

# Coastal Hiking Trail

## Croatia



### Concept Idea

- ◆ A long distance hiking trail along the Croatian coast
  - ◆ Development of appropriate infrastructure
  - ◆ Marketing and public relations
  - ◆ Integration into the European long distance hiking trail network
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- ◆ Signal and symbol for the collaboration of Central/Western Europe and South East Europe
  - ◆ A project that leads to sustainable development  
Local Agenda 21 - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) United Nations

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# 1. Project Summary

## 1.1. Project Idea

The aim of the project is to develop further a coastal hiking trail along the Croatian coastal mountains. The trail will consist of already existing trails (standardly marked). The route will allow hikers to walk from one place (that offers appropriate touristic infrastructure like accommodation and catering facilities) to the next one in not more than one day.

At public transportation stops (bus, train, ferry), boards with information on the *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* will be placed in coastal towns and in the interior of the country. Therefore, several stops can be used by the hikers.

The Sentier de Grande Randonnée (GR) in France shows that a long-distance hiking trail can be realized with relatively low expenses. The *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* could be integrated into the long distance trail E6 (Scandinavia-Greece) and “normal” hikers should be able to walk the route without any greater alpinistic difficulties.

## 1.2. Sustainability

The project will lead to sustainable development based on social and environmentally friendly tourism. It will generate economic benefits thanks to partnerships. As a holistic project it will link the different aspects of a sustainable development in tourism.

Tourism is an important source of income and generates employment. As many parts as possible of the project will be implemented on site. Even in the development phase the local population will profit primarily from the value creation.

Hiking is one of the most environmentally friendly leisure activities and gaining popularity in Central Europe, evolving into a mega trend.

## 1.3. Solidarity and Cooperation

Project partners: local, regional, national as well as Swiss actors (as part of Switzerland’s contribution to the enlargement of the European Union).

The content of the *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* and its implementation will be developed by the local population and involved organisations together with the other actors of the project.

The project will raise awareness for the region and the landscape. Solidarity and cultural exchange between tourists and local population will be enhanced.

## 1.4. Via Dinarica

The Via Dinarica is an existing long distance trail that extends from Albania to Slovenia. The largest part of the trail slices diagonally from southeast to northwest. More information: <https://trail.viadinarica.com/en/>.

The *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* connects Southeast Europe to the rest of Europe and has therefore symbolic character for a prosperous future. It symbolizes the connection between humans and nature, and between humans.

## 2. Content of the Project

### 2.1. Trails

The project aims to create a safe and secure long distance hiking trail from Rijeka to Dubrovnik. If possible, in the north it will connect to the European long distance hiking trail E6 (coming from Slovenia) and is connected and based on the Via Dinarica.

The following regions might be appropriate:

Long-distance trail Premužićeva staza (54 km): goes from the mountain hut Zavižan in North Velebit to Baške Oštarije (passing the Alan-region). This trail can serve as example for all other sections/parts.

Paklenica-Nationalpark: offers several activities for hikers, with a variety of routes.

Hotels and guest houses can be found in Starigrad, located directly at the coastal street Rijeka-Zadar (with buses frequently passing). In the Paklenica canyons all characteristics of the Velebit Mountains can be found.

Mountain massif Biokovo: offers many hiking trails. It was declared a nature park thanks to its biodiversity, geomorphology and the scenic beauty.

Some stages of the route might lead to some islands near the coast (due to bad conditions of the trails on the mainland or because they are especially attractive for hiking).

In the north Krk, Pag Pašman Ugljan appear to be suitable, in Central Dalmatia Brač or Hvar, and in the south the peninsula Pelješac and the island Korčula.

### 2.2. Development of an appropriate infrastructure

Where it is possible, existing infrastructure, signalization and accommodation will be used. Environmentally and culturally friendly infrastructure is preferably used. Where not yet existing, the following infrastructure will be build:

- Central contact point: Office, marketing etc.
- Simple accommodation and catering facilities
- Direct marketing shops for local products
- Expansion of public transport
- Additional touristic offers
- Theme trails
- Hiking guides and hiking maps

Good conditions can be found in the national parks Paklenica and Biokovo (Makarska-Riviera) or partly in the national park Nordvelebit. In addition, every region has different requirements regarding hiking tourism.

A big part of the mountain huts is either only opened in the summer season or not at all. These are often self-catering huts that do not have the same standards (not all have drinking water). For further information see <https://trail.viadinarica.com/en/> or [www.hps.hr/info/planinarske-kuce/](http://www.hps.hr/info/planinarske-kuce/).

The project provides know-how and if needed financial resources for investment. After starting the operating phase all offers and activities will be self-supporting.

### 2.3. Marketing and Public Relations

The label *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* serves as image advertising for the tourism destination Croatia. The Corporate Design that includes a logo and a slogan will target new guest segments for the off-season and rural areas.

The following information and communication material can be suggested (selection):

- Advertising material: Flyers, brochures, magazines, etc.

- Hiking guide, incl. GPS
- Website and electronic newsletter
- Digital applications for smartphones

The following marketing instruments can be suggested (selection):

- Long-term media activities, at least twice a year
- Offers for hiking holidays in collaboration with tourism companies and hiking providers of European countries
- Merchandising using the logo *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia*: T-shirts, sticker, post cards etc.

### 3. Background and Starting Point

#### 3.1. Hiking in Croatia

Hiking in Istria and Dalmatia has been an inside tip for some time due to unspoilt nature and the fact that there is no mass tourism. Ocean as well as mountains are close by. In the catchment area of Istria and Dalmatia and therefore along the coastal hiking trail there are at least 5 national or nature parks.

Information on national parks:

- [www.kroati.de/kroatien-infos/nationalparks-kroatien.html](http://www.kroati.de/kroatien-infos/nationalparks-kroatien.html)
- [www.kroatischeadria.de/nationalparks](http://www.kroatischeadria.de/nationalparks)

Three examples of information sources about hiking tourism:

- Croatian mountaineer association: [www.hps.hr/info/planinarske-kuce](http://www.hps.hr/info/planinarske-kuce)
- <https://trail.viadinarica.com/en/>
- Long-distance hiking trail Velebit: [www.hps.hr/english/velebit-hiking-trail](http://www.hps.hr/english/velebit-hiking-trail)

#### 3.2. Hiking Trails and Hiking Literature

Currently, a lot of hiking literature exists that informs about the current hiking trail network and partly about the infrastructure.

Alan Čaplar is the author of the comprehensive hiking guide *Planinarski vodič po Hrvatskoj*, (Zagreb, 2011). It comprises more than 600 pages including almost every possible hiking trail in Croatia and many touristic tips and maps.

Željko Poljak wrote the hiking guide *Hrvatske planine*. It lists many of the existing and awarded hiking trails.

In German: Mainly literature of the publishing house Rother: Reto Solèr, *Dalmatia* (Rother, 2015).

In English: Hiking guide *Walking in Croatia – Day and Multi-Day Routes* (R. Abraham, 2010, Cicerone)

Croatia: Maps are of different quality. In the national parks and in the Velebit mountains the Smand-maps are the best material to use (scale 1:30 000). Astroida has hiking maps (scale 1:25000) and tourist offices have diverse, but not homogenous material.

#### 3.3. Natural Environment

Croatia is ideal for a coastal hiking trail because of the topography and geographical location. The coastal landscape is only partly built on. A sound and attractive environment is the basis for sustainable tourism.

Only few regions in Europe have so many national and nature parks to offer on such a small space. Furthermore, cities like Pula, Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, Korčula or Hvar complement the nature adventure.

The Dinaric Alps extend from Rijeka (in the North of Croatia) to Dubrovnik in the South. Thanks to the Mediterranean climate the conditions in spring and autumn are ideal for hiking tourism.

## 4. Integration of the Project

### 4.1. Integration into European Long Distance Trail

A Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia that connects Slovenia with Montenegro can be perfectly integrated into the European long distance trail E6 (starts in Sweden and ends in Greece). The stage planned in former Yugoslavia was postponed due to the war.



Source: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europäische\\_Fernwanderwege](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europäische_Fernwanderwege)

Many European countries provide good infrastructure for hiking: Switzerland is known to have the best integrated system. France and Italy offer well developed long distance trails: Sentiers de grande randonnée GR ([www.gr-infos.com](http://www.gr-infos.com)) or Grande Traversata delle alpi GTA ([www.gtaweb.de](http://www.gtaweb.de)).

The coastal hiking trail Cinque Terre in Italy can serve as example: It attracts many tourists in the off-season and is very famous in all of Europe.

Other examples are the „Pembrokeshire Coastal Trail“ in Wales or the Lycian Way (Turkish Mediterranean coast).

The European Ramblers' Association provides information about European hiking trails.

### 4.2. Sustainability in Tourism

The promotion of a more nature based tourism is an important part of a sustainable development. The following points will be part of a list of criteria for sustainable hiking tourism in relation to a coastal hiking trail Croatia.

#### Economic Sustainability

- Creation and retention of employment in tourism
- Conservation and promotion of agriculture
- Direct marketing of local products
- Greater added value

#### Ecologic Sustainability

- Environmentally friendly tourism
- Conservation and valorisation of landscape

- Direct marketing reduces transport distances
- Promotion of arrival and departure with public transportation
- Citizen buses
- Sensitization of tourists and service providers for ecological aspects

#### Social Sustainability

- Cultural exchange between tourists and population
- Enhancement and promotion of rural environment
- Stop of rural migration
- Enhancement of Croatian cultural assets

For tourists and service providers a codex with guidelines will be published. The criteria are based on:

- Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), [www.gstccouncil.org/en/gstc-criteria/](http://www.gstccouncil.org/en/gstc-criteria/)
- Agenda 2030, in particular Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 12 and 14<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Project Organization

### 5.1. Project Partners in Croatia

Project partners in Croatia could be local, regional and national authorities:

- Croatian mountaineering associations
- Croatian governmental tourism und environmental programs
- Croatian regional tourism associations
- Croatian NGOs, national park administration, landowners
- Via Dinarica: <https://trail.viadinarica.com/en/>
- Regional and local industry/business

These will realize projects elements together with the Swiss partners and be responsible for the management from the operating phase onwards.

### 5.2. Project Partners in Croatia

Potential project partners in Croatia are:

Via Dinarica Croatia Alan Čaplar
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Palmotićeveva 27, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia Phone +385 91 51 41 740 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:info@viadinarica.hr">info@viadinarica.hr</a>

<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

Institute for tourism Zagreb Zoran Klarić
<a href="http://www.iztzg.hr/">http://www.iztzg.hr/</a>
Institut za turizam Vrhovec 5, Zagreb 10000, Croatia Phone +385 1/ 3909-666 E-Mail: Zoran.Klaric@iztzg.hr

### 5.3. Project Partners in Switzerland

Association “Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas” KNEB Reto Solèr
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#### Profile

Reto Solèr is an expert for 25 years in sustainable development of mountain regions and is specialized in the touristic valorisation of nature and culture, and sustainable mobility. He was long-time director and president of CIPRA Switzerland (2000 to 2014) and is currently leading the campaign "Respect to Protect - Snow Sports and Respect" and "Respect Wildlife" on behalf of the Federal Office for the Environment.

Further References: Project management of valorisation such as “Water world Göschenen” or „Soft mobility in Alpine destinations“, publication of hiking books such as Dalmatia (Rother, 2015) or Uri-Gotthard (Rotpunkt 2007). On an international level, he has carried out projects for transfer of know-how in Slovenian and is currently involved in sustainable tourism projects in Bulgaria.

#### History

About 17 years ago, Natalie Stimac and Reto Solèr presented a concept for a *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia* to Croatian representatives of tourism. Due to other priorities in the development of Croatia, the project was postponed. As a result, a hiking guide for Istria was published (Rother) and edited by the author Marcus Stöckl in the year 2014. Reto Solèr is the author of the hiking guide Dalmatia, published in 2015 by Rother.

#### Swiss Contribution

Croatia joined the European Union on July 1, 2013 as the 28th member state. As Swiss contribution to the enlargement of the Union, Switzerland supports different cooperation projects in Croatia. The support aims at strengthening the economic and political relations of Switzerland and the new member state in areas such as security, environment, health and development of the private sector. In this context, the project initiators decided to realize the coastal hiking path in a second attempt.



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Potential further project partners in Switzerland:

- Swiss hiking trails: [www.wandern.ch](http://www.wandern.ch)
- Switzerland Mobility: [www.schweizmobil.ch](http://www.schweizmobil.ch)

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This short description outlines the idea of a *Coastal Hiking Trail Croatia*. The specification of the idea, the definition of the partners and their roles, the project concept and the budgeting and funding will be developed in a next step together with project partners in Croatia.