# PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, A FACTOR FOR INCREASING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE NATIONAL PARK

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**Abstract:** Kosovo is a country that has all the potentials necessary for an attractive tourist destination for domestic and international tourists, such as natural beauties, cultural heritage and hospitality. The promotion of sustainable tourism in the Western Albanian Alps has a very important role in the growth and development of sustainable tourism, ensuring that the promotion contributes not only to the economic development of the country, but also to the preservation of the environment and culture of the local community of the area. The Alps with their magnificent landscapes and rich biodiversity, offer excellent opportunities for various mountain tourism activities and other activities. Activities should be properly managed to bring benefits to the economy, providing employment opportunities for residents and promoting the development of small businesses, such as accommodation, restaurants and other services. The promotion of sustainable tourism ensures that economic development occurs in harmony with the preservation of nature, taking into account the importance of the ecosystems and biodiversity that make this region unique.

**Keywords:** development, sustainable, cultural, natural etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Park is located in the southwest of Kosovo, near the city of Peja, (Rugove) and is one of the most popular destinations for mountain and nature tourism. This park is part of the Kosovo Alps and lies in the Rugova region, which is known for its amazing landscapes, deep valleys, mountains, cliffs and natural resources. It is an area rich in biodiversity. It is known for its trekking, mountaineering, rafting and other natural activities. There are also many villages and untouched areas, which make this park an excellent destination for sustainable tourism and for those looking to enjoy nature in its purest state. The promotion of sustainable tourism in the National Park is a key factor for the development of tourism in this area. The Alps are among the most beautiful and richest in nature, but also very sensitive to the impacts of mass tourism. There are several important aspects for the promotion of sustainable tourism and its impact on the growth and development of tourism in this region. Sustainable tourism is a solution to protect the natural beauties of the Alps. By encouraging tourists through promotions to respect ecosystems and biodiversity during their visits, the destruction of natural habitats can be avoided, this way can help preserve the environment as well as the development of natural tourist attractions such as landscapes, rivers, lakes and mountain tourism, which are attractive to tourists. The Alps are rich in traditions, culture and history that can become part of a tourist package that integrates culture and nature. The preservation and promotion of local traditions, festivals and crafts are important elements for the development of cultural and sustainable tourism in the National Park. Promoting awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism is very important in preserving the environment and sustainable tourism. Tourists, as well as local residents, should be informed about the negative impacts of mass tourism and the best ways to travel sustainably, respecting the environment and local culture. Good management is, without causing damage to natural ecosystems, which are necessary for our future generations (Dreshaj et al. 2022). The development of tourism in a country depends largely on the natural resources that that country possesses, (Kuqi & Selimaj 2023). In order to have a sustainable promotion of tourism, it is very important to make a well-thought-out and coordinated strategy with the local community. The strategy for promoting sustainable tourism should include several essential aspects to ensure that tourism development will not damage the environment and will contribute to improving economic and social conditions for local communities and beyond.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of this study will be based on a combination of primary and secondary data, research and literature from various authors in the field of tourism, both local and international, who have addressed issues of sustainable tourism, development and tourism perspectives from different perspectives. For the preparation of this paper, various sources were used, which were collected and processed by relevant institutions in the field of tourism. This methodological approach includes combined data, where the description of phenomena is done through the analysis of primary and secondary data and the situation on the ground collected from reports and other relevant documents, drafted and promoted by governmental and non-governmental actors, which have addressed the appropriate topics.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The environment in the National Park area has exceptional ecological values, being associated with the rich diversity of ecosystems and different habitats, such as mountain, river, forest, meadow, alpine pasture, as well as karst, surface and underground ones. Sustainable tourism has played an important role in the development of this area, reflecting one of the characteristics of the period of the industrial revolution and technological progress. Tourists have the opportunity to exploit natural resources (Hargrove, C. (2020). The ever-increasing demand for tourism services has led to the creation of new capacities, thus marking the opening of the tourism industry. However, the development of sustainable tourism represents an important opportunity for sustainable growth in the future for this area. However, the development of tourism and the entire territory cannot be left to chance, on the contrary, it is necessary for appropriate measures to be taken by the government to ensure a balanced and sustainable long-term development in the Rugova National Park. Kosovo has good opportunities for the development of tourism, especially mountain tourism. In our country, Kosovo, the conditions are suitable for the development of tourism in the four seasons of the year (Kuqi 2018). Sustainable tourism promotes the economic and social development of local communities. Sustainable tourism for tourists is a concept that aims to provide a sustainable and responsible travel experience towards the environment, society and culture, by respecting local cultures and traditions (UNWTO. (2019). Tourists can benefit from all cultures and traditions in the area (C.L., Lizama, J.T. (2018). The cultural heritage of the area is an asset created and shaped by past generations and is a means of preserving the identity of a society (. This asset is closely linked to time and space, reflecting the values, beliefs and traditions that have existed in a certain period. The National Park (Rugova) is an area rich in landscapes and natural beauty as well as flora and fauna, where different types of plants and animals can be seen, offering opportunities for ecological tourism. Also, the culture and traditions of the country are an important element of tourism, where visitors can experience the hospitality of the locals and the traditional gastronomy of the area.

***Photo 1. Ski slope in Boge*** ***Photo. The lake in Drelaj***



Source: Authors

The Drelaj Lake Trail is one of the most beautiful and visited trails in the Rugova Kombate Park region, which offers excellent opportunities to spend time in nature and enjoy beautiful natural landscapes. This trail is known for the white tape that serves as a guide for visitors, being followed for a distance of about 1 km. The trail is relatively easy to follow and can be used in both directions, which makes it suitable for all those looking for a relaxing and enjoyable experience in nature. The trail offers an excellent opportunity to get away from the daily routine and relax,

while you can explore the natural beauties of the area. This trail is suitable for all tourists, families, groups of friends, etc.

***Photo 3. Campsites in the National Park***



***Photo 4. Winter villas in the National Park***



Source: Authors

Sustainable tourism is a very important concept, especially for mountainous areas like Boga and the surrounding villages, where nature is an inseparable part of everyday life. When we talk about sustainable tourism, the goal is to develop a tourism industry that respects the environment, preserves natural resources and provides economic opportunities for the local community, ensuring that this development is sustainable for generations to come. Protect the The environment is important for nature (AMK 2021). The Municipality of Peja and the respective Mianitra are focused on directions that help the development of sustainable tourism (MIT 2024: KK.Peja 2024). Promoting sustainable tourism can be an excellent opportunity to exploit the natural beauties of the four seasons of the year that will bring income to the local community (Kuqi, B & Vishaj, B. (2024). Tourists are also aiming to bring a 'better world', as they follow their travels with social responsibility (Adriana & et,.al (2016). Tourists can contribute to the development of sustainable tourism (Li et al.,2024).

***Table 1.*** *Number of foreign visitors and their nights of stay in hotels, by country of origin:*

| | Visitors | | % | Night stands | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | October 2023 | October 2024 | October 2024 / October 2023 | October 2023 | October 2024 | October 2024 / October 2023 |
| Foreign visitors | 30 333 | 34 488 | 13,7 % | 63 457 | 69 199 | 9,0 % |
| Albania | 6 683 | 8 181 | 22,4 % | 15 865 | 18 746 | 18,2 % |
| Germany | 2 908 | 3 464 | 19,1 % | 6 005 | 6 722 | 11,9 % |
| Switzerland | 2 402 | 3 362 | 40,0 % | 5 199 | 5 912 | 13,7 % |
| Turkey | 2 151 | 2 912 | 35,4 % | 3 247 | 4 577 | 41,0 % |

Source: ASK 2025

As for foreign visitors compared to the previous period (October 2023), there is an increase in visitors by 13.7%. In total, 34,488 foreign visitors, of which the largest number is from Albania, Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, etc.
Of course! The 13.7% increase in the number of foreign visitors is a clear sign of improving the attractiveness of a tourist destination. This may be the result of a number of factors that contribute to the increase in the flow of tourists from different countries. Tourism promotion may have been a successful promotional campaign carried out in certain countries (Albania, Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, etc.) that has stimulated more interest in visits. This may include advertising, presentations at tourism fairs, or collaborations with travel agencies that help increase the number of visitors.
During each year, traditional games are organized in the Rugova National Park that reflect the culture and customs of this area. These activities are an excellent opportunity to get to know the ancient traditions of the local population

better (Vishaj, B., Kuqi, B. (2025). Such games include traditional competitions, folk music, and activities that also include local crafts. Participants and tourists, from different regions, come every year to enjoy this authentic atmosphere, where they can see and experience a part of the culture that has survived for centuries. This event is an opportunity to visit this beautiful natural place and share unique experiences with others (Lajçi et al.,2021).

***Photo 5, Women's National Dance***



***Photo 6, Traditional dance***



Source: Authors

Promoting sustainable tourism is extremely important for several reasons, not only for environmental conservation, but also for the economic, social and cultural development of tourist destinations (Lajçi et al., 2022). Tourism can have major negative impacts on nature and biodiversity, especially in places with special natural assets, such as national parks and nature reserves. Promoting sustainable tourism helps to: Minimize negative impact on the environment: Well-managed tourism activities can reduce pollution, overexploitation of natural resources and damage to fragile ecosystems. Conserving biodiversity: By following sustainable practices, it can be ensured that the flora and fauna of the park, forests, rivers, etc., are protected from destruction and overexploitation.

***Photo 7, Hiking during the winter***



***Photo 7, Hiking during the summer***



Source: Kosova Hiking

Hiking in Rugova National Park is a fascinating experience all year round, both in summer and winter, with changing landscapes and offering extraordinary opportunities for nature and adventure lovers. In all four seasons, Rugova offers an excellent opportunity for those who want to escape from everyday life and experience nature in different forms, both during the green summer period and during the magic of winter.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Promoting sustainable tourism in national parks is a key factor for the sustainable and long-term development of tourism. This practice not only protects the environment and natural resources, but also contributes to the growth of the local economy, creating employment opportunities and improving infrastructure. The development of sustainable tourism requires a careful balance between the need for economic development and the preservation of biodiversity. The implementation of sustainable management strategies will help minimize the negative impacts of mass tourism, ensuring a richer and more responsible experience for visitors. Furthermore, this can improve the image of tourist destinations, making them more attractive to those seeking ecological and cultural tourism. Partnerships between state institutions, non-governmental organizations and the local community are essential to achieving this goal, ensuring an integrated and sustainable approach. With proper management, sustainable tourism can become an engine for the economic development of the region, contributing to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

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