

# SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE'S TOURISM IN TIME AND SPACE RETROSPECTIVE - AN INSIDER'S VIEW

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**Abstract:** South-Eastern Europe was, at the beginning of the modern-day tourism, in the 1960's, a well-defined area of states. With the exception of Greece, all had communistic governments. Yugoslavia decided to open borders, invite tourists and enrich their hard currency income. According to UNWTO Yugoslavia was in 1980's listed among the 10 most visited countries of the world. Through the eyes and experiences of a tour operator and academician, the paper will elaborate on tourism characteristics in three time-frames: 1.) in the historically unified space; 2.) in the contemporary fragmented space and 3.) in the post-industrial globalized space. Personal impressions will be enriched with results of own research and from young scientists' mentorship.

The Fall of the Iron Curtain, the strive for national/ethnic sovereignty, the inclusion of most of the East-European periphery into the EU, the uprising of the middle class in some Euro-Asian and Latin American countries, the change of the air travel mode, the growing cruising industry, the experience thirsty and adrenalin searching population and the health- and environment conscious social groups have again made the tourist destination South-Eastern Europe a territory worth to discover. The fragmented space of the former Yugoslavia is divided into 7 nation-states, crisscrossed by approximately 6326 km of semi-open, often not defined borders where on approximately 252 border crossings tourist must identify himself and declare custom goods. Despite it, will most countries in 2015 of the region report best economic results of the tourism industry ever.

In addition to the pull-effect for the Europeans – namely the warm waters of the Mediterranean - sightseeing tourism of Asians is enriching outstanding features of cultures and nature. Historical capitols and towns, countries' outstanding natural specifics, and dominant cultural sites register Asian visitors near the top of the foreign nation's tourist list. The future of the region for the tourism industry lies in the promotion of cross-border development and in the increase of the awareness of sustainable development of tourism industries' complexity. Tourism development can only be tolerated to an extent where it would not kill the inviting nature, the authentic culture and itself. Regulating millions of visitors in protected sites of nature and UNESCO heritage places is the task for tourism developers of the future.

**Key words:** former Yugoslavia, tourism geography, timeframes, cross-border- / sustainable development.

*Tourists move because they find the world within their reach irresistibly attractive.  
(Bauman, 2000)*

## INTRODUCTION

Time and space are, along with wealth, main generators of tourism flows. Tourists' motives are beneficial to a tourist destination only if visitors find the space attractive, have an abundance of time and a surplus of finances for leisure activities. But, in this equation one must not disregard the living standard, demography, culture and geopolitics on both ends of touristic industries' activities - in the outgoing and incoming space. If conditions

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regarding space, time and wealth contents change, this might affect the tourism economy overall.

South-Eastern Europe was, at the beginning of the modern-day tourism in the 1960's, a well-defined area of nation-states. With the exception of Greece, all had communistic governments. All of them, with the exception of the named and Yugoslavia, were in the beginning reluctant to support the development of international tourism and tourism in general, which they considered a bourgeois heritage. According to the UNWTO, in the 1980's, Yugoslavia was among the 10 most visited countries of the world (Gosar, 1989).

In this paper, we will give attention predominantly to the space of the former Yugoslavia, author's own studies and experience as well as research made predominantly by Slovenian scientists. Maps and other visual material will be presented predominantly in the conference's power point presentation.

Yugoslavia's disintegration (1991 - 2008) has through several (geo)political, cultural and wealth issues impacted the space where tourism was to a reasonable extend blooming. It took some of the seven new political entities almost two decades to level out numbers regarding tourists' visits, lengths of stay and incomes; some still struggle. In this paper we will not discuss changes in politics and economy (from communism to democracy; from the central planning economy to market economy) but will elaborate (just) on selected tourism industry's characteristics linked to the time-frame and related space.

**Tab. 1.** International visitors and international stays on territory of former Yugoslavia (in 1000)\*

		1984	1994	2004	2014
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Visitors Stays	394	99	153 392	526 1.109
Croatia	Visitors Stays	5.621	2.659 14.013	7.912 42.516	10.955 59.688
Kosovo	Visitors Stays	-	-	41 63	62 112
Macedonia	Visitors Stays	584	185	165 361	425 922
Montenegro	Visitors Stays	-	-	-	1.324 8.414
Serbia	Visitors Stays	1.272+	301+ 1.264+	481++ 1.650++	922 1.988
Slovenia	Visitors Stays	1.137	832 3.103	1.484 3.833	2.259 5.962
Ex – Yugoslavia Territory	Visitors Stays	9.008	4.066	10.236 48.815	16.473 78.195

\*subject to available source (various sources - not cited)

+incl. Montenegro and Kosovo; ++ incl. Montenegro

## THE PAST IN THE UNIFIED SPACE

The term Tourismology as name for a discipline, which studies tourism in its complexity - including space, time, economy and other relevant factors - was born in South-Eastern Europe. The contemporary term in use is Tourism Sciences. In 1961 Živadín Jovičić called upon an integrated theory of tourism research – naming it Turizmologija (Ritchie et al, 2008). In the same summer, I stood in a double lane, with an Ethiopian flag in hand, to great Emperor Haile Selassie visiting the Cave of Postojna, where I was employed as guide. Just months later, the country we lived in opened its borders. Soon my parents seasonally devoted our house to people on the move, and on week-ends the main road through my home-town hardly could be crossed due to the many Volkswagens and increasingly Fiats – the popular Fičo – heading to or from the coast. The Simplon-Orient Express (Istanbul/Athens – Paris/London) took me and family to the Atlantic port of Le Havre and subsequently to America.

Modern-day tourism, which started in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the past century, took Yugoslavia by surprise. The sudden freedom to move across borders inspired its own citizens to intensive cross-border shopping trips and subsequently visits to gateway amenities along western borders. In cities and along the coast, domestic tourism started to level out with the incoming foreign. International tourism impacted the western portion of the country at large, whereas inland just urban centers and localities along major trans-continental highways gained transit guests' attention. Sun, Sea and Sand dominated foreign visitors' motives; just a minority decided to enrich their knowledge on cultural diversity of the multi-ethnic state and the many faces of the Balkan natural diversity (Planina at al., 1981; ).

I switched from cave to Adriatic seaport guiding. Every second week, Austria Travel London occupied a railway carriage with tourists interested in Adriatic Mediterranean towns. I met them at the border station (Jesenice), talked to them on train, took them to the port (Rijeka) and embarked them on a Jadrolinija ship bound for Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik – showing theme cultural sites there. The second season at Kompas Yugoslavia, I received obligations related to the Blue Cars London program exploring several South-East European nation-states by bus. In the 1960's, this was still considered a highly adventurous trip: long check-ups at border posts, local guiding on the nation-state's territory, constant switch of currency, buses and hotels with no air-conditioning, hygiene at a minimum. In my final six years of tour guiding, which lasted way into the 1970's, I become an expert on the Classical Tour of Yugoslavia.

The Kompas Yugoslavia's own tour program, being offered on the western market, joined British and American, sometimes even French and German visitors on the same bus. A trilingual tour manager was the norm. The expectations of tour participants tended more towards gaining multi-cultural expertise on religion and ethnicity and, in particular, “experiencing adventure” (in a communistic nation-state). I remember all, but the first trip left deepest impressions. As more or less a newcomer to the business, I was responsible for the second bus, loaded with American tourists. Western impressions were left in Ljubljana and Zagreb. Banja Luka's parking in the middle of the central avenue was unusual, the Pliva waterfalls and the traditional grain mills were impressive; the legend of the birth of the communistic state in Jajce in 1943 and “pleskavica on lepinja”, on the main square of Andrić's Travnik, were the highlights of the third day. On the next day a retired professor,

the local guide, delivered hundreds of impressive stories of co-habitation of people and religions in Sarajevo. And, as travels continued, along the Jablanica Lake and Neretva River Yul Brynner's movie "The Battle on Neretva" was re-lived. Mostar's young guys jumping into the cold waters of the named river and Žilavka made the afternoon and evening brighter. As on gravel roads the travels continued, "stečki" and the narrow-gauge railroad towards Dubrovnik asked for many photo-stops. The next week's return trip followed the partly finished "Jadranska magistrala" where Greek, Roman, Turkish, Venetian and Slavonic history was re-lived (Gosar, 1989).

**Tab. 2.** Length of borders between nation-states on the territory of former Yugoslavia, 2015 (in km)

	BIH	CRO	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	SLO	All
Bosnia and Herzegovina	X	956	-	-	225	345	-	1.526
Croatia	956	X	-	-	14	252	670	1.892
Kosovo	-	-	X	170	79	380	-	629
Macedonia	-	-	170	X	-	62	-	232
Montenegro	225	14	79	-	X	45	-	363
Serbia	345	252	380	62	45	X	-	1.084
Slovenia	-	670	-	-	-	-	X	670
Ex – Yugoslavian Territory	1.526	1.892	629	232	363	1.084	-	6.326

Later I switched to a desk job accommodating rare Czechoslovak youth guests (CSKM). As a tour guide, I occasionally joined them on a two day bus excursion to Venice. Their group had to have individual visas, a trustworthy tour manager, and enough hard currency. On two occasions, several young couples disappeared from the hotel and never returned to the group. In the late 1970's, I was invited to Munich, to join a German research team studying the phenomenon of Yugoslavian tourism. Therewith I ended my career as tourism industry's practitioner and continued to work in academic circles.

Open borders were still in focus of domestic travel then. Shopping in Trieste, Gorizia and Tarvisio as well as in Klagenfurt, Radkersburg and Graz kept these cities in the capitalistic West alive and well. Some of them are almost ghost towns today. No preventive measures implemented by the government could stop the import (and smuggling) of Levi's jeans, Minas coffee, margarine, toilet paper, detergents, etc. (Jeršič, 1970) Arrangements such as a personal bank deposit of 500 Dinars (equivalent to \$ 50.-) to cross the border, or the cyclic travel permission for cars with odd and even numbers on the roads could not stop Yugoslav nationals from crossing the border (Mikačič, 1989). About one million Yugoslavs found permanent jobs in the West. Twice as many visited border towns on

shopping sprees each month. Within the federation's territory, another million citizens enjoyed their leisurely time in second homes and apartments they built or purchased in the mountains and along the Adriatic Sea (Jeršič, 1989; Salmič & Koderman, 2013; Koderman, 2014; Cigale, 2015).

## THE CONTEMPORARY FRAGMENTED SPACE

The Balkan wars of the 1990's reduced international visits, hindered tourism growth and resulted into the nation-states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The fragment space asked for re-structuring of the tourism industry in many ways (Mihalič, 1999; Gosar, 2005);

In 2015, the fragmented space on the territory of the former Yugoslavia is crisscrossed by approximately 6326 km of semi-open borders. The border delimitation between states, with the exemption of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, is not entirely set; in particular maritime and water-based border delimitation causes concern (Gosar, 2012a). On every border-crossing, every single tourist has to present his or her personal document; on most (except Slovenia-Croatia, both EU members), customs control posts are added. Law regulations and currencies are different in all but three; Slovenia, Montenegro and Kosovo have Euros.

Branding of the new entities was/is a difficult process. Branding of a country as a tourist destination is an image process that a nation/place reflects to the world. On the global and European scales, the new countries are known for their rainbow of natural wonders and cultural heritage, but - most of them – also as countries being recently ravaged by war. The new image to be mediated to the world must therefore be rooted in the nation's (new) natural or cultural authenticity and in its people. International visitors are now invited to the part of the space they knew before as – Yugoslavia. To be successful (= profit) it is important to focus within nation-states on a single area or product of the country in attempting to become worldwide (= Europe-wide) the best (Bruketa, 2013). This could annoy tourism providers of the nation which are not put in front of the campaign.

Croatia and Slovenia were among the first to be aware of the importance of branding of their new states. But, according to surveys and tourism industry experts, both are still poorly recognizable in the global context. Both countries have switched in years of sovereignty from one to another slogan - starting with "On the Sunny Side of the Alps" (Slovenia, 1991) and "Mediterranean as it once was" (Croatia, 1999). Finally, they've switched from advertising their own dominant geography, towards literate acrobatics and invigorating promises – "I Feel SLOVEnia" (2010) and "Croatia – Full of Life" (2015). On markets of the Far East, their advertisement becomes unified. The territory of both countries is advertised unison with "Experience Croatia, Feel Slovenia". Other national tourist advertisement campaigns of the region, including BiH ("The Heart-Shaped Land"), follow the trend.

In some of new sovereign nation-states the change on the geopolitical territorial level resulted into the initiation of tourism development strategies. Some countries' governments were reluctant to midterm strategy planning, as they saw this trend as being a heritage of the communistic past (Five Year Development Plans), they've believed that the market itself will regulate tourism trends. The Republic of Slovenia introduced its first tourism development strategy in 1993. According to authors, within the following five "subjects of

tourism” tourism products of Slovenia should be developed: a.) the Coast and the Karst; b.) the Mountains and Lakes; c.) the Health Resorts; d.) the Rural Countryside and e.) the Historic Towns. (Sirše et al.,1993; Sirše & Mihalič, 1999). Geographic features behind the above literary named “subjects of tourism” could easily be identified.

But, recent discussions have pointed out that the basic geographic regions of Slovenia can intermingle easily with each other and could therewith produce new “subjects of tourism” and new tourism products. According to authors, the “Slovenian attraction”, namely of the space between the Alps, the Mediterranean and Pannonia and, in the cultural sense, “between Venice and Vienna”, should be promoted/offered to different markets with certain distinction. Tourism products, based on experience environmental consciousness, have since become the lead element in tourism promotion and creation of touristic regions. Geography has been regarded only as a general frame to be considered and, on a small-scale, in a specific socially/historically bound spatial context. Authors of the new tourism strategy in progress are deliberating on three issues: A.) the overall national importance of a tourism product (incorporating Slovenia as a whole), B.) the nature of tourism products linked to specific natural and cultural sites, and on C.) tourism products applied to certain micro- or mezzo-localities and conditions – like a.) gastronomy and enology, b.) physical activity and related adventure(s), c.) urban culture, d.) eco-experiences: e.) health improvement and wellness enjoyment, f.) meetings and events, g) gaming and gambling, and h.) youth tourism (Cigale 2012; Gosar, 2012b).

The major uplifting of the reduced number of international visitors began in most of the above named countries about 15 years ago; the uncertain (geo)political and economic situation still hinders tourism development in some. I am sure that the conference will in several presentations enlighten the process. I have since mentored two dozens of MSc and a dozen PhD dissertations dealing with the impact of political uncertainty related to tourism. In all, along with immediate financial losses, the short and mid-term impact was proven (Mihalič, 1999). But, on the long run, if the situation stabilizes, tourists not only return but even increase their visits (Gosar, 2012c). Often, even above the trend of the general growth of the tourist industry of the world! What struck me most in the process of analyzing the uplifting of tourism is that visitors from neighboring (new) countries have - after the conflict! - become the most loyal customers of the (new) tourist industry developing in the (new) nation-states. For example: Slovenes (just 2 Million inhabitants) are constantly among the three nationals leading in tourist visits to Croatia (Kerma & Koderman & Salmič, 2009). In 2014 they were second considering visits. First were still Germans (81 Mill inhabitants), Slovenes are followed by Italians (61 Mill. inhabitants) and Austrians (9 Mill. inhabitants). But, Slovenes are also among the leading visitors of Bosnia and Herzegovina – along with citizens of Croatia and Serbia (Koderman & Kerma, 2009) The sun, sea and sand tourism (SSS) motive is now on the territory of SE Europe enriched by VFR tourism (visiting friends and relatives), roots tourism, memory and spiritual tourism, nautical tourism (incl. cruising), adventure and adrenalin tourism, gambling and gaming, as well as enological and gastronomical enjoyment (Koderman, 2015; Cigale 2006, Balažič 2014, Koderman & Kerma, 2010).

What was until recently missing regarding previous origin of tourists were visits from geographically peripheral western and northern countries of Europe. The area has now become a playground of the residents of Central Europe (Gosar, 2012c). This trend switches slowly to the structure of nationals in the 1980’s as increasingly Israeli, Russians

and Asian tourists are enriching the tourist scene. Japanese, Koreans, Chinese and Indian tourists visit in an extremely short travel time-span natural and cultural wonders of the region.

**Tab. 3.** International visitors and international stays vs. residential population on territory of former Yugoslavia (in 1000)\*

	Population 2014		1984	1994	2004	2014
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.810	Visitors	0.10	0.03	0.04	0.13
		Stays			0.10	0.29
Croatia	4.250	Visitors	1.32	0.69	1.86	2.58
		Stays			10.00	14.04
Kosovo	1.764	Visitors	-	-	0.02	0.03
		Stays			0.04	0.06
Macedonia	2.038	Visitors	0.29	0.09	0.08	0.21
		Stays	0.53	0.16	0.18	0.45
Montenegro	621	Visitors	-	-	-	2.13
		Stays				13.55
Serbia	7.164	Visitors	0.18+	0.04+	0.07++	0.13
		Stays			0.23++	0.28
Slovenia	2.062	Visitors	0.55	0.40	0.72	1.09
		Stays			1.86	2.89
Ex – Yugoslavia Territory	21.709	Visitors	0.41	0.19	0.47	0.76
		Stays			2.25	3.63

\*subject to available source (not cited)

+incl. Montenegro and Kosovo; ++ incl. Montenegro

## THE GLOBALIZED SPACE OF THE POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Mature tourism tends to risk stagnation if innovation is not going to be added to the general pull effects (climate, culture, etc.) to the existing products of the region (Sedmak & Mihalič, 2008). According to UNWTO statistics the top 5 countries leading in the 1950's in international tourist arrivals (USA, Canada, Italy, France, Switzerland) accounted for 71% of the global demand, 60 years later the top 5 group accounted only for 31% of the billion international tourists traveling. Regarding international visits, Yugoslavia was in the 1970's ranked among the second group (first 10) and in the 1980's among the 15 most visited countries of the world. Those 15 countries have in the 1970's accounted for 75% of all international travels and in 1990 for 66%.

The travel and tourism competitiveness index 2015 - TTCI of the World Economic Forum proves that quality and diversity of touristic products increasingly override inexpensive products on the market. Considering just Europe, Spain, France and Germany are leading - despite the fact that they are highly developed countries with high costs in global terms. The combination of business environment, infrastructure, governance and innovation make that possible. The TTCI 2015 ranking of the Mediterranean countries on the world scale

shows that Croatia is 33<sup>th</sup>, Slovenia 39<sup>th</sup> Montenegro 67<sup>th</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not mentioned among 141 countries being ranked. Among countries of SE Europe Serbia is ranked 95<sup>th</sup> (value 3.34), Macedonia and Kosovo are not included in the ranking.

**Tab. 4.** The globalization of supply and demand in the tourism industry

Rank / Year	1950	1970	1990	2010
1.	USA	Italy	France	France
2.	Canada	Canada	USA	USA
3.	Italy	France	Spain	China
4.	France	Spain	Italy	Spain
5.	Switzerland	USA	Austria	Italy
Group Share	71%	43%	39%	31%
6.	Ireland	Austria	Mexico	United Kingdom
7.	Austria	Germany	Germany	Turkey
8.	Spain	Switzerland	United Kingdom	Germany
9.	Germany	Yugoslavia	Canada	Malaysia
10.	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	China	Mexico
Group Share	17%	22%	18%	14%
11.	Norway	Hungary	Greece	Austria
12.	Argentina	Czechoslovakia	Portugal	Ukraine
13.	Mexico	Belgium	Switzerland	Hong Kong
14.	Netherlands	Bulgaria	Yugoslavia	Russian Fed.
15.	Denmark	Romania	Malaysia	Canada
Group Share	9%	10%	9%	11%
Other Share	3%	25%	34%	44%
TOTAL	25 Million	166 Million	436 Million	940 Million

Source: Payeras, 2015

The example of Bovec shows us how important it is to think out of the box and become innovative. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after the unsuccessful bid for the Winter Olympics 2006 (popular: “Senza Confini” = without borders) the three participating countries – Austria, Italy, Slovenia, decided to continue co-operation and work towards a unique, single tourist destination. The alpine resorts such as Kranjska Gora, Bovec, Tarvisio, Faak am See decided to co-operate in promotion and in services. Disregarding their locality of tourist’s stay! Cross-border co-operation is also in progress in Istria, the Adriatic peninsula, located in Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. The recent examples include wellness programs and routes devoted to enological tourism (Vodeb, 2010; Vodeb, 2012; Kerma, 2014; Jurinčič, 2014).

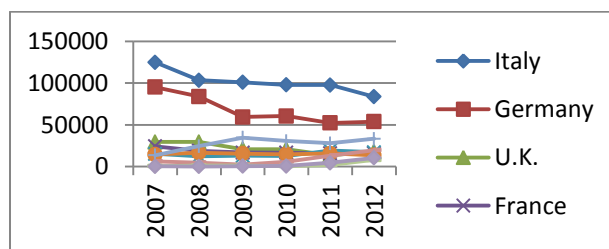


**Tab. 5.** Travel and tourism world competitiveness 2015 (ranking of selected European and Mediterranean countries).

World Rank	Europe		World Rank	Mediterranean Area	
	Country	Value		Country	Value
1.	<b>Spain</b>	5.31	1	<b>Spain</b>	5.31
2.	<b>France</b>	5.24	2	<b>France</b>	5.24
3.	<b>Germany</b>	5.22	8	<b>Italy</b>	4.98
4.	/United States/	5.12	15	<b>(Portugal)</b>	4.64
5.	<b>United Kingdom</b>	5.12	31	<b>Greece</b>	4.36
6.	<b>Switzerland</b>	4.99	33	<b>Croatia</b>	4.30
7.	/Australia/	4.98	36	<b>Cyprus</b>	4.25
8.	<b>Italy</b>	4.98	39	<b>Slovenia</b>	4.17
9.	/Japan/	4.94	40	<b>Malta</b>	4.16
10.	/Canada/	4.92	44	<b>Turkey</b>	4.08
11.	/Singapore/	4.86	49	<b>(Bulgaria)</b>	4.05
12.	<b>Austria</b>	4.82	62	<b>Morocco</b>	3.81
13.	/Hong Kong/	4.68	66	<b>(Romania)</b>	3.78
14.	<b>Netherlands</b>	4.67	67	<b>Montenegro</b>	3.75
15.	<b>Portugal</b>	4.64	72	<b>Israel</b>	3.66

Source: World Economic Forum, 2015

The case of the Cave of Postojna (and Lake Bled) in Slovenia shows us another regional trend. Despite of its 50 years of the modern day tourism tradition, South-Eastern Europe was until recently not discovered “on large” by Asian and even American overseas visitors. Europe worth visiting for them was Rome, Paris, London, ...Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, as a conglomerate of cultures and natural landscapes, was for decades an exotic periphery of communism and predominantly a summer holiday warm seas/lakes destination enjoyed by West-Europeans. In addition to the pull-effect for the Europeans and the region – namely the warm waters of the Mediterranean, the Alps and mountains of the Balkan Peninsula, and the karstic natural heritage – the sightseeing keen Asians are now enriching outstanding features of both, culture and nature. Historical capitols and towns (like Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo and Dubrovnik), countries’ outstanding natural resources (like the authentic karst) and dominant cultural sites register Asian visitors near the top of the foreign nation’s tourist list.



**Fig. 1.** The Postojna cave: International visitors, 2007 to 2012

Source: Postojnska jama, d.d., Postojna 2013.

The year 2015 promises to become a peak year of international visits in most of the countries of the region. What can we expect from future trends in tourism for the region? In addition to traditional tourism – the renewed sightseeing and sea/mountain holiday-making (described above) - we can expect the following incoming tourism trends to come to the foreground of visits:

1. Roots tourism or Tourism of the Diaspora (within the VFR segment of tourism) is likely to become an increasingly growing international travel mode to the territory and the individual nation-states of former Yugoslavia;
2. Dark Tourism or Tourism of Grief, combined with Tourism of Imagination and with Spiritual Tourism, is likely to increase;
3. The sightseeing “Rainbow of Cultures Tourism” (RCT tourism), incorporating cultural landscapes and well-preserved natural resources of the region is, again, going to become attractive to predominantly Asian and other overseas visitors traveling by land, sea/river or just crisscrossing the region, having other major European points of interests in mind as well.
4. The EEE tourism (Ecological, Ethnological and on Experience based tourism), the AAA tourism (Adventure, Action and Adrenalin rich tourism), and the ISI tourism (Involvement, Heritage and Imaginary tourism) types will increasingly be added to the SSS motives of travels to the most parts of the region.

**Tab. 5.** International tourist arrivals in selected countries of SE Europe by regions of origin (2013).

International arrivals in 2013	Austria		Croatia		Hungary		Slovenia	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Europe	21,776,236	87.8	9,965,000	91.0	9,420,000	88.7	1,969,837	87.2
<b>Asia</b>	<b>1,593,422</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>452,000</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>487,000</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>167,889</b>	<b>7.4</b>
Africa	60,827	0.2	20,000	0.2	27,000	0.3	5,682	0.3
Americas	860,311	3.5	382,000	3.5	614,000	5.8	88,344	3.9
Australia and Oceania	157,318	0.6	129,000	1.2	76,000	0.7	26,818	1.2
Not specified	365,014	1.5	/	/	/	/	/	/
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,813,128</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10,948,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10,624,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,258,570</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Statistik Austria 2014, Croatian bureau of statistics 2014, Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015; Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2015a.

In some countries of the region tourism contributes already to more than 10% of the national GDP (Croatia - 22%, Montenegro – 19%, Slovenia 13%). Bosnia and Herzegovina reported 12.9% growth of tourist arrivals (2012 – 2014) and claims that Sarajevo is on the 43<sup>rd</sup> place of the world’s best city ranking (Lonely Planet), ahead of all other capitols of SE Europe, except Athens. To increase the number of international tourists is – sadly – the characteristic of strategic plans of most of region’s tourism developers. But, be aware that mass tourism could hinder normal business – like in Dubrovnik, where cruise ship visitors literally occupy the town for several hours - and could become a threat to natural heritage – like at the Plitvice Lakes National Park, where ten thousand (predominantly Asian) daily visitors are a burden to the existing park

infrastructure and are enforcing pressure on the natural karstic phenomenon! Regulating millions of “human intruders” (as tourist) at protected sites of nature (Plitvice Lakes, the Cave of Postojna, Lake Bled, etc.) and in UNESCO heritage places (Dubrovnik, Split, Mostar, Višegrad, etc.) and pilgrimage destinations (Međugorje) is a major task for tourism developers and planners of the future. Tourism development can only be tolerated to such an extent where it would not kill the inviting nature, the authentic culture and itself. Indiscriminated use of resources of any kind can kill destinations. To reach the balance and interdependence between economy, environment, corporations and residents should become the major goal for tourism developers in the region.

In the digital age, customers take advantage of mobility and of access to information as never before. They make their own decision after searching, sharing, reading or comparing different options. As a result of it, they are able to create individual products on which they want, as participants, be at least to a minimum in command. They do not want to be one more in the crowd. Contemporary tourists are open to (any) new challenges – as they are driven by the innovative society. They use visual and audio app’s - instead of guidebooks, and GSM cartography - instead of classic maps. Low cost airlines enable them to visits far-away places, with a rucksack, just for a day or two (with no burden for their budget). The modern tourist does not simply follow the footprints of others ahead; they are making their own footprints and new paths to be discovered and used by the tourism industry of the region of SE Europe as well!

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