (which is already mentioned in point 3.3.). Hiking, cycling, and hiking are allowed in the national park. It is one of the national parks that "lives" in the winter, not just in the summer.

It offers activities such as tobogganing, skiing, and equipment rental. Rowing is also allowed, which is held on the largest lake Kozjak, and the possibility of renting wooden boats,<sup>56</sup> which is shown in the picture below, Figure 8.

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<sup>56</sup> Nacionalni park Plitvice Lakes, available at: <https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/planirajte-posjet/aktivnosti/> [22 August 2020]

**Figure 8 - wooden rowing boats within the Plitvice Lakes National Park**



Source: Nacional park Plitvice Lakes, <https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/planirajte-posjet/aktivnosti/veslanje/>

In the Papuk Nature Park, additional services offered by the park itself, in addition to restaurants and accommodation, have the possibility of celebrating banquets, birthdays, confirmations, christenings, team building, wedding celebrations, and the like. They offer hiking opportunities for both adults and children

In the park itself, there is an adrenaline park Duboka which attracts a large number of visitors. They have a polygon with different exercises located between the trees. The planned polygon has 12 elements for adults, and slightly less for children. They offer a visit to the "House of the Pannonian Sea", with various educations and quizzes. For sightseeing of the nature park, there is the possibility of renting a bike, e-bike and mountain bike.

Figure 9 – adrenaline park Duboka in Nature park Papuk



Source: webpage, Nature park Papuk

Žumberak Nature Park Samoborsko gorje offers various activities such as: hiking, organized guided bike tour, electric bike rental, car racing, holding adventure races, holding marathon races, holding competitions with mountain bikes, concert holding and educational programs for children.

Biokovo Nature Park is known for hiking, and offers visitors 19 different mountain trails and five hiking trails. The nature park also offers educational trails, a botanical garden, and information and presentation centers. There is also a free-flying activity (paragliding) in the park.

Velebit Nature Park is the largest protected area in Croatia. Visitors like to visit it because of hiking, mountaineering/climbing, rafting and canoeing, and cycling (12 bike trails).<sup>57</sup>

One of the Nature Park that offers a wide range of recreational activities is Lonjsko polje. It offers solar-powered boat rides, boat rides, hiking trails, various bike routes, bike rental, canoe rental. Various educational programs for children and excursion programs for adults.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the many natural and cultural heritage in the Učka Nature Park, it can be educated in various workshops, and workshops are offered only for children. Educational trails and walks, hiking, biking, climbing, flying, and sports competitions and races.

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<sup>57</sup> Park prirode Velebit, *turistička ponuda – biciklizam*, [http://www.park-zumberak.hr/ugostiteljska\\_ponuda\\_i\\_smjestaj.html](http://www.park-zumberak.hr/ugostiteljska_ponuda_i_smjestaj.html) [12 August 2020]

<sup>58</sup> Park prirode Lonjsko polje, *Edukativni programi za djecu*. Available at: <https://pp-lonjsko-polje.hr/za-posjetitelje/edukativni-programi-za-djecu/> [15 September 2020]

In the Vrana Lake Nature Park, visitors can rent a kayak, ride bicycles along the many educational trails. They can visit the adrenaline park offered by the nature park, ride the electric train, and participate in educational programs.

The offer of boat rides, boat rides, various canoe trips, cycling, multimedia exhibition, White Water lily promenade, recreational fishing, and educational programs are some of the activities offered by the beautiful nature park Kopački rit.

In the Medvednica Nature Park you can hike, bike, explore educational trails, and one interesting piece of information that you can rent a bat. There are 35 species of bats in Croatia, and there are as many as 18 species in the park area.<sup>59</sup>

Additional services provided by National Parks and Nature Parks are very important to attract new visitors. Some National Parks and Nature Parks have a wider range of services, while some have failed to develop such a range. One should strive to develop additional services that are sure to attract new visitors and encourage visitors who have already visited the area to come back again. People today increasingly prefer to spend time in nature and use the services found in naturally protected areas. Most NP and PP in Croatia offer general services such as: cycling, hiking, walking and running, while some have special services listed above.

#### **4. POTENTIALS OF FUTURE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS**

This chapter contains the challenges and opportunities of tourism development from the Brijuni National Park and the Telašćica Nature Park, their Swot analyzes and the differences between them. The last subtitle contains prospects of future development in protected natural areas.

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<sup>59</sup> Nature Park Medvednica, *Usvoji šišmiša*. Available at: <https://www.pp-medvednica.hr/turisticka-ponuda/usvoji-sismisa/> [12 August 2020]

#### **4.1. Challenges and opportunities of tourism development in chosen protected natural areas**

Brijuni National Park, like all national parks, strive for further development of tourism. The national park must not be burdened with too many visitors, it is important to continue to maintain its cultural and natural heritage for the further development of the national park.

When visiting a national park, people must be environmentally conscious in order to protect nature, the environment, animals, and the sea as much as possible. Today, a healthier lifestyle is increasingly valued. People are increasingly staying or trying to stay in nature, eating a healthier diet, so it all benefits the National Park. Some of the threats to the Brijuni National Park are increasing competition, so it must strive to renovate the hotels, rooms and villas, and provide additional facilities such as swimming pools, saunas and a fitness center, which is very popular today. Brijuni National Park is exclusively a summer destination, you can say spring, but not winter. So far, they do not offer additional facilities listed above (swimming pool, sauna), so they are currently succeeding mostly in the summer season. They have a very interesting destination that can attract people with special interests (golf lovers, archaeologists, nature lovers). It is the only national park in Croatia that offers eco golf courses, which were built in the time of Kupelwieser.

**Figure 10 – golf course in National park Brijuni**



Source: Private photo

Telašćica Nature Park is a valuable protected area full of flora and fauna that should continue to be preserved and maintained. Most of the locals around the nature park are engaged in fishing, viticulture, olive growing, but all for private needs. A large number of residents are leaving the island due to a lack of schools and additional education. They do not have the possibility of employment, there is not enough cultural offer and content for young people. There is also mistrust within the community which leads to dissatisfaction and lack of communication.<sup>60</sup> The public institution should help with youth employment and job creation, so I would contribute to a better local community through the sustainable development of the nature park. The local community in the nature park is a very important factor for the development of Telašćica. Therefore, it is necessary to create the best possible connections between the Public Institution and the local community.

The total area of all fields in the park is 155 hectares, with only 20% of the area cultivated.<sup>61</sup> This concludes that most of the area is neglected and needs a complete renovation, which requires local residents. Almost the entire land area of the nature park is privately owned, so it is important that the Public Institution assists the local community in its development in accordance with legal possibilities. One of the major disadvantages of the nature park is that the park area does not have a spatial plan and thus makes it much more difficult to arrange any protected area.<sup>62</sup>

## **4.2. SWOT analysis of protected natural areas in Croatia**

SWOT analysis is a method that tries to create a balance between internal capabilities and external capabilities. Internal abilities are certainly strengths and weaknesses, while external ones are considered as opportunities and threats. National parks as well as nature parks are trying to strengthen and improve their capabilities and encourage increasing opportunities. Improvement in organization, management, employees and quality of work, accommodation

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<sup>60</sup> Park prirode Telašćica (2012) *Plan upravljanja 2012-2022: Podrška lokalnoj zajednici i održivo korištenje prirodnih dobara*. Javna ustanova Telašćica, p. 80

<sup>61</sup> Park prirode Telašćica (2012) *Plan upravljanja 2012-2022: Podrška lokalnoj zajednici i održivo korištenje prirodnih dobara*. Javna ustanova Telašćica, pp. 97-98

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98



offer, service provision, and visitor satisfaction. The SWOT analysis compares one's own strengths and weaknesses with the opportunities and dangers that always occur in the environment.

Some of the components related to protected natural areas in terms of biodiversity, environment, eco-tourism, and the space and identity of the area, are shown in the following table.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 2 – biodiversity, environment, eco-tourism, space and identity in protected natural areas**

<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>ECO-TOURISM</b>	<b>SPACE AND IDENTITY</b>
Pressure from domestic and foreign guests	Entry of polluted and wastewater into the protected area	Unfavorable age structure of the population	Unclear property-legal relations in general, and especially within protected areas,
Commercialized hunting with criminal elements	Illegal landfills	Sanitary and communal conditions	Fragmentation and fragmentation of the landscape
Tourism in particularly valuable areas	Poor and irregular garbage collection	Inflexible legislation	devastation of the rural environment through unregulated or illegal construction (cottages, three-story buildings, hydrants, concrete pillars).
Abandoning traditional forms of management	Traffic noise	Uneducated citizens	
Cottages outside the construction zone	Uncontrolled burning of weeds and fires	Poor knowledge of foreign languages	

Source: Vujić, V. – *Gospodarski razvoj zaštićenih područja*.

The internal capabilities of all National Parks and Nature Parks are listed as management, finance, infrastructure. What would mean the vision and mission, the goals of the development

<sup>63</sup> Vujić, V. (2001) *Gospodarski razvoj zaštićenih područja: Tourism and hospitality management* 7. Sveučilište u Rijeci, pp. 167-168 [14 August 2020]

of protected areas, the management team one of the main elements, the organizational structure, the promotion of services, and activities that the protected area provides to visitors.

While external possibilities would be more focused on political stability, efficiency of the legal system, infrastructural resources, ie monetary and fiscal policy.

SWOT analyzes of National park Brijuni and Nature park Telašćica are provided below. (Table 7 and Table 8)

**Table 3 – SWOT analysis of National park Brijuni**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National park – beautiful nature</li> <li>- wealth of historical value</li> <li>- Island – group in one place</li> <li>- the possibility of organizing various outdoor events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- slow renovation of the hotel and lack of facilities (swimming pool, sauna, fitness</li> <li>- Island: arrival and departure dependent on the ship</li> <li>- small accommodation capacities</li> <li>- old infrastructure has high costs</li> <li>- workforce</li> <li>- inadequate spatial plan</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the trend of returning to nature and healthy living</li> <li>- more developed environmental awareness</li> <li>- An increasingly valued healthy diet</li> <li>- communication technologies cannot replace direct contacts - increase in meetings and congresses</li> <li>- building awareness of the need for teamwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increasing competition</li> <li>- price policy</li> <li>- high operating costs</li> <li>- legal restrictions</li> </ul>

Source: National park Brijuni, Marketing plan za 2017 godinu

**Table 4 – SWOT analysis of Nature park Telašćica**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive destination, attractive position of Telašćica bay</li> <li>• Internal organization-good communication between JU services (weekly meetings)</li> <li>• Informing and involving the local community in the planning and management process (management plan, but such zones, sustainable tourism plan)</li> <li>• Implementation of nature protection programs-development of monitoring protocols for species and habitats-no research overlap and results are comparable on a multi-annual basis</li> <li>• Cooperation and implementation of joint projects with other public institutions</li> <li>• Existence of land infrastructure</li> <li>• Educational routes-content for visitors (educational trails, guiding applications)</li> <li>• Infrastructure for the reception of boaters (the fact that at least there is)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undercapacity of the professional service - especially for the implementation of projects funded by EU funds</li> <li>• Undercapacity of the PR, management and marketing department</li> <li>• Lack of legal service</li> <li>• Non-coverage by GSM signal at certain locations - difficult ticket collection</li> <li>• Infrastructure is not in acceptable condition (no electricity, water, inadequate infrastructure in Mir Bay, insufficient number of buoys)</li> <li>• Landfill within the boundaries of the Park</li> <li>• Large number of visitors at the same time in the same place (Mir bay)</li> <li>• Lack of administrative building and info center</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU funds as a source for financing infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Development of anchoring system and tourist infrastructure (spatial plan)</li> <li>• Development of marketing programs</li> <li>• Certification of the park as a destination for sustainable tourism</li> <li>• Collaborate with the local community in creating and branding local products</li> <li>• Visitor center on Grpašćak</li> <li>• Creating new content for visitors (underwater</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legislation</li> <li>• administration</li> <li>• Lack of understanding and capacity of relevant institutions</li> <li>• inability to carry out adequate control (non-compliance with regulations)</li> <li>• inability to find employment (Government decree)</li> <li>• Private ownership of the mainland of the park (95%)</li> </ul>

trail; educational playground...) • Infrastructure development in Mir Bay (administrative building, info center, camp for scientists, students ...)	
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Source: Javna ustanova Park Prirode Telašćica (personal contact by email)

The forces provided by the Brijuni National Park and the Telašćica Nature Park are certainly a treasure of nature, fauna and flora. One of the weaknesses faced by the Telašćica Nature Park is the lack of a legal service, while, say, the Brijuni National Park has members of the legal service. Weaknesses shared by both protected areas are certainly the lack of infrastructure and slow renovation of accommodation. The opportunities they have are EU funds as a source for financing infrastructure projects that can help them significantly. The threat faced by the Telašćica Nature Park is inability to find employment (Government decree), while the Brijuni National Park has the possibility of employment, throughout the year, and especially seasonally.

### **4.3. Prospects of future development of protected natural areas in Croatia**

Protected areas in Croatia have an important rule and responsibilities in Croatia. Protected areas are expected to develop every year. The very name "protected area" indicates that not everything in the National Parks and Nature Parks can be rearranged. Some buildings are protected and their historical story is of great importance.

The perspective for the development of the park system in Croatia is certainly studied from: improving the functioning, contributing to sustainable development, and sufficient long-term financing. They have a very unfavorable expenditure structure, with more than 80% of total revenues going to salaries and material costs, and less than 15% to investments and program costs, including projects to support local community development. The strategic goals of the development of the park system are defined by the Strategy and Action Plan for Nature Protection of the Republic of Croatia. Sustainable financing of the park system starts from the calculation of direct and indirect values of protected areas and total market and non-market

services and benefits to which they contribute to society. The management concept must be based on clear financial mechanisms and diversified sources of money, such as: transfers from public budgets, concessions and other fees, and own revenues of park administrations. All revenues from fees in the park system must be strictly reinvested in the preservation, maintenance and development of the system.<sup>64</sup>

The perspective of contributing to sustainable development can be linked to the system on the number of visits to protected areas at the national level and certainly the introduction of multi-day programs for visiting protected areas. Both are of great importance and it is necessary to involve the local community with them. It is important to implement tourism strategies and stick to a management plan.

The perspective of sustainable financing means revenues and expenditures of protected areas in which 85% of revenues are directed to costs for employees and current operations, and 15% for costs used for additional investments and programs.<sup>65</sup>

It is very important that the system of Croatian parks operates at a higher functional level, such as the ecological network NATURA 2000, which deals with protection, restoration, and revitalization.

Each nature park and national park has its own board. There are future plans to establish a National Park Agency (NPA) for all Croatian protected areas. It will take over the management of 8 national parks and 11 nature parks,<sup>66</sup> and will have the task of management and leadership, which would lead to a uniform model of functioning in all units of the system. The NPA should start performing its function as soon as the Croatian Parliament approves and adopts a new Nature Protection Act. However, this has been going on since 2012, and it is not known whether it will materialize.

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<sup>64</sup> Martinčić, I. (2015) Development vision of protected areas system for the Republic of Croatia – National park Krka as a leader of trends. Zagreb, šumarski fakultet.  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/85f6/e0641b40591d8025b333bfdd4b4fee2f97f2.pdf> [9 September 2020]

<sup>65</sup> Martinčić, I., Sladonja, B., and Zahtila, E. (2012) *Development Prospects of the Protected Areas System in Croatia*. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/books/protected-area-management/development-prospects-of-the-protected-areas-system-in-croatia> [9 September 2020]

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore Croatian natural areas and their development within tourism. State the importance of them, how they are unique, why they differ from each other, and their statistics back a couple of years.

As already mentioned, it is very important to protect natural areas in Croatia as much as possible, but also in the world. They themselves play an important role in the development of the environment, nature, wildlife, both marine and terrestrial. It is important to maintain a balance of visits to the natural areas themselves, to maintain awareness of environmental protection, and to use their free time by staying in nature. We should strive to develop ecotourism in order to pollute the air, land, sea, water surfaces, coast, and associated flora and fauna as little as possible.

Nature Parks I National Parks are financed from the state budget, but the exceptions are larger National Parks such as Brijuni, Plitvice Lakes and Krka, which are financed exclusively through their own funds and by using funds (Environmental Protection Fund) for necessary projects in nature and environmental protection.

Existing facilities in the National Parks need to be rehabilitated, arranged, and modernized in accordance with environmental standards. One of the methods used in the Brijuni National Park to a lesser extent, but as a guideline for the future, is its own eco production of fruits, vegetables, and olive oil.

It can be concluded from all the above that Croatia has an extremely large potential of natural resources that need to be valorized and used as a tourist offer.

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