How to Achieve the Balance Between Cruise Tourism and Destination Sustainability – The Case of Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik as a Cruise Destination
Dubrovnik’s culture, history and landscape are one of a kind in the Adriatic. Following the development of the port infrastructure along with its advantageous geographical position, the city has become one of the most popular cruise destinations in Europe. In 2018 Dubrovnik was the 10th most called cruise port in the Med, even though the total number of calls demonstrated a 18.7% decrease compared with 2017. Despite the decrease, Dubrovnik is still the first port in Adriatic for Transit passengers. ¹

Though overcrowding has been an identified issue in Dubrovnik, the city in general has a positive attitude towards cruise passengers, but the Mayor also acknowledges the need for better coordination and distribution of embarking and disembarking times.

Facts (recorded at Seatrade Cruise Med 2018)

- **Total tourists figure doubled between 2010 and 2017**
  In 2017, it is recorded the total tourists arrived in Dubrovnik reached to 17.4 million – 10% more than in 2016. This number is expected to grow even further.

- **Overtourism is seasonal**
  It is suggested that peak season from May to November accounts for 85% of the total cruise calls, as well as 90% of the airplane arrivals.

- **Overtourism is only experienced at certain hotspots in the Old Town**

- **Cruise passengers are not the only tourists contributing to overcrowding, in fact they only accounted for 5% of total number of tourists**
  The statistics suggests there is 17% annual rise in arrivals by air (low budget flights) and daily visitors (buses, cars, etc.). However, cruise passengers definitely contribute to the overcrowding of the city as at some days there is large number of passengers disembarking and embarking in a short period of time.

Measures in the City & Tourism (2018-2019)

1. Raise the stakeholders’ awareness and get them involved.

2. Partner with industry associations: In July 2019, Dubrovnik forged a partnership with CLIA to advance sustainable tourism. A dedicated working group is put in place to create a destination stewardship roadmap for the city based on UN sustainable tourism goals, and to communicate and implement a previously developed 2020 cruise ship berthing policy.²

3. Monitor and limit the number of visitors at cultural heritage hotspots: In January 2019, the City government together with Dubrovnik Port Authority (DPA) had talks with Ministry of Tourism about the potential of introducing tourist tax for cruise passengers in 2021.³

¹ MedCruise, 2019, “Cruise Activities in MedCruise Ports”
4. Coordinate and manage the traffic in collaboration with the city police department, municipal and traffic officers, parking, etc. In cooperation with the City of Dubrovnik DPA is implementing a project called **Respect the City** which aims to harmonize tourist flows and migrations through city infrastructure, where cruise passengers represent significant percentage of daily visitors. The aim of the project is to find optimal solutions for sustainable tourism development in the destination.

5. Develop alternative visiting modes and excursion offers: Since early June 2019, Intercruises Shoreside & Port Services has introduced new shorex options in Dubrovnik following the launch of the custom-build catamaran. The tours’ highlights including guest pick-up directly from the gangway, a Dubrovnik Old Town cruise, sailing to the nearby Lokrum or Elaphite islands.¹

6. Safety and security intervention planning

**The Port**

DPA is actively developing its port area with new investments in infra and supra structure as well as new technologies with aim to become a greener port. Currently the main focus is on the following projects:

- **Batahovina 2** – construction of two new berths of total length of 450m with two ferry ramps for international and domestic ferry traffic, smaller cruise vessels and mega yachts. Expected construction completion is during 2023.

- **SSE facility** – prefeasibility study for construction of SSE (Shore Side Electricity) facility is completed and the conceptual design is under way.

- **Photovoltaic powerplant** – Still in planning state, the aim of the project is to reduce amount of electric energy used from local power grid and produce sufficient level of power to cover electric energy consumed in port area. When operational, expected ration of energy produced against energy consumed from public power grid is expected to reach minimum 80-20. Completion of this project is planned in early 2021.

- **LED external lighting** – with replacement of existing external lighting bulbs in port area with LED technology, calculated reduction of power consumption is 50% with much longer life expectancy for each bulb.

There are also several superstructure projects in conceptual stages of preparation for port terminals and other public services and facilities within port area that will be addressed in the near future in cooperation with the city urbanistic and development plans.


² MedCruise, 2019, “Yearbook 2019/20”