



## **TOUR OPERATORS INITIATIVE**

FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

### **The Lastovo 'pilot project'**

As the first 'pilot project', WWF and TOI selected the island of Lastovo. Since 2000, WWF and SUNCE have worked together for the identification of the areas with higher natural values and for their conservation and sustainable use.

The island of Lastovo, on the Dalmatian coast, ranked very high in all scientific and socio-economic assessments, and it has been proposed as a Marine Protected Area to the Croatian government. WWF invited the TOI to join this process, by bringing to the table their tourism expertise, and support the community of Lastovo in understanding how the tourism industry operates and what the sustainability criteria for a long term product are.

The launch of the pilot 'effort' in Split, in May 2005 in front of the press and government officials, provided the opportunity for the representatives of the Tour Operators' Initiative, and in particular its Chairman, Dr. Tom Selännemi, to reconfirm that the tour operators members of the TOI support in full the establishment of protected areas as these add to the tourism value of a destination both as an attraction and by supporting the long term sustainability of the environment.

In September 2005 a 'Sustainable Tourism Day' was organized on the island of Lastovo for the local community. Participants included over 30 representatives of the local community. The TOI team was composed by representatives of Aurinkomatkat, REWE Touristik (formerly LTU Touristik), TUI AG and First Choice/Sunsail. WWF Germany, representing the WWF International tourism network, the Mediterranean Program and SUNCE also participated as main organizers.

The contributions of the members of the Tour Operators' Initiative (Aurinkomatkat-Suntours, REWE Touristik, TUI AG and First Choice-Sunsail) aimed at providing the local community with a first-hand understanding of what are the opportunities and challenges of tourism and in particular to understand:

1. The needs, requirements and potentials of different types of tourism
2. The demands of the tourism business
3. Value of nature conservation for tourism development
4. Tourism as an opportunity of sustainable development in protected areas
5. Implications for Lastovo
6. How to balance economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism developments on their own sphere of life

#### ***Tour operators' recommendations for the sustainable development of tourism of the island of Lastovo included:***

- The need to create a network to link the many small complementary tourism related services on the island. An incoming agent would then coordinate and link appropriately all the elements together, from private apartments, hotel, bars, restaurants, car and bicycles rental, dive operators, as well as providers of agricultural and fisheries products into a tourism package and sell it to outbound tour operators. The outbound operators would find this extremely more efficient than having to deal with individual small apartments (often for one family only). This model would however work with a steady number of clients (in the Lastovo case an estimate of 1.500 clients was proposed).

- The tourism market is highly segmented, with each segment having different and often conflicting requirements. The segments include sun & beach holiday makers; fun & action; nature & outdoor; culture & education; families; traditional repeat; individualists. What is crucial then is to define what are the one /two target groups that island should aim for based on its unique selling points, but avoid trying to serve them all as this would be a failure (given the limited resources of the islands and size).
- High quality accommodation include the adoption of very strict health and safety criteria, comfort as well as environmental.  
Nautical tourism is already a very strong market segment for the island. This could be improved by the establishment of mooring buoys, so that people will feel more secure. Buoys also fit in with the natural beauty of Lastovo and will prevent damage to the sea bed. In general yachters are will be willing to pay for this. Offer rubbish removal service as part of the mooring fee. Also the provision of good local food, nature and cultural excursion and cultural event could become an attraction point for yachts in the regions.
- Competition nowadays is at all level: an island like Lastovo competes at the national regional and international levels. It is therefore important to define what would make Lastovo unique and therefore attractive to tourists.
- Defining a critical mass for the economy to run and for the ecological system is a crucial step in planning tourism. These numbers though can not be proposed without a detailed assessment. Furthermore, the ecological capacity is intrinsically linked to the management measures adopted.
- Critical for the long term sustainability of the tourism industry is the assessment and improvement of the island's infrastructures in particular fresh water supply, waste water management, sewage water treatment etc.
- Tourism development and conservation are real allies. Tour operators confirmed that they have no knowledge of areas that after having been declared protected suffered from a decline in tourism. Most of the time is the opposite. Tour operators therefore strongly support conservation, and in particular protected areas when necessary as this will preserve the tourism industry in the long term.

Based on the input provided, the local participants concluded that a 'strategic plan for tourism' is needed in order to define the priorities and specific actions needed to support the sustainable development of tourism on the islands. The process of developing of the plan would need a facilitator, and should only include local residents. The participants then agreed to reconvene in two weeks time to discuss the details, under the leadership of the Lastovo Tourism Board. The Tour Operators' Initiative members also offered to help the establishment of an incoming agency by training in their own incoming agencies the identified representative.



**Dr. Tom Selänniemi, Chairman of the TOI, Lastovo, September 2005**