



Beyond The Adriatic Coast

没时间旅游的旅游部长

A lower value added tax, more lifestyle programmes and new leisure facilities are part of Tourism Minister Veljko Ostojic's upcoming raft of measures – and pleasures – to welcome the world to Croatia's wonders

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Photo: Ministry of Tourism, Croatia

Croatia's new Tourism Minister Veljko Ostojic sounds like he needs a break.

Since assuming his duties last year, he has been criss-crossing the country in an attempt to visit all 21 counties by the end of this year, to better market the south-eastern European nation to the world.

When Croatia becomes a member of the European Union (EU) next year, half a billion EU citizens will be able to travel to Croatia without

immigration formalities. With backing from EU funds, Croatia would also be able to improve its tourism infrastructure and do more to attract European tourists. Ostojic wants the tourism industry and its 100,000-strong staff to be ready to welcome them.

"I haven't been on my summer vacation," he muses about how busy his schedule has been.

Croatia is fast becoming a popular destination for Europeans and Asians, and even scored a

cover-story stamp of approval from luxury travel magazine Condé Nast Traveler for its splendid wine, cuisine, culture and sights.

According to the Croatian Tourist Board, a record 9.8 million visitors were received in the first eight months of this year, mostly from Europe, but there has also been a marked increase in visitors from countries further away, namely China, Israel and South America.

However, Croatia is widely considered as an

ideal destination for summer and early autumn vacations – it is coastal country and the seaside lifestyle is a huge draw – but the rainy winters and bitter cold of the inland put most travellers off. This is a headache for Ostojic. He has been poring over ways to extend the country's tourist season, to create new reasons for visiting and "make it an even more interesting lifestyle destination, not just for the annual summer holidays but also for weekend breaks".

"By developing additional programmes and facilities, for example, for biking, golf and high quality cuisine, we wish to attract visitors to Croatia outside the high season."

Ostojic, 54, knows Croatia's tourism industry intimately – he has previously held senior positions at Croatia Airlines and a number of hotel groups. So when he was appointed Tourism Minister last year, the industry had high hopes in his ministry's goal of achieving or surpassing 7 billion euros (\$11 billion) in income from tourism this year – a 3 to 5 per cent hike.

He has pledged to iron out some of the industry's knots, boost its competitiveness and turn it into a pillar industry for the country and its struggling economy. One of the first changes he has advocated is to lower VAT for the industry to 10 per cent; the new rate will come into effect from January 1 next year.

Every part of Croatia has its own allure, Ostojic says. "The potential for Croatian tourism lies in the fact that each region is unique. In a relatively small space, Croatia has numerous possibilities and it is up to us to preserve this potential and enrich it with new features."

Some of the sights he recommends are the capital city of Zagreb, the islands of Dalmatia, the historic town of Dubrovnik and the mountainous Gorski Kotar and Lika areas in the central region.

While keen to show off all of Croatia's gems to the world at large, Ostojic does harbour a personal favourite. "I grew up in Pazin in Istria county, so it is normal that I love Istria the best because it is my home."

"Istria is a very beautiful peninsula with beautiful seashores, but also very interesting interior areas, with lots of small villages which tell you a story about giants that used to live there ages ago, freshwater streams and nice people."

Given the distinct local character of each region, Croatian cuisine offers quite a variety of flavours that reflect each region's geography, history and culture.

Along the beautiful Adriatic coast, for example, grilled seafood plays a starring role and the flavours that tend towards the Mediterranean. In contrast, its northern cuisine bears Austrian and Hungarian influences. Ostojic says the regional specialties of his hometown are cheese and cold cuts and two of the best Istrian wines are Malvazija of Buje and Teran of Buzet.

With so much wealth in its geography, culture and cuisine to be discovered, it will not be long before the world comes knocking on Croatia's doors, which should put a smile on Ostojic's face and give him a break next summer for a much-needed holiday. ☺

The city of Split has been given the Unesco stamp of approval (Photo: Ng King Kang)



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— Croatia's Tourism Minister
Veljko Ostojic

Croatian handicraft from Dubrovnik (Photo: Ng King Kang)





世界文化遗产古城杜布罗夫尼克。(Photo: Ng King Kang)

克罗地亚旅游部长韦利科奥斯托伊奇需要时间休假，因为自从出任旅游部长后，他完全没有度假时间，甚至还在暑假期间办公，以公职身份到访克罗地亚海岸的许多地方，因为他希望能在今年年底之前造访克罗地亚所有21个县。

从这个没有时间旅游的旅游部长的繁忙时间表，可看出克罗地亚旅游业正处于高峰状态。

克罗地亚在近几年成为许多欧洲甚至是亚洲人最钟爱的旅游地点。英国知名旅游杂志Conde Nast Traveller近期以克罗地亚为封面专题，大篇幅报道了克罗地亚的葡萄酒、美食、文化和旅游景点，打开了许多读者的眼界，让更多人见识到克罗地亚的美。而随着克罗地亚明年加入欧盟，到时除了能利用欧盟的发展基金来搞旅游建设外，也将能吸引到更多欧洲人前往旅行，这股克罗地亚旅游热潮必将持续延烧。

54岁的奥斯托伊奇受访时说：“到时将有大约5亿欧洲人更清楚了解克罗地亚的旅游概况。他们可以不用办任何通关手续便可到这里旅游，这对我们10万名旅游业同仁来说是一个很大的鼓舞。”

奥斯托伊奇对克罗地亚的旅游业了如指掌，

“通过发展新项目和创造新旅游卖点，我们将成为一个更有吸引力的旅游目的地，除了暑假，游客也能在周末到这里游玩。”

——克罗地亚旅游部长韦利科奥斯托伊奇

他曾经在克罗地亚航空公司和几家大型酒店任高级主管，因此当他在去年出任旅游部长时，该国的旅游业者都对他抱很大的期望。

他走马上任后立志解决克罗地亚旅游业者所面对的一些问题，大力加强旅游业的竞争性，希望能让它成为该国的重要经济支柱之一。他上任所办的第一件大事就是把旅游业的增值税（VAT）减到10%，新税率将从明年1月1日开始实施。

许多游客都认为克罗地亚比较适合在夏天或者早秋旅行，这点让奥斯托伊奇相当头痛，他不断思考要如何延长克罗地亚的旅游季节。

“为了让克罗地亚更显吸引力，我们不断地改进服务素质，开创新的旅游卖点。通过发展新项目和设施，如骑单车、高尔夫球和高级料理等，我们希望能吸引游客在夏天旺季以外的季节来克罗地亚旅行。”

根据克罗地亚旅游部所提供的资料，在今年首8个月，大约有980万名外国游客造访，多数来自欧洲。当局也发现，中国、以色列和南美洲等偏远国家的游客数量有很大的增长。虽然旅游部预测欧洲人将是克罗地亚未来5年的主要游客来源，不过奥斯托伊奇认为亚洲市场还是具有很大的潜力。“克罗地亚旅游局目前把宣传活动集中在日本，因为我们在当地设有办事处；该办事处也负责在韩国进行一些宣传。我们也同斯洛文尼亚合作，在中国和印度举行特别宣传活动，并已和香港和台湾的伙伴进行初步接触。”

谈到最喜欢克罗地亚的哪一区时，奥斯托伊奇直率地说：“我在Pazin出生，自然最爱Istria半岛，这里有非常美丽的海岸，内陆景色也相当有趣，很多小村庄依然流传着远古时期巨人的传说。这里的小河景色优美，当地人相当和蔼可亲。”

奥斯托伊奇认为克罗地亚的每个地区都有其独特之处，游客其实有很多地方可以选择。他推荐的一些景点包括：首都萨格勒布、沿海地区达尔马提亚的海岛、历史古城杜布罗夫尼克和中部山区Gorski Kotar和Lika等。

每个地区有自己的特性造就了拥有强烈地方特色的菜肴和美酒。例如在亚得里亚沿海地区，多数海鲜都是以烧烤方式烹煮，具有浓厚的地中海菜肴特色；克罗地亚北部的菜肴则受到奥地利和匈牙利的影响，味道别具一格。奥斯托伊奇分享，他家乡的特色佳肴是乳酪和冷盘，葡萄酒方面则是Malvazija of Buje和Teran of Buzet。

“克罗地亚的每一个地区都是独特的，有潜力开发不同类型的旅游模式。旅游业的发展完全看我们如何利用这个潜力，增添新的旅游元素。通过发展新项目和创造新旅游卖点，我们将成为一个更有吸引力的旅游目的地，游客不单在暑假，也能在周末到这里游玩。”

通过一系列的改变和发展，奥斯托伊奇希望能为克罗地亚带来额外20亿欧元的旅游收益。他表示，旅游部已经制定了“旅游业发展策略文件”，里面清楚列出了克罗地亚未来的旅游业管理和发展方向。相信在不久的将来，这个历史悠久的文明古国将成为欧洲另一个炙手可热的旅游胜地。