

CROATIA'S EU MEMBERSHIP TO BOOST TOURISM INDUSTRY



Croatia, one of the most popular European summer destinations, had more than 12.5 million international tourists last year, which brought more than 7.1 billion euros (\$8.9 billion) into the country's economy. The country entered the European Union on 1 July after it applied for membership in 2003. This change is likely to boost local tourism.

In 1991, Dubrovnik was crushed into ruins after Serbian invasion forces destroyed old Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic buildings. Serbian project have hit over 500 buildings in Southern Croatia, and dozens were destroyed in fire. Only ten years later, Dubrovnik returned to its glory after the help of the UNESCO which rebuilt the city making it one of the most beautiful and most popular European destinations. Every year hundreds of worldwide celebrities like Beyonce, Jay-Z and Bill Gates to name a few, come to this beautiful city and enjoy their vacation there.

This small European country has come a long way since their 1991 war of independence which claimed over 50,000 lives. **Tourism still remained one of the brighter spots of this country facing big unemployment rates and smaller GDP.** Tourism saved the country from recession in the past few years.

Since it is easier for other European Union members to come into Croatia even without their passports, Croatia expects bigger tourist industry income primarily because of the EU membership.

Marketing board has set a challenging goal to turn this small nation of 4.25 million people in one of the 15 most visited tourism countries by 2020. Darko Lorencin, tourism minister, said at U.N. WTO conference this year that Croatia's accession in EU will certainly help to reach Croatia's primary goals considering tourism.

Two thirds of last year's tourists were actually from countries that are members of European Union. By these estimates Croatia should gain more EU visitors than it should lose from elsewhere.

At the same time, British travelling agents have decided to hold their annual assembly in Dubrovnik this year, and cited that **20 percent more British citizens have visited Croatia in first nine months of 2012 than at the same period in 2011.** It is expected that even more Brits will come to Croatia this year.

American travel agency Travel Leaders stated that bookings for Croatia this year are up 37 percent than in previous years which is encouraging for Croatian tourism industry. They said that Croatia is probably one of the safest and most attractive Mediterranean destinations. Croatia has been one of the most popular hotspots for travelers from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Italy.

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