

CASE STUDY

GREENING TOURISM IN DUBROVNIK

From over-tourism to sustainable
destination management



Background

Dubrovnik, a UNESCO World Heritage city with 41,562 residents, is one of Croatia's most visited destinations. In 2024, it recorded 4.55 million overnight stays and 1.39 million arrivals, ranking as Europe's Leading Cruise Destination (WTA 2024) with over 500,000 cruise passengers.

Tourism generates around 70% of the city's total revenue, yet also places pressure on infrastructure, the environment, and residents' quality of life. To address these challenges, the city launched "Respect the City", a comprehensive strategy to shift from over tourism toward sustainable and inclusive destination management.

Strategy

"Respect the City" integrates urban planning, technology, and policy innovation to balance heritage preservation with everyday urban life. Key actions include:

- Visitor management through digital monitoring, timed entry, and dispersal beyond the Old Town.
- Research partnerships with the University of Dubrovnik on visitor trends, carrying capacity, and cruise tourism impacts.
- The first Management Plan and carrying capacity strategy for a UNESCO site in Croatia.
- Resident engagement and diversification of the tourism offer toward cultural, creative, and green activities.

These measures have repositioned Dubrovnik as a leader in responsible and forward-looking tourism.

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PROTECTING HERITAGE MEANS
PROTECTING COMMUNITY –
DUBROVNIK'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON
BALANCE BETWEEN CULTURE,
PEOPLE, AND THE PLANET



Results to Date

- Visitor dispersion and crowd reduction in the Old Town.
- Higher quality of life for residents through better tourism flow management.
- Sustainability performance improved from 69.8% (2019) to 86.04% (2023) in the GSTC assessment, with zero risk indicators.
- Residents increasingly view tourism as a driver of heritage protection and social benefits.

Future Ambition

Dubrovnik aims to consolidate its leadership as a model of green and resilient tourism in Europe. Upcoming priorities include:

- Further integration of eco-mobility, circular economy, and smart tourism solutions.
- Strengthening local supply chains and low-impact tourism products.
- Scaling collaboration with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to align with international standards.
- Expanding green infrastructure and climate-adaptive urban design within the tourism sector.
- Promoting year-round, community-based tourism that supports cultural life and local livelihoods beyond the peak season.

By linking sustainability, innovation, and heritage, Dubrovnik aims to remain both a world-class destination and a thriving place to live.