



# Best Practices for Developing Ecotourism in Support of National Parks in Slovakia

Presentation of LT&C Handbook and Current Situation of Ecotourism in Times of COVID-19

September 18th, 2020

Nina Breck, Diana Körner



# Welcome on behalf of LT&C!





# Presentation Agenda

- Overview of key messages from handbook 'best practices for developing ecotourism in support of national parks in Slovakia'
- Implications of COVID-19 on ecotourism and the emergence of new trends





**Key messages from handbook 'best practices for developing ecotourism in support of national parks in Slovakia'**

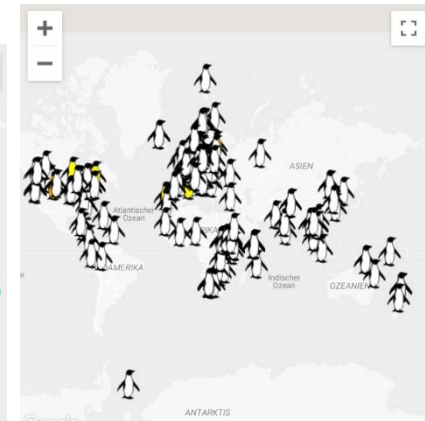
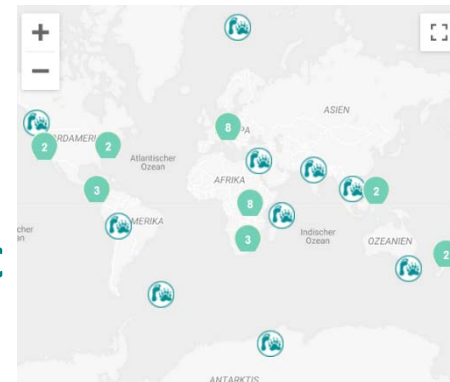
# Aim and methodology

## Aim of the handbook:

- Present best practice examples of ecotourism and conservation in key areas of concern that are relevant to Slovakia
- Provide practical testimonies and experience
- Highlight approaches, tools and recommendations for Slovakia.

## Methodology:

- Desktop research
- Qualitative interviews with eleven key LT&C members and partners





# Support of LT&C to Aegis project

- Data and research component.
- Joint study tour to Slovakia, visiting three national parks and one protected landscape area.
- Practical handbook for Slovak partners.
- Best practice cases from LT&C-Examples (and beyond) of stakeholder engagement, financing mechanisms, products, certification and visitor services efforts that foster ecotourism development in national parks.



# Handbook - key messages

- Joint participatory bottom-up approach to sustainable ecotourism development.
- Tourism as tool for protected area financing, management and income generation for local communities.
- A staged approach to ecotourism development, as part of a multi-land use approach.
- People centered outlook - ecotourism is seen as an integral part of rural development.
- Careful planning, consideration of sustainability, health and safety standards and constant monitoring.
- Think outside the box and finding ways that provide benefits for all parties!



# CHAPTER 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

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**Base for success of the protected area/ ecotourism destination is:**

- Level of commitment, ownership and collaboration between stakeholders
- Proactive and people-centred multi-stakeholder approach with a neutral coordinator to form a Management Plan
- Tourism must be seen as one but not the only income source for local populations
- Visitor flow management



# Cooperation model at regional level between DMOs and National Park Authorities

## Stakeholder Map



Source: own depiction based on IUCN 2002

# CHAPTER 2: FINANCIAL MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

*Examples highlight the importance of a Multi-land use approach with ecotourism being a key source for financing a protected area/ ecotourism destination.*

## **Establishing an Ecotourism Fund**

- Establish a fund as 3rd party independent party in benefit of both the private and public sector
- Promote it as an ecotourism public and private sector cooperation
- Private sector and tourists funding needs to adapt an environmental conservation giving culture
- Survey to prove willingness to pay amongst private sector and tourists



# CHAPTER 2: FINANCIAL MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## Establishing an Ecotourism destination

1. Test ecotourism products on small scale (preferably on an already protected zone)
2. Evaluate approach and monitor progress closely
3. Adapt products if needed
4. Enlarge protected area and widen buffer zones



# CHAPTER 3: TOOLS FOR ECOTOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Limiting factors, such as governmental regulations, lack of training, etc.
- Strive towards ecotourism products that are:
  - Financially successful
  - Of benefit for the protected area and community in question,
  - Support conservation,
  - Provide jobs,
  - Raise awareness,
  - and funds for environmental protection.
- Importance of identifying the USP of a protected area destination and developing products in line with a specific theme to communicate an identity





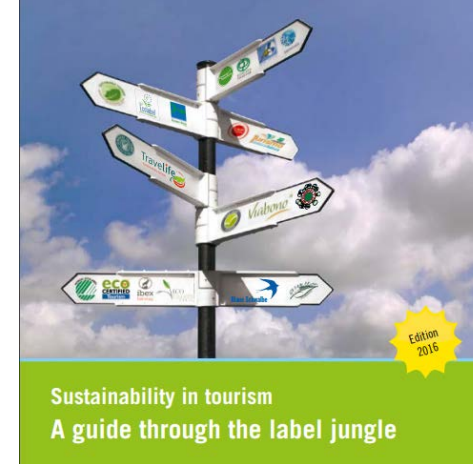
# CHAPTER 3: TOOLS FOR ECOTOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Involvement of local populations
- Environmental education is central to find pathways to integrate environmental awareness training for local communities as well as for the tourists,
- UNESCO heritage sites are considered high level tourism destinations, whereby the UNESCO status can act as a real tourism magnet for protected areas
- Beech forests in Slovakia show high potential
- Sustainable forestry model is recommended, together with the support of local agriculture
- Small villages need to be supported to strengthen their autonomy and offer in terms of touristic infrastructure



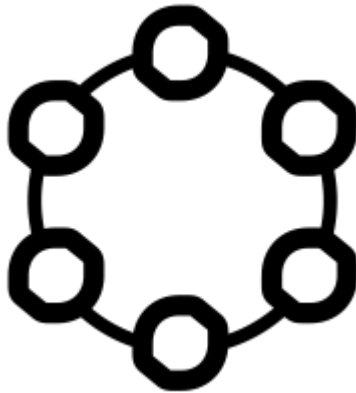
# CHAPTER 4: CERTIFICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDISATION ON REGIONAL AND DESTINATION LEVEL

- Measurable sustainability framework
- Independent seal of approval of dedication towards environmental protection and sustainable business practices for businesses close to protected areas
- Voluntary procedures that assess, audit and give written assurance that a facility, product, process or service meets specific standards (Spenceley and Bien, 2013)
- Label jungle
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)
- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA)



# CHAPTER 4: CERTIFICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDISATION ON REGIONAL AND DESTINATION LEVEL

- Strong governance and a collaboration across the destination
- Time-intensive process
- Lessons to be learnt:
  - Establish a vision early on, making it the organizing principle
  - Inventory and baseline assessment
  - Rally key leaders and influencers of the business community

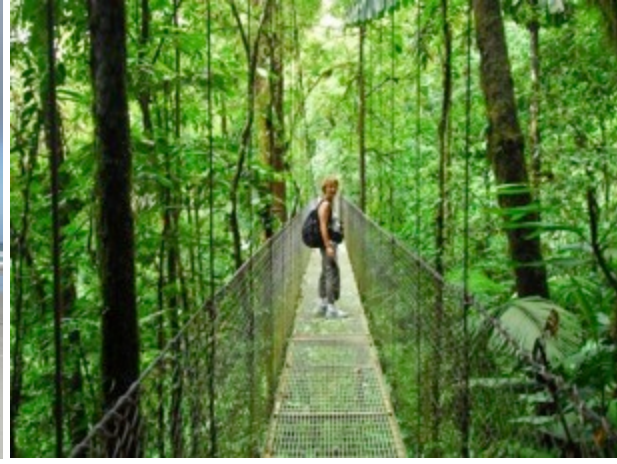


# CHAPTER 5: VISITOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY NATIONAL PARK AND NGOS AND COOPERATION SCHEMES WITH TOURIST GUIDES

- When it comes to ecotourism in protected areas, the most valuable incentive and knowledge provider is the tourist guide.
- Information centres are a tool for information transfer between the destination and the visitor.
- Information centres are important as a focal point for visitors to arrive at and learn about the NP.
- Information transfer is elevated when there is guiding available at the destination.
- There are great opportunities to involve young people in the guiding scheme.





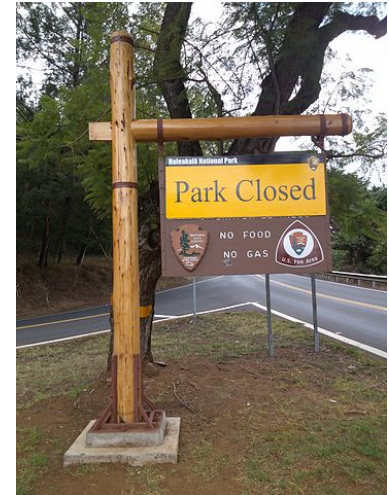


# Implications of COVID-19 on ecotourism and emergence of new trends

# Impacts of COVID-19 on ecotourism\*

- International tourist arrivals decreased by 56 per cent in the first months of the year 2020, with numbers in May down by 98 per cent
- 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk
- Micro, small and medium sized enterprises which employ a high share of women and young people are particularly hard hit
- Shutdown of tourism activities has meant months of no income for many protected areas and the communities living around them, many highly dependent on tourism for survival and with no access to social safety nets
- Before pandemic, the world's protected areas received roughly eight billion visits per year, generating approximately USD 600 billion per year in direct in-country expenditure and USD 250 billion per year in consumer surplus
- 21.8 million jobs in wildlife tourism (WTTC, 2019)

BE6897	Closed
EZY6955	Closed
BE6813	Cancelled
BA2939	Cancelled
LH6517	Cancelled
BE768	Closed
EP2257	



\*UN (2020): Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism; Parks Vol 26 May 2020

# Impacts of COVID-19 on ecotourism\*

- Threatens to reverse decades of conservation efforts as communities may turn to the over-exploitation of natural resources, either for their own consumption or to generate income
- Effectively and equitably managed networks of well-connected protected areas, are crucial to strengthen and repair the relationship between humans and the natural systems on which we depend
- Enormous potential of the sector in the preservation of biodiversity is apparent. 7 per cent of world tourism relates to wildlife tourism, a segment growing annually at about 3 per cent
- Limited connectivity and weak customer confidence limit recovery in international travel



\*UN (2020): Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism; Parks Vol 26 May 2020

# Impacts of COVID-19 on ecotourism\*

- Management effectiveness
- Loss of livelihoods
- Increased pressure on biodiversity and ecosystems
- Ranger activities had to be reduced in many countries, drone technology was introduced more actively in some places
- Reduced enforcement capacities due to cuts in salaries
- No hard data on poaching trends available yet, but first reports suggest:
  - Increased poaching (both subsistence and commercial) and illegal resource extraction in countries such as Cambodia, India, Costa Rica and southern and eastern Africa;
  - 10x increase in illegal logging is reported in Tunisia.
  - More cases of illegal extraction of forest resources, such as illicit logging and harvesting, in the first month of lockdown (514 cases) than in the entire previous year (483 cases) in Nepal

\*Parks Vol 26 May 2020



# Emerging opportunities

- Digitalization (e.g. exponential growth of Zoom)
- Partnerships (e.g. Future of Tourism)
- Resilience, regeneration
- Re-appreciation for nature, open space and wildlife observation
- Mountain tourism, nature, heritage, cultural and adventure tourism are predicted to grow rapidly over the next two decades (300 per cent increase in interest for walking and trekking activities in Sweden). It is estimated that global spending on ecotourism will increase at a higher rate than the average industry-wide growth
- Boom in gardening, camping
- Innovation and start-up competitions



Sources: Sverige Radio, "Kraftigt ökat intresse för vandring"; NY Times, "Move over, sustainable travel, regenerative travel has arrived,

# Trends guiding tourism recovery

Accelerating	Decelerating
Domestic, adventure, nature, beach	Long haul, unsustainable models
Wellness, luxury	Mass tourism
Camping, eco-pods, rentals	MICE, corporate business
Digital, mobile	Mega cruises, super jumbos
Families, Gen Z and Y	Baby boomers
Social issues balanced with environmental (63%)	Sustainable sourcing (26%)
Sustainability as key value proposition (76%)	Recycling (21%)

Source: Euromonitor via wtm Global Hub (2020)

# Virtual visits to protected areas

DISCOVERLATESTOBSESSIONS

QUARTZatWORK

CONTRIBUTORSGUIDESBECOME A MEMBER

Grand Teton

Sitka

Cedar Breaks

Golden Gate

Grant-Kohrs Ranch

Kenai Fjords

Wrangell - St. Elias

Yellowstone

LIVEMatarikiSTARGAZING

Takapō / Lake Tekapo

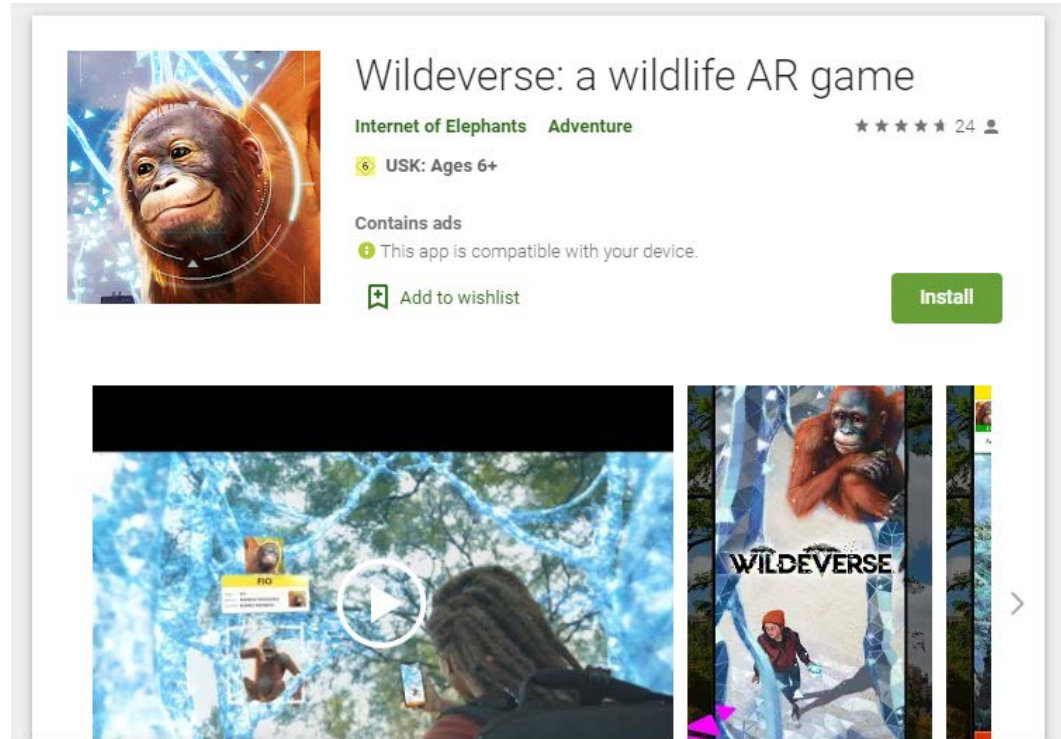
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TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020 AT 5:30 AM - 7:30 AM UTC+12

Matariki Stargazing Live 2020

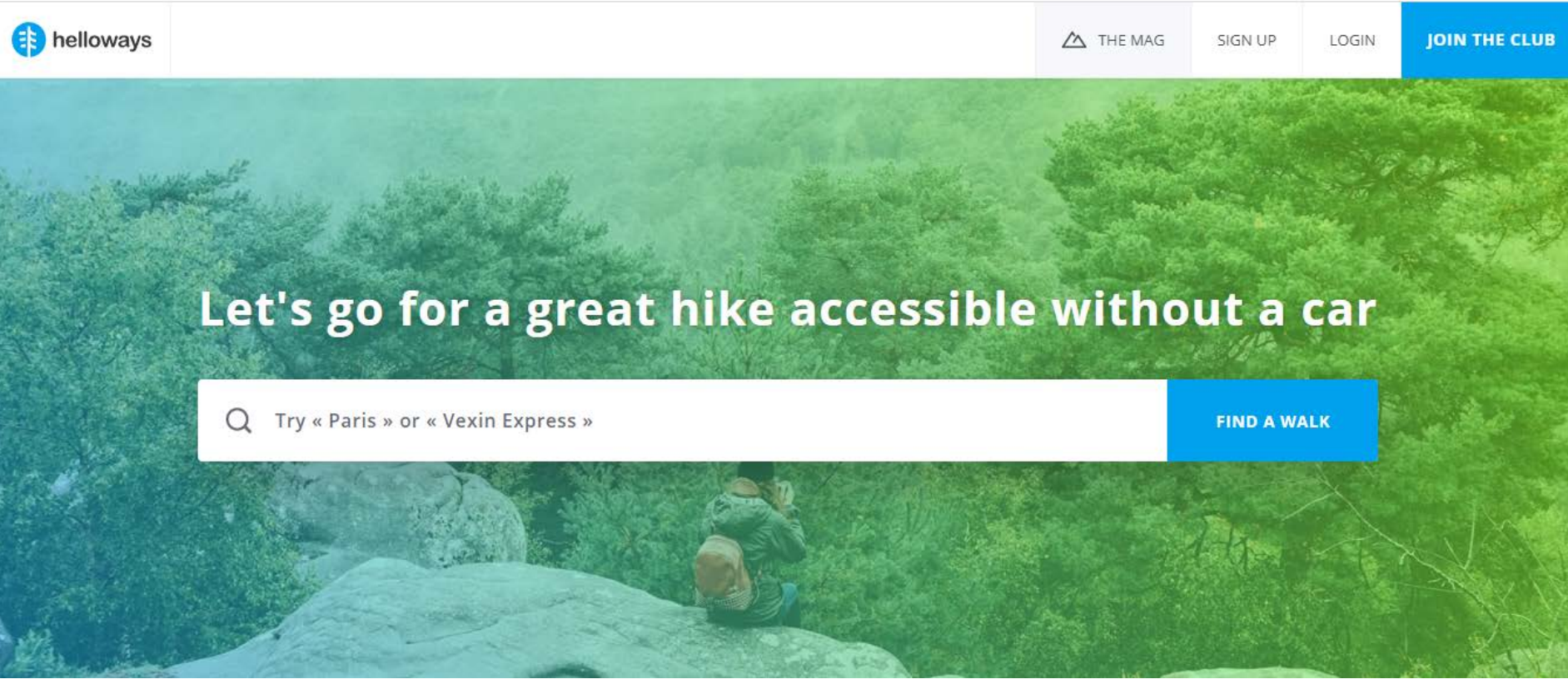
Online Event

# AR wildlife games





# Micro-adventures, staycations



# Pressure on certain protected areas

- Infrastructure challenges
- Hotspots
- Congestion in rural areas and residential areas
- Sanitation
- Littering
- Limited positive contribution to local economy
- Erosion close to paths
- Conflicts of interest between different protected area stakeholders



# Responses to managing increased visitation

- **Carrying capacity models:** Establishing and managing “maximum number of people that may visit a protected area at the same time, without causing (i) destruction of the physical, economic and sociocultural environment, and (ii) an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors’ satisfaction”\*
- **Limits of acceptable change:** Degree of change or impact that will be tolerated for a protected area. Preliminary process of defining the desired resource conditions and the consequent actions necessary to maintain or achieve them. LAC focuses on the impacts and requires assessment, analyses, action.\*
- **Standards of quality:** minimum acceptable condition or indicator variables

\*1: Leung, Yu-Fai, Spenceley, Anna, Hvenegaard, Glen, and Buckley, Ralf (eds.) (2018). Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 27, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 120 pp.

2: Aquatic Life Lab: <http://www.aquaticlifelab.eu/5-5-carrying-capacity-and-limits-of-acceptable-change/>

# Virtual visitor flow management

## AUSFLUGS-TICKER OBERBAYERN

Startseite → Ausflugs-Ticker

AKTIV SEIN

GENIESSEN

ERLEBEN



BUCHEN

KARTE

SERVICE

SUCHE

Startseite ▶ Erleben ▶ Urlaub in Corona-Zeiten ▶ [Digitaler Tagesplaner](#)

**Nichtiges vernachlässigen auf der Alm**

Wer den Spätsommertag heute in den Bergen nutzt, bitte achtet auf folgende einfachen Grundregeln - dann klappt's auch auf der Alm :-):

- Bleib bitte auf den beschilderten Wegen!
- Nimm bitte Deinen Müll wieder mit nach Hause!
- Die Almflächen sind kein Spielplatz, kein Streichelzoo und auch kein Zeltplatz!
- Der Tag gehört Dir, die Nacht den Tieren!
- Leine Deinen Hund an und lass ihn nur in Notsituationen frei laufen!

Nehmt Rücksicht und bleibt entspannt!

0 • Teilen • Kommentieren

Sep. 05 06:00

**So wird der Samstag...**

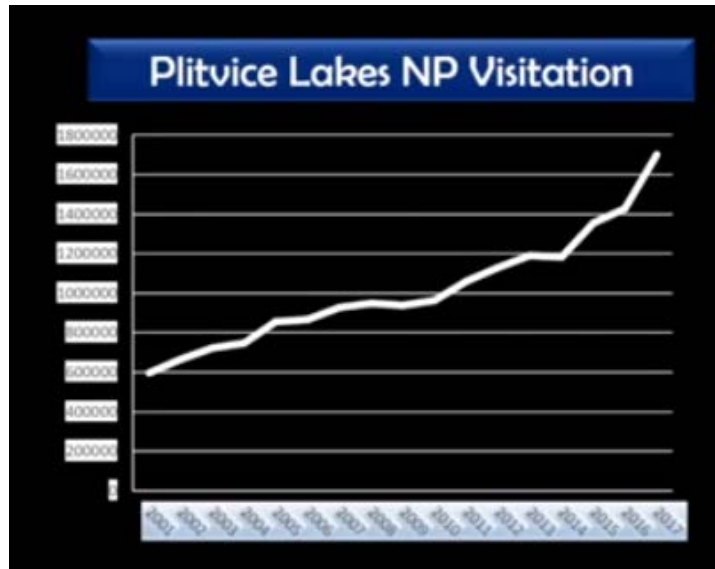
Am Samstag erwartet uns wunderschönstes Spätsommerwetter mit bestem Ausflugs- und sogar nochmal Badewetter!

**Bitte beachtet bei der Planung eures heutigen Ausflugs:**

- Es ist mit erhöhter Verkehrsbelastung zu rechnen - da in Bayern die Schulferien enden, ist auch mit Rückreiseverkehr auf der Autobahn zu rechnen. **Also: entspannt bleiben, ein bisschen Zeit einplanen oder sich einfach mit der BRB am**

# Over-visitation of iconic parks

- Plitvice National Park, Croatia

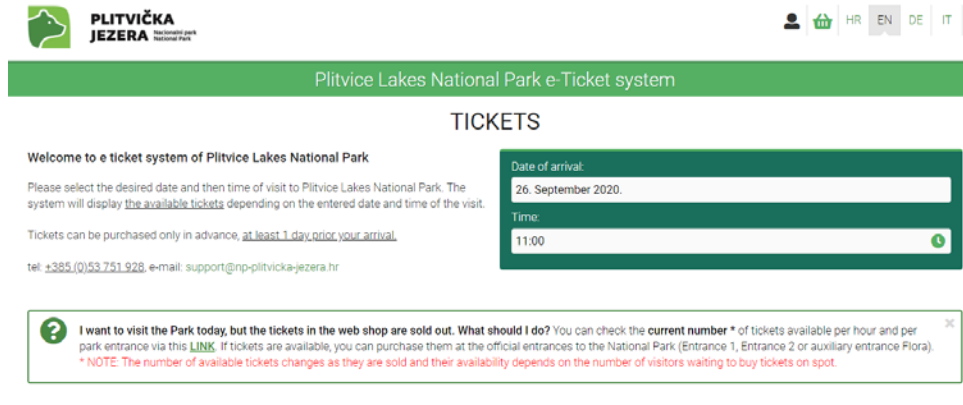


Source: McCool (2018):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKxWV\\_QNChA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKxWV_QNChA&feature=youtu.be)



# If you don't understand your visitors, you won't know how to manage them

- Looking at the nature of the problem – define vision of public use (what do visitors come away with?)
- One possible solution: online booking system, revised visitation programmes



The screenshot shows the Plitvice Lakes National Park e-Ticket system website. At the top, there is a logo for "PLITVIČKA JEZERA" and a navigation bar with icons for a user, a shopping cart, and language options (HR, EN, DE, IT). Below the logo, the text "Plitvice Lakes National Park e-Ticket system" is displayed. The main heading is "TICKETS". A welcome message states: "Welcome to e ticket system of Plitvice Lakes National Park. Please select the desired date and then time of visit to Plitvice Lakes National Park. The system will display the available tickets depending on the entered date and time of the visit. Tickets can be purchased only in advance, at least 1 day prior your arrival." Below this, contact information is provided: "tel: +385 (0)53 751 928, e-mail: support@np-plitvicka-jezera.hr". A form for booking is visible, with fields for "Date of arrival:" (26. September 2020.) and "Time:" (11:00). A green button with a white arrow is next to the time field. At the bottom, a green box contains a question mark icon and text: "I want to visit the Park today, but the tickets in the web shop are sold out. What should I do? You can check the current number \* of tickets available per hour and per park entrance via this LINK. If tickets are available, you can purchase them at the official entrances to the National Park (Entrance 1, Entrance 2 or auxiliary entrance Flora). \* NOTE: The number of available tickets changes as they are sold and their availability depends on the number of visitors waiting to buy tickets on spot."

## Approaches to visitor management

Increase supply

Harden sites

Educate visitors

Marketing

Regional approach

Temporary redistribution

Limitation of use

Source: McCool (2018):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKxWV\\_QNChA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKxWV_QNChA&feature=youtu.be)

Plitvice Lake National Park Management Plan

# Thank you Ďakujem



[www.LTandC.org](http://www.LTandC.org)