



Sustainable Transport / Tourism Offers

IPA PP6: Elaboration of the regional tourism facilities and opportunities offered alongside the route

Title:	CULTURAL HERITAGE BIKE TOUR IN STRUMICA MICRO REGION
Partner:	<i>PROMO IDEA - STRUMICA, IPA PP6</i>
Overview	
Country:	<i>Republic of Macedonia (NUTS1)</i>
Region:	<i>Republic of Macedonia (NUTS2)/ South-East region (NUTS3)</i>
Short description:	<i>Cycling tourists who are coming to the South-East region of the Republic of Macedonia are offered exciting bike tour for exploring the cultural heritage sites in Strumica micro region alongside the sub-section 4 of the ICT route (churches, monasteries, archaeological sites etc.). This offer includes mini-bus rented by the operator, bike rental, transport of the tourists from the capital city of Skopje to the main attractions (without access by rail) and their accommodation in hotels in Strumica.</i>
Objectives	<i>To offer the cyclists and cycling tourists exciting bike tour in the area of Strumica micro region that integrates and facilitates the visit to main cultural heritage sites alongside the route.</i>
Target groups	<i>Cycling tourists from the region of the capital city of Skopje (mainly regular and recreational cyclists on weekends) with middle and high income and foreign tourists arriving in Skopje (via bus, rail or plane) who are interested in cultural heritage. Also cycling tourists from Thessaloniki, Greece and its wider region and foreign tourists arriving in Thessaloniki (via bus, rail or plane) who want to explore the cultural heritage are considered.</i>
Phase	<i>The offer is in a conceptual phase. Contacts have been established with hotels in Strumica, tourist guides as well as with tourist agencies in Strumica. The future offer will contain: transportation of the tourists and their bikes by mini-bus to the tourist attractions, luggage transport, bike rental services, accommodation, food and beverages, and tour guide.</i>
Operator, contact	<i>Possible "operator" of the "offer" is the Travel Agency Laguna travel – Strumica.</i>



	<p><i>Further information:</i> <i>Tourist Agency Laguna travel – Strumica; Mob.: +389 78 291 370;</i> http://lagunatravel.mk</p>
Cost and benefits	<p><i>The rental services (the bus, the trailer, the bikes, the guide), the accommodation and food services will be subcontracted. If we estimate that at the beginning there will be one booked offer in March, April and October, and 2 booked offers per month in the period May - September, the profit in terms of agency provision will be cca 2.100 Euro. The initial investment is estimated at 1.000 Euro for printed materials, renting of stands at 2 events and web hosting and up-dating. This means that the initial investment can be recovered already during the first year. It is therefore worthwhile to consider the option of buying a trailer instead of renting it.</i></p> <p><i>Concerning the additional benefits, it is expected that the number of cycling tourists and leisure cyclists will increase as the infrastructure and services along the ICT improve. Besides the estimated profit of the operator, this offer will bring additional profit for the bike rental company, the tourist guides as well as for the hotels and restaurants. In terms of indirect revenue, it brings benefits to the tourist attractions (e.g. archaeological sites, museums, galleries, events, etc.) and there is a possibility to sale complementary products (e.g. local products, souvenirs, etc.).</i></p>



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Marketing Analysis I.	
"Product" - detailed description of the services	<p><i>This package (which will be promoted on the operator's web site) offers a cultural heritage bike experience along sub-section 4 of the Iron Curtain Trail in the Strumica micro region. The itinerary will last 3 days and will cover almost 90 km. The operator will offer to groups of tourists (minimum 8 persons) an itinerary who will include:</i></p> <p><i>Day 1: Skopje – Strumica (6 km)</i> <i>Arrival at Skopje airport (optional from the main bus or the central railway station). The operator will organize transfer with minibus from Skopje Airport to Strumica. Arrival in Strumica and accommodation in the hotel. Tourists will get their rented bikes at the hotel in Strumica. Accompanied by a local guide, the tourists will start the cultural heritage tour with the visit of the Museum in Strumica, the Church "St. 15 Tiberiopolis hyeromartyrs" and the Gallery of icons. After visit of these sites, the tourists will drive to the hotel. Dinner at hotel. Overnight in Strumica.</i></p> <p><i>Day 2: Strumica (45 km)</i> <i>Breakfast at the hotel. The tourists can enjoy all day tour visiting cultural heritage sites in Strumica micro region accompanied by a local guide. The drive is on an asphalt road and a little bit hilly in its final part. The tour continues with a round trip of 25 km and visit to the beautiful medieval monasteries from XI century in Vodocha and Veljusa. After that comes the most challenging part which involves uphill drive to the restaurant "Complex Carevi Kuli" (7,5 km) where the lunch will be served. Tourists will enjoy the famous local dishes and nice view of Strumica valley. After the lunch break will drive on asphalt and gravel roads and pay a visit to the city fortress "Tsar's towers" which is on a distance of app. 2,5 km. After relaxing sightseeing of this extraordinary place the last part of the drive involves downhill drive of app. 10 km to the hotel. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight in Strumica.</i></p> <p><i>Day 3: Strumica – border Novo Selo - Skopje (39 km)</i> <i>Breakfast at hotel. Bicycle drive on the local asphalt road Kuklish - Svidovica – Bansko (13,5 km). In the immediate vicinity of Bansko the</i></p>



	<p><i>tourists can visit Roman bath dating back to III century, which is very well preserved and hear more about its history directly from our tourist guide. Lunch will be served in the restaurant "Podgorski an". Afterwards the lunch break the route continues along the slopes of Belasica mountain (13,7 km). The drive on the section from Mokrino until Smolare is on a gravel road f app. 2,6 km. The tour continues with a drive on a good asphalt road in direction to the state border with Bulgaria. Near the border, the archaeological site Golema Trpeza is located (1,2 km). After the visit of the site and the short break, the tourists will be transferred with the minibus to Skopje.</i></p>
"Place" – market analysis	<p><i>This offer will be bookable from March to October when the weather conditions are more favorable. In order for this offer to be profitable for the operator, it is necessary to gather a group of at least 8 cyclists. If the group is eventually bigger, the price will be cheaper. At present the Iron Curtain Trail has not been included in any offers of the Macedonian tour-operators. So, this offer/package can be considered as first of this kind.</i></p>



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Marketing Analysis II.	
Price	<i>We estimate that the price of all services included in the offer is 240 Euro per person, valid for groups of minimum 8 tourists. All entrances are included in the itinerary.</i>
Sales	<i>After analyzing the on-line offer, the tourists can get in touch with the operator by e-mail or phone, in order to express their agreement to purchase the services. The payment can be done via bank transfer after issuing an invoice.</i>
Promotion	<i>It is essential that the offer to be well promoted on-line, in a very attractive manner, both on the operator's website (with updated information and prices), but also at travel fairs (at national and international level (e.g. Thessaloniki in Greece)) and with printed materials (distributed in the hotels in the East and South-east region in Macedonia and in the capital city of Skopje, in the bike shops, in the tourist info centres, etc.). First, priority should be given to materials available on-line, because they are more quickly accessible and can be more easily updated.</i>



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Implementation plan I.	
Detailed description of the technical solution	<i>The mini-bus must have at least 8 seats + driver, must be equipped with air conditioning, luggage compartment, audio station with microphone, reclining chairs and GPS monitoring system. The trailer must be lightweight (750 kg) and must be equipped with professional bike carriers in order to transport at least 8 bikes. Also, the trailer should offer the possibility to lock the bikes individually and to be able to carry them without touching to avoid damage.</i>
Actions to take	<p><i>The operator will have to sign collaboration agreements for renting the mini-bus, the bicycle trailer and the bicycles, for the travel guide as well as for the accommodation and food services. The promotional activities are specified as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Design, printing and dissemination of printed materials;</i> <i>- Placing and promoting the offer on the web site of the operator;</i> <i>- Participation of the operator at the fairs and events in the country and abroad (identifying fairs and events, renting stands, preparing promotional materials, etc.).</i> <i>- Dissemination of printed materials to the national tourist agency for presentation at international tourism fairs.</i>



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Implementation plan II.	
Costs of development and operation	<p><i>For a tour that lasts three days and includes 8 people, the costs are: the mini-bus rental cost is 300 Euro (3 days x 100 Euro), the trailer rental cost is 100 Euro (for 3 days), 8 bicycle rental cost is 360 euro (8 bikes x 3 days x 15 Euro/day), renting a travel guide costs 150 euro (3 days x 50 Euro/day), the accommodation with half board (HB) costs is 576 euro (8 persons x 2 HB x 36 Euro), 2 additional lunches cost 192 Euro (8 persons x 2 lunches x 12 Euro). The travel agency commission will be 10%.</i></p> <p><i>The costs for the promotion activities are: Printed materials = 500 Euro; Placing of the tour on the website of the operator is for free; Renting stands at the fairs costs 400 Euro (2 events x 200 Euro/event).</i></p> <p><i>The total cost for the promotion activities is 1000 Euro for 13 tours in the 1st year (or cca 77 Euro/ offer): Printed materials = 500 Euro; Placing of the tour on the website of the operator is for free, but the web hosting of the web site is 100 Euro/ year; Renting stands at the fairs costs 400 Euro (2 events x 200 Euro/event).</i></p>
Time plan for the realization	<p><i>Signing of agreement for cooperation will be in the first two weeks. After that the operator will be place the offer on its website. Printed materials will be designed, printed and disseminated after one month. Afterwards they will be distributed to National Agency for tourism which participates at international tourism fairs. In the first 3 months the operator will promote the offer on at least 2 events.</i></p>
Stakeholders and organisation	<p><i>Main stakeholders will be the Travel Agency Laguna travel - Strumica. Local tourist guides, hotels and restaurants will also have an important role.</i></p>