

## WINE TOURISM AS A FACTOR OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF FRUŠKA GORA (VOJVODINA PROVINCE)

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### Abstract

The authors emphasize the importance of developing wine tourism for rural development of Fruška gora. Fruška gora has a long historical and cultural tradition of over 1,700 years in viticulture and wine production in the Republic of Serbia. This tradition is a result of the excellent climate and soil conditions. Although there are significant land resources in the area of Fruška gora for grape production, lower part of the area is intensively farmed, which is a limiting factor for the development of wine tourism. In recent years there has been a growth in wine tourism and other related activities in the area (activation of private museums, ethno-house, wine cellar, etc.). However, despite the existing potential, wine tourism on Fruška gora is at the beginning of development since the wineries are not organized to achieve the maximum benefits from wine tourism. The authors point out that it is necessary to improve viticulture and wine production to ensure a better tourist offer of wine roads. A better organization within the wine tourism is necessary in order to attract and motivate a greater number of tourists. The importance of wine tourism in rural development of Fruška gora is that through initiating the development of a series of related economic activities (agriculture, industry, education, trade, transport, hospitality, manufacturing, etc.), which contributes to improving the socioeconomic living conditions of the local population.

**Key words:** *wine tourism, wine roads, rural development, Fruška gora, Vojvodina*

### Introduction

Wine tourism is the subject of a large number of studies all over the world. Because of its specificity and complexity, the definition is not unique. Johnson (1997) was among the first that defined wine tourism as "*a visit to the vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and exhibitions that are organized for the purpose of recreation*", and then in the study, "*Wine tourism in the world*", Hall et al. (2000) presented a definition for wine tourism which means "*a visit to the vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine exhibitions, with wine tasting and / or experience attractions, wine-growing region are the primary motives*". Although there is no unique definition, many authors are in agreement about the premise that wine tourism is an important component of the wine industry and tourism, and that it brings many economic and social benefits, especially in rural areas (Olaru, 2012; Pivac, 2012; Presenza, et al., 2010). Viticulture of Fruška gora has a long tradition. It is assumed that the grape vine is autochthonous plant species in the Fruška gora, but seriously dealing with viticulture refers to the period from the third century AD, when the Roman Emperor Probus increased areas planted with vines by draining wetlands of Fruška gora. Viticulture of Fruška gora since then had ups and downs, caused primarily by permanent colonisations and conquests of this area. At the present time, winery owners in Fruška gora are becoming to deal more with tourism, because they realized that the economic and social benefits of wine tourism are significant (e. g. increased sales of wine "from the cellar"). Tourist product of wine tourism in Fruška gora is diverse and consists of, besides the winery and cellars, also numerous museums dedicated

to winemaking and viticulture, the manifestations dedicated to wine and the grape vine, and established wine routes.

The aim of this paper is to consider the characteristics of the wine tourism in Fruška gora's vineyards, to determine the current state, and analyze the degree of attractiveness of the existing offer of winery owners.

### **Materials and methods**

In order to achieve the objectives, we used a number of methods such as historical research methods (review of existing international and domestic literature, written documents, etc.), methods of analysis, descriptive method, critical, empirical method to identify individual demographic characteristics and rural development in the region of Fruška gora, and a method of observation of the winery of Fruška gora.

### **Results and discussion**

#### ***About the region of Fruška gora***

The region of Fruška gora includes municipalities of Sremski Karlovci, Petrovaradin and Beočin, which are entirely in this area. Municipalities of Irig, Inđija, Šid, Bačka Palanka and Ruma, and the city of Sremska Mitrovica are partially included in the coverage of this area. The central and highest part of this region is incorporated into the National Park, which is surrounded by villages and agricultural land with extensive use. In a broader scope there are larger settlements, as well as areas that are intensively used. Agriculture is the traditional and main economic activity in this area. Tourism is the second most important business. National Park "Fruška gora" is the first national park in Serbia (established in the 1960s) and represents a natural resource of great importance for the country.

#### ***Viticulture of Fruška gora as a precondition for the development of wine tourism***

Contemporary viticulture of Fruška gora is based on conventional production with mostly white wine varieties of grapes. In accordance with the recommendations, there are possibilities of organizing organic grape production at approximately 10% vineyards of this area, which are right near the national park "Fruška gora" (Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, 2011). The largest part of this production is realized on small holdings, at about 1,500 ha of fertile vineyards (Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, 2011).

According to the data available for 2013, for municipalities and the cities which are part of the region Fruška gora<sup>1</sup> vineyards were represented in approximately 2,000 ha:<sup>2</sup>

- 233 ha in Petrovaradin;
- 167 ha in Bačka Palanka;
- 317 ha in Beočin;
- 237 ha in Sremski Karlovci and Inđija;
- 236 ha in Irig,
- 540 ha in Šid;
- 22 ha in Ruma, and
- 56 ha in Sremska Mitrovica.

In terms of total production in the cultivation of grapes, the highest production in 2013, was achieved in municipality of Inđija with about 5,914 tons, and other municipalities had the following production volumes:

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the lack of accurate statistical information for Fruška vineyard, we used statistical summary data for municipalities and cities, where the values refer to those parts of the settlements which are not in the coverage region of Fruška gora.

<sup>2</sup> According to the National Statistical Office, Republic of Serbia.

- Novi Sad<sup>1</sup> with 2,939 tons;
- Bačka Palanka 689 tons;
- Beočin 1,497 tons;
- Sremski Karlovci 2,124 tons;
- Irig 2,571 tons;
- Ruma 880 tons;
- Sremska Mitrovica 1,620 tons;
- Šid 3,872 tons.

On the basis of the total area and achieved production in the region of Fruška gora are noted the visible differences which are the effect of primarily insufficiently advanced technology of production. Possibilities for the development of viticulture in the region of Fruška gora are much higher, and it is and necessary development measures. It is possible to improve the production of at about 5,000 ha, but it means that it is necessary to: planting new vineyards; improving the technology of production of grapes and wine, establishment of appropriate varieties; faster development advisory services, and association of producers (Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, 2011).

#### ***Wine tourism in the region of Fruška gora***

Viticulture and wine production in Fruška gora has a tradition of over 1,700 years. Authentic wine of the region is "bermet" which was exported to the United States 150 years ago, and the wines from Fruška gora were used in the Czech Republic and Poland in the fifteenth century (Vlastelica, 2011). Within wine regions of Fruška gora, wine tourism is developed in the municipalities of Sremski Karlovci, Beočin, Irig (where are located the largest number of wineries) and Šid, and the total number of registered wineries is 49, while 26 wineries are engaged in wine tourism.

Some of the wineries and cellars with the most developed tourist offer are:

- Winery "Kovačević" is located in Irig and has a tradition of winemaking and grape growing for more than 100 years. Wines produced by this winery are: Chardonnay, Aurelius, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Roseto and Bermet. In 2009, the winery produced 350,000 bottles of wine (<http://www.vinarijakovacevic.co.rs/onama.html>). Beside wine house, winery has a restaurant, tasting room, covered lobby and accommodation in modern apartments.
- "Mačkov (cat's) basement" is located in Irig and is one of the oldest wineries in the area with more than 10 acres on the slopes of Fruška gora. The winery produces white, red and rose wines, and wine quality is confirmed by numerous national and international awards. Tourists are provided with the possibility of tasting wines and local specialties and it is possible to visit the vineyards. The winery often organized numerous training programs on the topic of wine producing and wine tourism.
- Basement "Bajilo" is located in Sremski Karlovci. Vineyard area is 8 acres, and it annually produces about 30,000 liters of wine, mostly red varieties. Tourists have the possibility to taste the wine and to buy it and also to try food specialties. Tourists can visit the vineyards of the family Bajilo.

For the development of wine tourism in the region of Fruška gora, great importance has the wine route that brought together family wineries and other stakeholders that support the

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<sup>1</sup> There is no statistical data for that year for the municipality of Petrovaradin.

development of the vineyards. The great importance of the wine route is that it enhances and enriches the offer, and increases the quality of services provided to tourists.

To attractiveness of wine tourism of Fruška gora contributes numerous events dedicated to wine. Wine events - which are often the main motive for tourists' visits to the area, but also additional content during their stay in the wine region - are:

- Event "Karlovačka berba grožđa" (Vintage in Sremski Karlovci) is held in Sremski Karlovci and is organized by the Municipal Assembly of Sremski Karlovci with the aim to preserve the tradition in viticulture. The event lasts for three days with a rich culture and entertainment program, and is held in late September and early October. Besides wineries, the domestic producers of food and handicrafts present their offer. This event is visited by more than 100,000 people.
- "Pudarski Days" are organized in Irig since 1993. The event is dedicated to pudar, the man who protect the vineyards during the summer from many pests. A special attraction of the event is carriage parade, costume party and contest in the making lanterns and masks from pumpkin. For the most distinguished guests (friends and business partners of Irig) are organized tours through vineyards.
- "InterFest" is an international wine festival, which is organized in Novi Sad since 2004, and between 30,000 and 50,000 people visits it. The festival promotes the synthesis of winemaking, gastronomy and music and is organized at the end of June and lasts three days. The program includes numerous special workshops and presentations.

Valuable cultural and historical sites in the territory of Fruška gora should be put at disposal of wine tourism, so this would enrich the offer and attract more visitors, while the integration could bring the positive effects to the entire local community (Pejanović et al, 2011a). Particular importance has the archaeological sites, traditional architecture, 17 monasteries, castles and summer houses (especially Špicerov's castle in Beočin which is protected as a cultural monument).

The tourist offer of the winery in Fruška gora region (Table 1) is not yet a complex tourism product, and it will be necessary in the future to offer beside wine tasting, food and accommodation, possibility of active participation in the work of the winery (wine production activities in the vineyard) supplemented with visits to attractions. The attractiveness of the offer could be increased by opening a museum dedicated to winemaking and viticulture (suitable location could be Sremski Karlovci because of a long and well-known tradition in winemaking and viticulture). It is necessary to educate owners and workers in the wineries through various seminars and panel discussions so they could be more acquainted with the concepts, examples of good practice in other regions, and to realize what are the benefits of dealing with wine tourism. Due to the specific location of Fruška gora and all the natural and cultural attractions that are located in its territory, it is necessary to establish cooperation with other forms of tourism such as rural, nautical or ecotourism (Pejanović and Đukić, 2011; Pejanović et al, 2011b; Đukić and Glavaš-Trbić, 2012). In order to attract more visitors, it is necessary to perform segmentation in accordance with that to plan promotional activities - creation of individual or joint web site with a detailed proposal of the wineries, production of leaflets and brochures. In order to encourage further development of wine tourism, the relevant ministries and secretariats should assist winemakers in the form of various benefits (loans).

**Table 1. Tourist offer of selected wineries on Fruška gora**

Winery/ basement	Wine tasting	Reception room for visitors	Basement	Direct sale of wine	Organized visits	Food	Accommodation
"Kuzmanović"	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
"Kovačević"	x	x		x			
"Mačkov besement"	x	x					
"Bajilo"	x	x	x	x	x	x	
"Šijački"	x	x		x		x	
doo "Vinum"	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Basement "Ačanski"	x		x	x	x	x	

Source: Authors' survey

### Conclusion

Viticulture on Fruška gora has a long tradition, but the number of vineyards is not satisfactory. There is a possibility to increase the grape growing area, which would contribute to the successful development of wine tourism in the region. Advantages of this area for the development of wine tourism are events dedicated to wine and grapes, the hospitality of the local population, as well as the rich cultural and historical heritage. However, during the analysis of the current situation, have been identified limitations for the development of wine tourism on Fruška gora:

- Poor transport infrastructure;
- Lack of tourist signalization;
- Insufficient accommodation facilities;
- Inadequate marketing approach, and
- Unattractiveness of the offer during the stay in wineries.

In order to overcome these limitations, it is required a more active role in public-private partnerships in the region of Fruška gora, that would represent a significant source of funding. The owners of wineries should be able to adequately respond to the changes and challenges that come from the environment in which they operate and to ensure further growth by identifying internal strengths, which will become a strong point in offering wine tourism, as well as weaknesses, whose overcoming will provide a more certain future in business.

Successful positioning and increasing the competitiveness of wine tourism has its implications for rural development. This is primarily reflected on the possibility of better marketing of agricultural products, increasing the number of employees and the quality of their life and the development of other services (such as education, industry, trade, crafts, hospitality, transportation).

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