

Child and Youth Educational Tourism in Rural Areas



NATIONAL TOURISM
ORGANISATION
of SERBIA

Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development
a joint UN programme in Serbia



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What Is Tourism?



“There is no better way to learn about a new culture than to experience it first-hand. Tourism offers a wonderful connecting thread between visitor and host community. It promotes dialogue and interaction. Such a contact between people of different backgrounds is the very foundation for tolerance. In a world

struggling for peaceful coexistence, tourism can build bridges and contribute to peace.”

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his letter addressed to the World Tourism Organization on World Tourism Day, September 27th 2011.

What Is Rural Tourism?



Rural tourism (Lat. rus, ruris – the country, countryside) enables us to leave the urban environment and enjoy natural beauty, agricultural diversity, tranquillity and the cultural richness of small towns; to find relief from the pressures of an urban lifestyle, in activities ranging from hiking, mountaineering and adventure tours, through experiencing the local cuisine, language and customs, to horseback riding, fishing and bird-watching.

Rural tourism includes different types of in-country tourism, as well as other tourism models realized in rural areas, such as sports or medical tourism, educational travelling, artistic and cultural tourism, ethnic and eco-tourism. Rural tourism offers a mixture of activity and passivity, fun and education, modernity and tradition.

One essential aspect of rural tourism is the tourists' contact with a local populace offering kindness, hospitality and warmth, making the tourists eager to return.

What Is Child and Youth Tourism?

Although the category of child and youth tourism is not strictly defined in Serbia as a separate tourism category, and bearing in mind that the age ranges of children and youth vary considerably between different national and international institutions, child and youth tourism may be broadly defined as tourism that addresses the needs of a heterogeneous beneficiary group aged between three and thirty years of age. Children and youth in this age range are highly valuable visitors who,

within the parameters of what tourism can offer, expand their knowledge, develop personal skills (especially social and cultural ones), gain and broaden their experience, make contacts with their peers and make a substantial economic contribution to the places they visit.

Tourism for children and youth represents a segment of rural tourism, or, more precisely, one of the elements of the total package of rural tourism.

Relationship between Tourism and Education

Every tourist trip represents an act of gaining knowledge. By travelling, people familiarize themselves with new landscapes, populations, languages, cultures and customs.

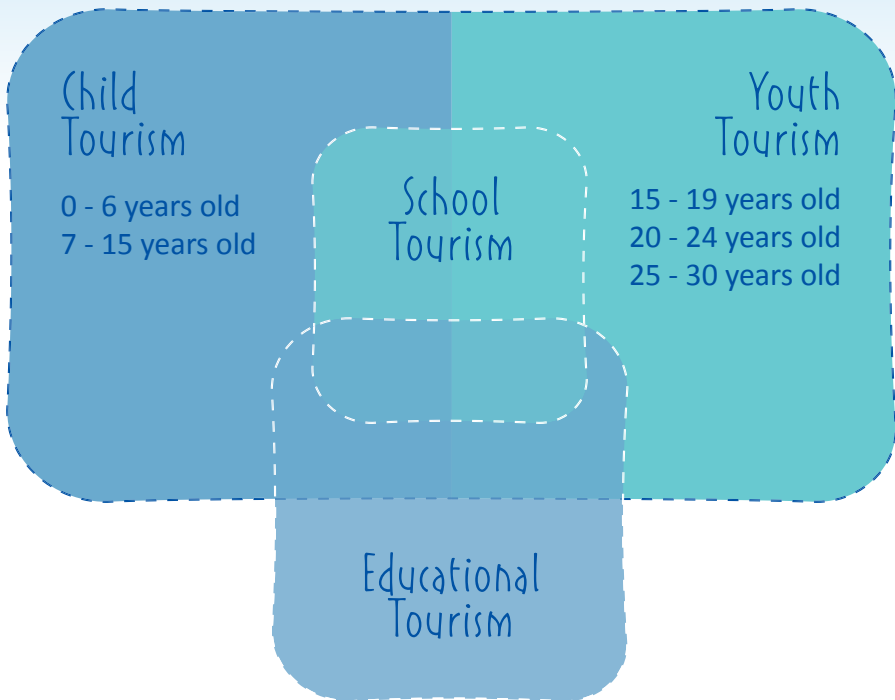
However, the didactic purpose of tourism may be even more pronounced, thus promoting education and improving the quality of education for children and youth.

Tourism aimed at gaining concrete knowledge through designed programmes may be called educational tourism. It represents a highly important aspect of child and youth tourism. The models that we propose further on in this document belong to this particular branch of tourism.



The Structural Schema of Child and Youth Tourism

In accordance with the given definition of the term child and youth tourism, a structural schema of the system for this branch of tourism could be:



The schema clearly shows that school and educational tourism are the sub-categories of child and youth tourism which can overlap, but not necessarily, since

educational also process happens out of the school system. On the other hand, educational tourism can cover different ages.



Services in Child and Youth Tourism

The services required in child and youth tourism are those that provide children and youth with the opportunity to investigate and acquaint themselves with cultural and historical contents and facilities, to gain and broaden their knowledge, improve their health, perfect their skills and acquire new ones, participate in events that give them a sense of self-fulfilment, get to know new places, customs and natural environments, establish contacts, as well as to develop network of collaborators and friends.

Simultaneously, child and youth tourism services contribute to a sense of increased understanding and cooperation among youth from different surroundings and states, as much as they promote tourist, educational, cultural, natural and other resources of different communities and states.

Services in child and youth tourism have their material and non-material characteristics, both of them equally important for their successful development.



Characteristics of Services in Child and Youth Tourism

Material
Characteristics

Quality

Non-material
Characteristics

- Form/model
- Formal organizers
- Programme concept and aims
- Service providers – contents/price ratio
- Performance standards
- Realization effects

- Safety
- Environment
- Respect
- Ability
- Hospitality
- Cordiality
- Convenience
- Cooperation

Realization of Services in Child and Youth Tourism

In accordance with an approach oriented towards the age categories of beneficiaries, tourist services could adopt two basic approaches:

Realization of services as a part of a diverse tourist package, outside the formal education system

Should address the needs, interests and wishes of children and youth in all age groups and includes different types of services.



Realization of services within the formal education system (preschool, primary and secondary education)

Directly connected with the educational aims of the school curriculum, it contributes to the effectiveness of education itself, as well as to the overall development of children's personalities.



The Role of the School in Child and Youth Tourism

Schools can and should have a prominent place in the development of child and youth tourism, especially in improving the quality of the curriculum for school trips, residential outdoor schools and recreational education.

The involvement of village schools in the development of this type of tourism in rural areas is vital, since they could utilize their facilities,

which are often unused, to facilitate tourism for children and youth (for accommodation, creative workshops etc.). Teachers could create educational programmes to enable children and youth to acquire knowledge through workshops, teaching in nature, practical work etc. - all with help from the local populace.



Models



Child and youth tourism is likely to develop through different concepts and models. Each concept can be realized through different models developed in accordance with the characteristics and specialities of each environment and local community. The models are developed by service providers, and by other exponents and implementers of child and youth tourism (schools, local government, tourist organizations, households in tourism etc.) in accordance with the characteristics of the specific environment.

The range and scope of the models depend on their potential, as well as on the abilities of the implementers themselves. Further on in this document, you can find some of the models that could be developed in the rural parts of Serbia. They represent basic framework concepts for the development of child and youth tourism, and each of them includes an educational component. It is important that within these tourism models, children and youth acquire different skills, often unaware of the fact that they have been learning since this education happens through fun activities.

Each of the models listed may include the activities itemized here, but this is not essential; the content of models is sure to vary depending on what the destination has to offer. Furthermore, models may be combined in order to create a destination which offers a multitude of contents and activities. Each model can offer learning in line with the official school curriculum, combined with the acquisition of skills and experiences unrelated to the curriculum.



Educational Farms



- This is a model for pre-school and primary school children and their families.
- Children can learn about country life and still have fun.
- They can learn about the life on a farm through farming activities (feeding animals, caring for plants and crops, making dairy products, following the process of making bread from grain to flour to the baked product,

watching bees, extracting honey etc.).

- They can also expand their knowledge of the countryside and country life on nearby farms, markets, in the workshop of country craftsmen where they can learn how to weave, make shoes or pottery.
- On these farms, children would be fed domestic produce only.

Eduainment Centres

- This model is aimed at preschool, primary and secondary school children and their families.
- It resembles the educational farm, but offers a somewhat wider range of activities that are not necessarily related to acquiring country life skills.
- In these centres children learn through practical work. For example: the knowledge of the world surrounding us is applied

in garden cultivation, growing fruit and vegetables; the knowledge of mathematics and physics is utilized in constructing a mini-cabin; linguistic knowledge is improved through researching local dialects and place names; art knowledge is utilized by preparing exhibitions, weaving or making ceramic objects, while music knowledge is developed by studying traditional instruments.



Various Rural Thematic Centres

This is for children and youth of all ages, but especially for youth. The possibilities include:

Rural art centres

- Love of art, and the talents that children and youth possess, are nurtured;
- Children may paint, sculpt, make useful objects and perfect their skills with the help of local artists;
- Art colonies may be organized in these centres;
- All the activities are organized close to nature.

Rural recycling centres

- Awareness of the importance of safeguarding the environment is raised through recycling;
- Art objects may be created out of objects meant for recycling, thereby nurturing creativity and ecological awareness.



Rural ecology centres

- Awareness of the importance of safeguarding nature, the importance of using renewable energy resources, decreasing pollution, etc. is raised;
- All the activities are nature-friendly, be it the making of concoctions and balms out of natural ingredients, preserving drinking water, making small wind generators, or demonstrating the potential of solar panels.

Rural adventure centres

- Children and youth are taught, through adventure, the skills of surviving in nature and natural laws;
- Activities in these centres promote both intellectual and corporal development, since most of them encourage physical activity, and they are integrated with nature and require natural materials (wood, stone etc.);
- Activities range from mountaineering, orienteering or learning to make fire to exploration of flora and fauna in order to survive in nature, or search for objects through solving riddles.



Discovery Centres



- These are for children and youth of all ages.
- They provide children and youth with opportunities to explore and learn through programmes with theoretical and practical components.
- Discovery Centres will have educational, as well as entertainment activities.
- Centres may consist of one or more buildings or facilities, and be equipped with the technical means necessary to implement the intended activities.
- They may organize activities related to archaeology or conservation, natural expeditions, historical or cultural explorations, science explorations and experiments.



Recreational Centres



- These are intended for children and youth of all ages, especially those aged 7 to 15.
- They may offer various sports and recreation activities, depending on the resources offered by the local environment.
- They could also offer different programmes for recovery, climate related treatments, rest and recreation.
- The possibilities include:
 - winter sports centre
 - water sports centre
 - forest adventure centre for extreme sports
- These centres should include both active and passive zones, since they also need to offer possibilities for rest, entertainment, learning and fun.



How to Establish and Develop Child and Youth Tourism Services ?

Preparation for the establishment and development of services for child and youth tourism may be divided into 3 phases:

1.

If you are interested in organizing child and youth tourism, it is necessary, as the first step, to consider the idea you seek to realize.

Then you need to analyze the possibilities for its realization, that is, to ascertain whether the need for such a service exists and the potentials, resources and facilities available for its realization. It is very important when processing the idea, to analyse its economic and financial impact on the local environment of both service provider and the potential beneficiaries. During this analysis, you need to establish whether similar services exist in your surroundings, and see their impact.

2.

In this phase prepare an outline of your proposed programme or project taking two aspects into account: the needs of the potential beneficiaries you seek to attract and the potential of the local environment.

If educational programmes are being organized, ensure they are harmonized with the prescribed aims and tasks of the concepts and models defined for particular age groups. If programmes for youth are envisaged, which are not directly related to the realization of a school curriculum, ensure the aims and contents are defined in line with those agreed for all the services in this rural tourism category.

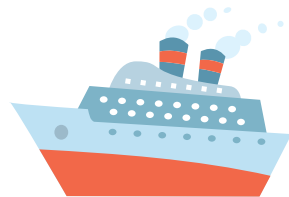
Proposed programmes must fulfil all the established characteristics of child and youth tourism services and be harmonized with all the regulations and norms pertaining to the realization of tourism services (valid regulations may be accessed through the links listed at the conclusion of this document).



3.

If you successfully realize all the steps in the first two phases, you have met all the preconditions to develop an organizational structure for the service and to initiate its implementation.

Simultaneously, you need to develop all the promotional activities. In order to secure and maintain the quality of service provision, it is necessary to constantly monitor and evaluate the service and thus detect the weaknesses and problems, as well as the ways of overcoming them.



Tips



Use your resources the best way possible!

Use everything available to you! The very thing that may seem mundane and trivial to you, may constitute someone else's unique experience. Furthermore, the skills and knowledge that you find common in your environment might prove to be invaluable to others.

Use your resources both traditionally and originally! Combine tradition and modernity! The combination of experience and innovation always proves to be successful.

Be creative!

Set your imagination free! Try to be original and invent programmes that would make young tourists want to come back for more.

Cooperate!

When you use the potential offered by other individuals and institutions in the neighbourhood, your offer will become more attractive.

Develop your knowledge and your service!

Constant improvement of quality is the only way to success.



Proposal for Labelling



Although child and youth tourism in Serbia is not defined as a separate tourism category and no official system of marking destinations, possibilities or contents exists, below is a proposal as to how it could be done. *



Child and Youth Tourism



Availability of accommodation



Availability of catering



Possibility to put up a tent



Accessibility to the persons with disability



Suitability for school groups



Suitability for family vacation



Exploring nature (landscape, environment)



Exploring flora and fauna



Exploring farm life



Exploring traditional country life and rural cultural heritage (myths, legends, traditional games, dances and skills)



Studying ecology



Availability of creative workshops



Availability of library



Vicinity of natural and cultural sites (national parks, monuments etc.)



Availability of hiking and biking treks



Availability of sport facilities



Horseback riding

*this labelling system is adopted within the Joint United Nations Programme „Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development“

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