

Italy: Perfect Destination for Fish Tourism

Fish tourism is part of a wider context of marine ecotourism and may involve the embarkation of persons (who are not members of the crew) on fishing vessels for recreational–tourism purposes, as well as the accommodation, catering and general provision of special tourism services associated to fishing and aquaculture and related customs and traditions.



Helping the Coastal Communities

The development of fish tourism may be perceived as an employment diversification opportunity aiming to help regenerate coastal communities, and fishermen in particular, that are experiencing economic hardship as a result of the decline of their income from traditional fishing activities. Moreover, fish tourism may propagate eco–awareness and the principles of sustainable development on both the parties involved, operators and customers, fishermen and tourists.

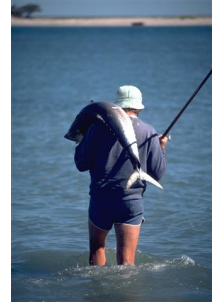
The need for such diversification in coastal regions –and the fishing communities in particular– has been long recognized by many national and international authorities, recommending that the inshore fisheries sector should be encouraged to pursue opportunities for diversification in addition to safeguarding traditional fishing activities.

Such diversification, which is considered a priority by the EU, has been successfully implemented in many coastal regions of the EU. In all cases, apart from the economic, societal and demographic reasons that set the base for the development of fish tourism in a region, a supportive and comprehensive legal framework is required.

The Strategy of Italy

Italy is closely related to the sea as there are 7,600 km of coastline and many inland waters (lakes and rivers). There are more than 16,000 fishing vessels, the majority of which are coastal and small scale fishing vessels, largely affected by diminishing fish stocks. The increasing rate of unemployment has led to the development of alternative forms of occupation (professional diversification) and fish tourism activities in particular.

Apart from sport fishing of large pelagic species like swordfish and tuna, pescaturismo has developed over the past few years, combining demonstration of fishing activities as well as participation.



The Italians made one step further developing ittiturismo which is a form of agrotourism practiced in coastal areas with emphasis given on fishery related traditions and customs. This kind of tourism provides a chance to the local fishermen to improve their income and to the tourists to discover the local fishing culture and explore the coastal areas.

Fish tourism has developed not only close to the sea, but also in inland areas, in communities where inland water fishing is practiced, such as in lagoons, lakes and rivers.

There are big national federations like FIPS (Federazione Italiana Pesca Sportivo) and KONI (Italian Olympic Commission) which occasionally organize sport fishing games across Italy. Carp, roach, trout, pike, eels are some of the species abundant to the lakes of Garda, Como, Iseo, Lago Maggiore, Trasimeno, Bracciano and Bolsena and of course salmon and trout to the rivers. Due to the tendency of the recreational fishermen to participate in such fishing activities, it is very likely that Pescaturismo will expand also to the inland waters.

Best Practice?

By far, the Italian model presents an ideal case of the best practice in fish tourism.

Pescaturismo is an integrated approach to fish tourism, focusing on the following activities which promote the fishing tradition and marine culture:

Conducting boat excursions along the coastline (including spending overnight on board) Watching the professional fishing activity Introduction to the traditional and classical fishing gear Provision of lunch on board or at shore Game fishing Provision of information on the marine environment and the coastal biodiversity

Ittiturismo provides additionally the following services:

Staying at fishermen's lodgings (if appropriately modified for such use) Tasting and purchasing food at local traditional fisheries (prepared with traditional recipes, home made)

The Pescaturismo initiative is managed by Lega Pesca which is a national association member of the Italian Union of Cooperatives and Associations. The structural role of Lega Pesca is to promote, supervise, represent and support the members of Pescaturismo (300 associations counting 20,000 members). Lega Pesca provides technical, financing, legal and managerial support.



Fish tourism activities are conducted by professional fishermen using their fishing vessel for exhibitions lasting from some hours to a few days (if accommodation is provided) returning always the tourists at the place of departure.

<http://www.fishtourism.eu>

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