



MSTourHer

master in sustainable
tourism development:
cultural heritage,
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School of Environmental Studies, Geography and Applied Economics
School of Digital Technology



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stakeholders' and tourists' perspective**

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Dedication page

This paper is dedicated to Spiros Bousias, environmental engineer, who introduced me to this place and its people in 2015. Thanks to him I inspired this work.

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Abstract in Greek

Η ακόλουθη έρευνα εξετάζει τον τουριστικό τομέα στα Μαστοροχώρια του Δήμου Κόνιτσας του νομού Ιωαννίνων. Η υπάρχουσα βιβλιογραφία είναι περιορισμένη εξαιτίας του ότι η ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού στα Μαστοροχώρια έχει καθυστερήσει σε σχέση με άλλα μέρη της περιοχής, όπως το χωριό Μέτσοβο. Γι' αυτό το λόγο, οι βιβλιογραφικές πηγές της έρευνας είναι τουριστικοί οδηγοί, κάποια ιστορικά βιβλία που αφορούν στην παράδοση κάθε χωριού και κάποια βιβλία και έρευνες του Καθηγητή της Ελληνικής Λαογραφίας Βασίλη Νιτσιάκου. Ο κύριος σκοπός αυτής της έρευνας είναι η κατανόηση και η ανάλυση των αιτιών για τις οποίες ένας τόπος πλούσιος σε φυσικούς και πολιτιστικούς πόρους δεν έχει αναπτύξει ακόμα τον τουριστικό τομέα. Για να απαντηθεί αυτή η ερώτηση είναι πολύ σημαντική όχι μόνο η βιβλιογραφική ανασκόπηση, αλλά ακόμα η επίσκεψη στα χωριά για την παρατήρηση του πώς οι άνθρωποι δουλεύουν στον τουρισμό και η συνομιλία με τη μορφή συνεντεύξεων τόσο με τους ιθύνοντες όσο και με τους τουρίστες σχετικά με αυτό το ζήτημα, καθώς και η συλλογή φωτογραφιών της περιοχής. Αυτή η διατριβή, λοιπόν, επιλέγει μια ποιοτική μεθοδολογία η οποία βασίζεται στις συνεντεύξεις. Διαφορετικές συνεντεύξεις πραγματοποιήθηκαν με τους ιθύνοντες και τους τουρίστες. Η εργασία περιλαμβάνει επίσης ανασκόπηση της βιβλιογραφίας και φωτογραφική ανάλυση. Μετά τις συνεντεύξεις, τα βασικά συμπεράσματα σχετικά με την καθυστέρηση της ανάπτυξης του τουρισμού στην περιοχή από την άποψη των ιθυνόντων ήταν η έλλειψη υποδομής, η ελλιπής διαφήμιση και η έλλειψη γνώσεων σχετικά με το θέμα του τουρισμού. Όσον αφορά την άποψη των τουριστών, υπογραμμίστηκε το κακό οδικό δίκτυο και το γεγονός ότι ορισμένα από τα μουσεία ήταν κλειστά. Όλα αυτά τα δεδομένα θα παρουσιαστούν σε ανάλυση SWOT για την καλύτερη κατανόηση των δυνατών σημείων του προορισμού, των αδυναμιών, των ευκαιριών καθώς και των απειλών.

Key Words: Τουρισμός· Τουριστικό μάντζμεντ· Αειφόρος ανάπτυξη· Βιώσιμη τουριστική ανάπτυξη· Εναλλακτικός τουρισμός

Abstract in English

The following research examines the tourism sector in a village complex in the region of Ioannina: the Mastorohoria villages belonging in the Municipality of Konitsa. The existing bibliography on this topic is limited because of the fact that the development of tourism in Mastorohoria villages has been delayed compared to other areas of the region, such as Metsovo village. For this reason, the bibliographic sources of this research are tourist guides, some historical books concerning the culture of each village and some books and researches of the Professor of Greek Folklore Vassilis Nitsiakos. The main purpose of this research is to understand and analyze the reasons for which a place rich in natural and cultural resources has not developed the tourism sector yet. To answer this question it is very important not only to have a bibliography review, but also to visit the villages in order to observe how people work on tourism and to talk with both stakeholders and tourists on this subject by taking interviews and collect some photographs of the region.

As a result, this thesis opts for a qualitative methodology which is based on interviews. Different interviews were conducted with stakeholders and to tourists. The thesis includes also a literature review and a photographic analysis. After the interviews, the main conclusions concerning the delay of the development of tourism in the region from the stakeholders' point of view were the lack of the infrastructure, the incomplete advertising, and the lack of knowledge on the subject of tourism. Concerning the tourists' point of view, most of them underlined the bad road network, and, in many cases, the fact that some of the museums were closed. All these data are going to be presented in a SWOT analysis in order to better understand the strong points of the destination, the weaknesses, the opportunities as well as the threats.

Keywords: Tourism; Tourism management; Sustainable development; Sustainable tourism development; Special and alternative forms of tourism

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Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
INSETI	Greek Tourism Confederation
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

Mastorohoria villages belong to the Municipality of Konitsa in the Prefecture of Ioannina in Greece. It is a complex of villages rich in natural and cultural resources and its history is lost in the depth of the centuries.

The first residents of these villages worked as craftsmen of the stone, hagiographers or painters, and wood carvers. They traveled all over the world building bridges, windmills, mosques or decorated the churches with hagiographies.

The natural landscape of the region consists of imposing mountains and large rivers. Flora and fauna of rare beauty complete the beauty of the landscape.

However, when visiting these villages, one can note that not a lot of people have discovered this region. Although the fact that there are enough hotels in the region, it seems that tourism hasn't been developed yet since there isn't an important number of tourists.

Searching on bibliography in order to find data concerning the tourism sector in the region, no information is appeared. Neither the employees of the Municipality of Konitsa have any data concerning this subject.

For this reason, the purpose of this research is to find out the reasons why Mastorohoria villages haven't developed enough the tourism sector. It is very important to ask both stakeholders and tourists what type of activities one can do while staying in these villages, what the positive features and weaknesses of the region are and in which way stakeholders believe that they can improve the situation.

The first chapters of this research study the history, the culture and the natural environment of the region. Next, today's situation is studied in order to find out what residents do nowadays and in which percentage they are involved in tourism. In the following chapters the selected research method and research tools are described in detail. The following chapter undertakes an analysis of the research material and the results of the research. Finally, it is important to study in which way and percentage stakeholders of other villages, such as Metsovo village, have succeeded to develop tourism in their region and make some suggestion concerning the sustainable tourism development of Mastorohoria villages.

Chapter.1: Tourism development and sustainability

Tourism is a tool for communities to develop their economies as it offers direct, indirect and induced employment and income, spurring regional and local economic development. It is an ongoing process and it is best suited as a supplement to a local community for achieving development (Aref et al., 2010).

Except the fact that it helps local economies to be developed, it also contributes to improve the educational levels of the residents in order them to increase skills and knowledge. So, local communities decide to invest on tourism field in order to provide economic, social, cultural and overall development of the community (Aref et al., 2010).

As it concerns sustainability, recently, it has become a very significant goal for communities for through sustainability they achieve to preserve their available resources, tangible and intangible, and protect their environment (Hall & Richards, 2000, 5).

A basic characteristic of sustainability is that community has to actively participate in decision-making procedures. According to Hall & Richards (2000, 26):

“Community involvement in tourism planning will involve stakeholders with different interests and attitudes, and this diverse participation can lead to more consideration being given to tourism’s varied economic, environmental and social impacts”.

What one can understand, as a consequence, is that when local community and especially stakeholders undertake an active role, the positive results can be various concerning not only the local economy but also the environment and the society. The reason why that can be happened is because of the fact that stakeholders are closer to the developments and to problems that the community faces and thus it is easier them to propose effective solutions.

Chapter.2: Purpose of research and research question

The purpose of this research is to investigate both the views of the stakeholders of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages, as well as the views of the visitors concerning the tourism field. More specifically the main research question is why tourism hasn't been developed in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

Moreover, some sub queries that are going to be asked are if stakeholders – hotel owners and the employees of the Municipality of Konitsa – are satisfied with the number of tourists visiting Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

This is a very significant question for if stakeholders are satisfied with the annual number of tourists, then there isn't any purpose to answer to the main question of this research; but if they aren't satisfied, then it is very important them to explain what the problems on tourism development are on their belief.

In parallel, it is important to ask tourists about what they don't like concerning the destination as well in order to have a more objective opinion.

In addition, the research has to answer in the question of what tourists would want better concerning the destination and what stakeholders believe that they have to do to better develop tourism in the destination.

According to what has been mentioned above, Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages are destinations rich in natural and cultural resources. That means that every visitor has the opportunity to pass his time doing different activities according to his preferences.

However, it is observed that neither the municipality of Konitsa – including Mastorohoria villages – and the stakeholders nor the residents have a functional plan in developing the tourism sector in the region in a sustainable way.

So, first and foremost, it is significant to find out the reasons why tourism hasn't been developed in these places by asking both stakeholders and tourists as it is important to investigate the whole problematic from different points of view.

A hypothesis concerning the question why tourism sector in Mastorohoria villages hasn't been developed yet is because of the lack of an appropriate management and marketing plan.

Chapter.3: Case study

The chosen case study is referred to tourism development in a complex of villages in Eastern Ioannina, named Mastorohoria villages belonging to the Municipality of Konitsa.

It is a very good example of a destination rich in natural and cultural resources that has not achieved to thoroughly develop the tourism sector in a sustainable way and it is important to study the reasons why this is happening and to find out ways so that such regions to be able to sustainably be developed.

Despite of the local community's great history, rich gastronomy with local wine and recipes, stunning natural environment consisting of mountains, rivers, rich flora and fauna, and also hot baths and lakes on the top of the mountains, and unique architecture, stakeholders – both hotel owners and employees of the Municipality – haven't found the best fitted management plan in order to take advantage of the natural and cultural resources of the region.

More specifically, a photo analysis coming from personal archive concerning the natural and cultural environment will help the study so that the reader has a clear picture of the destination.

Afterward, through a short-range qualitative research, which lasted a week in late August, mainly in Konitsa, and one of the biggest villages of Mastorohoria, Pyrsoyianni, it is easy to find out the most important reasons about why this region haven't developed sustainable tourism yet, what stakeholders believe is wrong and what tourists believe about the destination.

At this point, a SWOT analysis will help this study to better organize the results of the interviews and better understand and identify the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats of the region.

Thus, the study will be able to accept or reject the fact that tourism development helps local communities to develop their economies, environments and society and to what extent the involvement of stakeholders can have positive effects on sustainable tourism development.

Chapter.4: Description of Mastorohoria villages

4a. Location and history

Mastorohoria villages are a complex of villages located at the northeast of Ioannina, Epirus, in Greece. Some of these villages are Vourbiani, Pyrsoyianni, Hioniades, Plikati, Playia, Amarantos Oxia, Lagada, Kefalohori, Kastaniani, Theotokos, Drosopigi, Gorgopotamos, and Asimohori. They administratively belong to the municipality of Konitsa, which is the main village¹. In the map below, one can see the exact position of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages on the map.

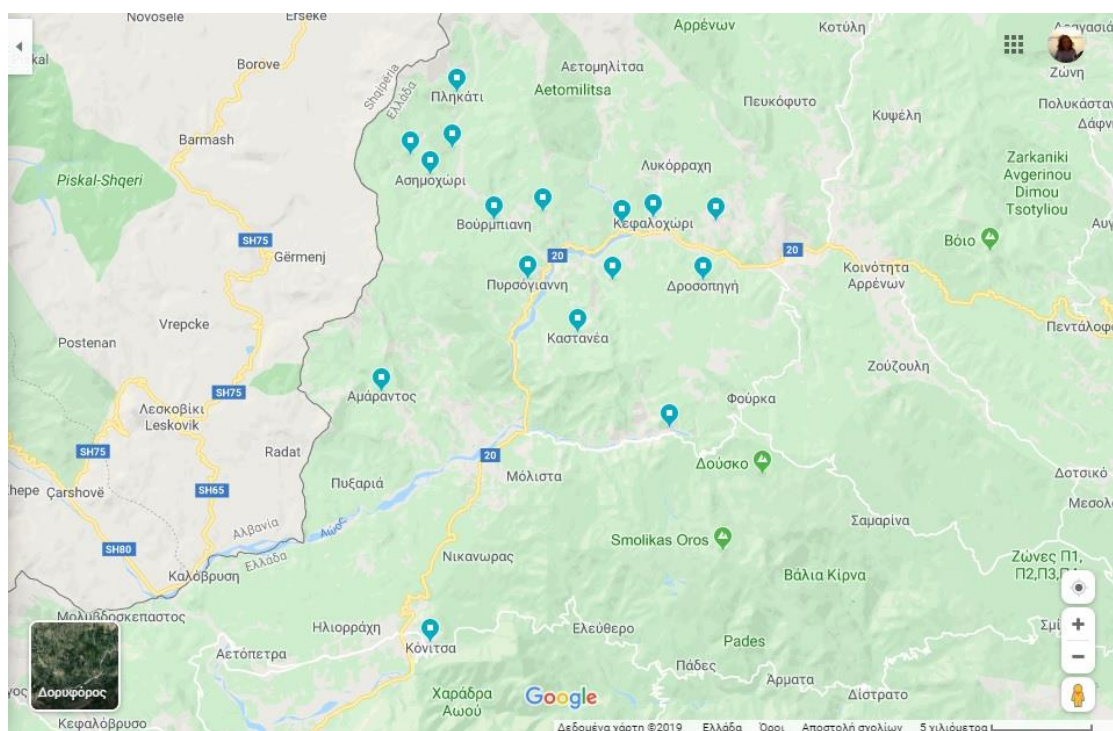


Figure 1: Source: Google Maps
Map of Mastorohoria villages

Around Mastorohoria villages one can find the mountain range of Grammos, and the mountains of Smolikas, Tymfi and Nemertsika. The presence of the liquid element is also intentional as there is Aios river, Voidomatis river, and Saradaporos river passing through the villages.

The date of inception of Mastorohoria villages is not established. It is estimated that the villages were established between 15th-16th (Sinanis, 2004) centuries when people and specifically Vlachs (Nitsiakos, 2008, 120) were trying to save themselves from the Turkish conquest. Such a landscape led most of the people to work as builders building houses, bridges, and churches

¹ Municipality of Konitsa, <http://www.konitsa.gr/visit/villages>

starting from this specific area and continuing in all over the world. The greatest work of these builders was Mount Athos, where a lot of generations of people coming from Pyrsoyianni were working there (Petronotis & Papageorgiou, 2008, v. A', 288).

More specifically, people coming from Pyrsoyianni village were skilled craftsmen of stone creating worker groups, named bouloukia, and building different buildings either in their region during the first years of their activity or more often, later, in other regions or even countries. They were leaving the villages before Easter, traveling to Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Persia and building churches, mosques, bridges, and watermills, and returning back at the feast of St. Dimitrios in November (Sinanis, 2004). Of course, they complementary dealt with agriculture and livestock. In other words, during the 19th century, these technical professions changed the physiognomy of the villages and helped to develop the folk art (Nitsiakos, 2008, 124).

In addition to this, not all the villages are known for the art of stone. In the case of Gorgopotamos village, on the one hand, for example, people were popular for their talent in woodcarving art. Carving knifers were working with patience and care on wood and the result of their art were placed in churches as decoration (Tatsis, 2010, 25). For two centuries – 18th-19th – these people were working on wood decorating not only the churches of Epirus but they were also traveling and working in Western Macedonia, in Thessaly, in Thrace, and in other countries such as Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, and Romania.

On the other hand, in the case of Hioniades village, people were famous painters. They were painting churches' icons. There were also cosmic painters who were involved in decorating houses or they were painting landscapes, portraits, and dead nature. People coming from Hioniades village were working in Epirus as well as in other parts of Greece and abroad. They followed the Neo-Russian style which they were taught in Mount Athos (Tatsis, 2009, 25-26).

To summarize, for more than three centuries, craftsmen have been traveling all over Greece and throughout the Balkan Peninsula. From the late 19th century, they began overseas trips to countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Congo, Persia, coastal Turkey, Russia, France and the Americas².

The craftsmen organized in groups – “bouloukia” – with unwritten strict regulations and hierarchy moved to different regions, constructing various buildings such as bridges, schools,

² Τα μπουλούκια – Bouloukia, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/ta-mpouloukia>

churches, mosques, hammam, mansions, mills, and lighthouses. Their itineraries are of great importance because they trace both the influence of local technique and the foreign influences brought back by the craftsmen. In this way, they established an indigenous architecture. The technique of the craftsmen is based on a deep knowledge of the strength and beauty of the materials³.

As it concerns the history of the Municipality of Konitsa it is worth noting that it got its name from the Slavs and in the Slavic language “Konitsa” means a horse land. Its history is lost in the depths of the centuries and it starts at 2200 B.C. when the first Greeks arrived there. Among these first Greeks there were a lot of Slavs and Molasses as well (Vlahos & Koliva, 2019, 3).

The area of Konitsa also lived strongly during the years of the Turkish occupation, as it is a place where Hamko, the mother Ali Passa, lived, and during the years of World War II. During World War II, the inhabitants of Konitsa as well as the inhabitants of the province in general, showed their patriotism during the Occupation and fought the conqueror, affiliated with the various resistance organizations.

Finally, Konitsa suffered new disasters at the end of December 1947 during the terrible period of the civil war with the destruction of entire families during the fierce armed conflicts that took place in the area (Vlahos & Koliva, 2019, 7-8).

4b. Environment

The landscape of Mastorohoria villages is characterized by a strong geological relief ranging. The wide altitude scale combined with the intense geographic relief and geological substrate creates slopes of diverse exposure and incline, characterized by local microclimate variations, which are in turn reflected in the flora. All the mountains of the area have steep slopes. There are a few gentler slopes as well, where the cultivated land of the several villages is located. Plains exist only in the basin of Konitsa and the surrounding villages (Prefecture of Ioannina, 2008, 13).

In the northern part of the region spreads a large section of the mountain range of Grammos which belongs both to Greece and Albania. Grammos is the fourth highest mountain in Greece.

³ Τα μπουλούκια – Bouloukia, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/ta-mpouloukia>

In regard to geology, impressive calcareous formations exist in several locations. In addition, tertiary sediments from the last ice age are found in several sites. Rapid torrents spring there; they flow more or less south in the wider area of Konitsa ending up at Saradaporos riverbed.

The mountain range of Grammos belongs to Natura 2000 as it conserves specialized agri-food species of rare species, such as the wild boar, the bear, and the golden eagle⁴.

Moreover, over the central and southeast parts of the wider area of Konitsa towers Smolikas Mountain, Greece's second highest mountain. Rapid small rivers, torrents, and streams flow at the slopes of Smolikas and its branches; all of them join the rivers of Saradaporos and Aoos (Prefecture of Ioannina, 2008, 19).

On its slopes we find black pine, rhombus, beech, fir, and a variety of deciduous trees. In their shade they find a shelter of roe deer, wolves, bears, many species of birds and reptiles (Prefecture of Ioannina, 2008, 54). Close to the highest peak of Smolikas there is a "dragon lake", one of the few alpine lakes in the country and also the home of the protected alpine triton (Basyiourakis, Dragon Lake – The peak of Smolikas, 2013).

As it concerns the rivers, Aoos, Saradaporos, and Voidomatis are the main rivers of the wider area of Mastorohoria villages.

Aoos springs on the slopes of mountains Avgo, Zygos, and Mavrovouni, then flows a distance of 70km up to the Greek-Albanian borderline and it ends up to its estuaries in the Adriatic Sea. Voidomatis' main springs are located at the central west Zagori and at Vikos gorge. As it flows further it forms Voidomatis gorge. Then it comes in the region of Konitsa where it joins Aoos River. Saradaporos wipes up several streams and torrents from the mountains of Grammos and Smolikas, until the borders of Albania where it joins Aoos River as well (Milas, Konitsa: Crossroads of three rivers and three mountains, 2013).

In general, the climate at the lower altitude zone is of the continental climate type, with characteristics between the Mediterranean and Middle Europe climate types. Cold, and rainy winters and warm, and dry summers; winter is extended, spring is usually short, summer is hot, and autumn is long (Prefecture of Ioannina, 2008, 24).

⁴ Όρος Γράμμος – Mount of Grammos, <http://www.konitsa.gr/visit/fusiko-perivallon-6/61-grammos>

It is important the fact that four large areas within the wider region of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages have been incorporated into the Natura 2000 European Network of Protected Areas. These areas are the National Park of Vikos-Aoos and the whole Tymfi Mountain range, the Smolikas mountain massif, and the majority of Grammos and Vassilitsa mountain massif (Ministry of Environment and Energy, Brief Maps of Natura 2000 areas).

A smaller area of Vikos-Aoos National Park, comprising Vikos gorge and Voidomatis River, has been declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Three other localities have also been proposed as AONB's: Aoos gorge, Saradaporos narrows, and the confluence of rivers Aoos and Voidomatis (Prefecture of Ioannina, 2008, 71).

In the map below, one can see each one of landscapes referred above.

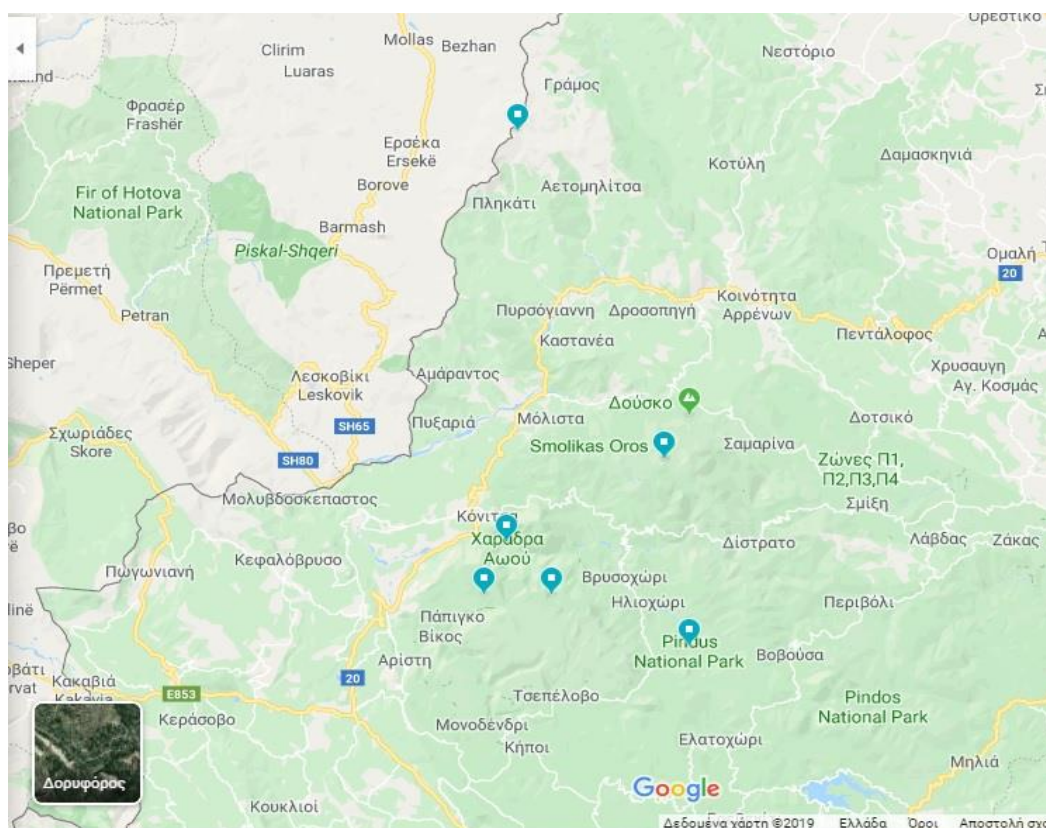


Figure 2: Source: Google Maps
Map of the natural landscapes

Finally, in the village of Amarantos one can find natural hot steam baths which operate with the natural use of hot air flowing through the interior of the earth making the unique Baths of their kind in Europe. The steam flow is natural and continuous all year round, making the experience particularly unique in the winter months. The temperature of the bath ranges from 33-38°C while the humidity depending on the degree of mixing with the ambient air is 97-100%⁵.

⁵ Λουτρά Αμάραντου – Amarantos Baths, <http://www.konitsa.gr/activity/iamatikos-tourismos-3/13-loutra-amarantou>

4c. Mastorohoria villages today

According to Greek Statistical Authority, in 2011, the population in the villages of Konitsa was 10,514⁶ and the average age was 50 years. Most of them are pensioners and employees⁷.

The diagram below shows the exact job situation in the region:

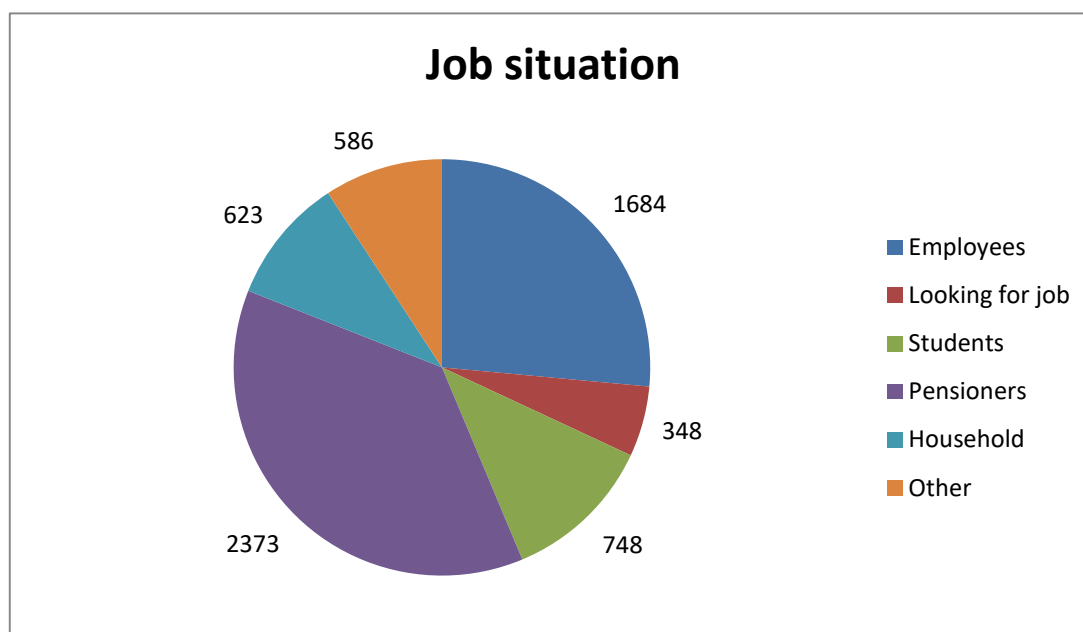


Table 1, Job situation in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages

It is obvious that the majority of population and specifically the 37.29% is older people who have stopped working and live with the state pensions. Another percentage of 27% of population is either students or unemployed or does the housework. So we conclude that there aren't a lot of people in these villages working in the different sectors of economic activity. In fact, the percentage of 35.68% of the total population is employees.

By extension, the data on employees by sector of economic activity are as follows:

⁶ Εφημερίδα της Κυβερνήσεως, Αρ. Φύλλου: 697 - Government Gazette, Sheet No: 697 https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/1210503/FEK_Nomimos_rev.pdf/9c385e3d-cd1c-4a9f-8caa-036bb1febe69

⁷ Δήμος Κόνιτσας – Απογραφή πληθυσμού – Κατοικιών 2011: Ανάλυση στοιχείων μόνιμου πληθυσμού – Municipality of Konitsa – population – housing census 2011: analysis of permanent population elements, <http://www.e-konitsa.gr/index.php/apogرافي-plithysmoy>

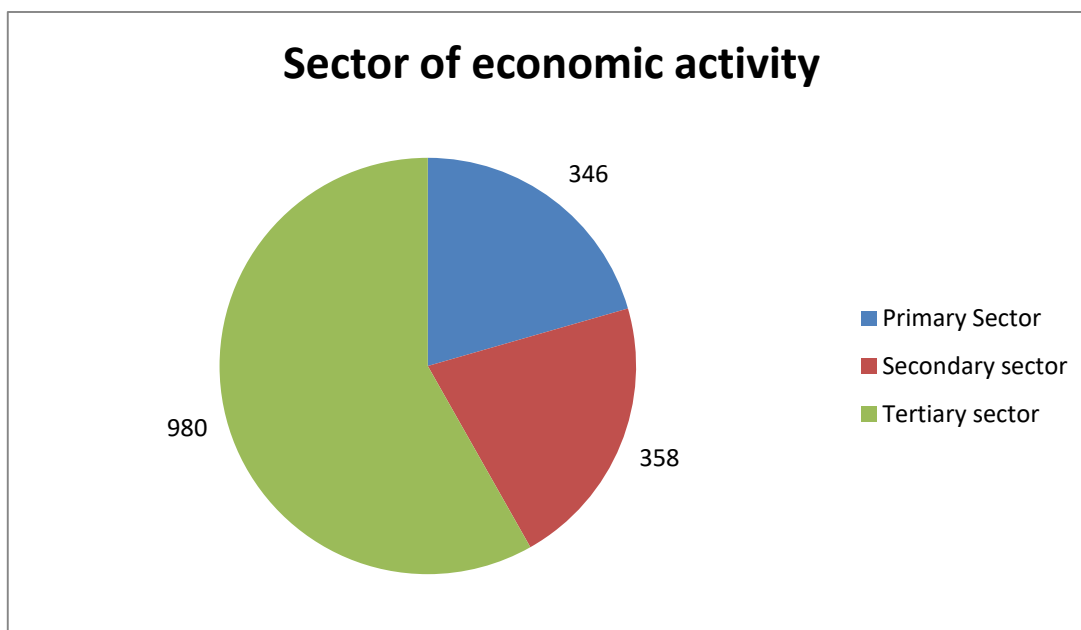


Table 2, Sector of economic activity in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages

The diagram above shows that nowadays increasingly less people decide to work in primary sector or even in secondary sector. Instead, they prefer to work in the tertiary sector as employees.

The tertiary sector is not related to the production of tangible goods or products, but is concerned with serving human needs through the provision of services such as hospital care, legal advice, education, etc. This sector comprises commerce, transport, communications, banking, tourism, as well as state responsibility for the production of intangible social goods such as health, administration, education, etc.

In numbers, 1,684 of total employees, the percentage of 58.19% of people works in the tertiary sector while the rest 41.80 is equally divided into the primary and secondary sectors of economic activity.

4d. Photographic analysis

At this point of the study it is very significant to have a photographic analysis coming from photographs from the researcher's archive in order to better understand some of the most basic characteristics of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages especially as it concerns the natural and cultural environment and resources of the destination.



1. Source: Author, 03/2015
The Bridge of Konitsa - 19th Century

The area of Konitsa, as well as the Region of Epirus as a whole, is characterized by the existence of stone arched bridges that are a distinctive element of cultural heritage while being landmarks for the area. Their design, form and harmonization with the natural environment make them a special tourist resource attracting visitors both from Greece and abroad. In addition, their association with the productive activity of the past in conjunction with their resistance to time and present conditions intensify their historical value.

More specifically, at the entrance of the village of Konitsa, the first thing a tourist can see is the most important stone Bridge of Konitsa. This bridge is the symbol of the region and of its modern history. It is the entrance to Aoos Gorge. The Bridge of Konitsa was built in 1871 by Ziogas Frontzos, a master craftsman. It gives the impression that it naturally joins the masses to the right and left of it with a single arch of 19.25m.

Separate project with arch opening 35.60m. It is considered to be the largest single-arched bridge in the Balkans and it gains contemporary admiration and glory not only to the master but also to its sponsors: Ioannis Loulis banker, Vassilis and Alcibiades Liabey, Angeliki Papazogloy and Germanos Bishop of the region of Vellas and Konitsa. Its construction cost was 120,000 rupees, and under the direction of Ziogas Frontzou worked over 50 craftsmen coming from Pyrsoyianni village and more specifically pelicans, builders, stone miners, molds, limes,

conveyors. Since then the bridge, after having escaped its blast in 1913 during the Balkan Wars, has continued to serve many people until nowadays⁸.

The Konitsa Bridge is an amazing architectural project. Tourists crossing it are like walking the paths of craftsmen in the past centuries.



2. Source: Author, 03/2015
Hamko's house

Hamko was the mother of Ali Passa of Ioannina and she was born and raised in Konitsa.

As it concerns her house, it is a complex of 18th and 19th century buildings, few of which are preserved today and consisted of Zainel Bey's seraglio of Ali Passas' grandfather on his mother's side, Hamko.

According to the descriptions at the official website of the Municipality of Konitsa the buildings were surrounded by a tall enclosure with loopholes and secret entrances. The fort structure of the residential complex and the imposing construction of the buildings revealed the wealth and power of this powerful family that was the most prominent of the Konitsa Muslims with a large fortune in the area and tsiflikia – it is the name for the large estates during the Turks occupation – in Thessaly⁹.

⁸ Γεφύρι Κόνιτσας – Konitsa Bridge, <http://www.konitsa.gr/visit/gefiria-7/17-gepuri-konitsas>

⁹ Οικιστικό συγκρότημα Χάμκως – Hamko's residential complex, <http://www.konitsa.gr/visit/othomanika-mnimeia-9/7-oikistiko-sugkrotema-camkos>

Visiting Hamko's house is a great opportunity the tourists to come in touch with the beginning of the history of Ali Passas of Ioannina.



3. Source: Author, 08/2019
Information Center of Konitsa

Visiting the Municipality of Konitsa nowadays one can see the Information Center located in the center of Konitsa, opposite the Town Hall. Even the Information Center is built by stones.

It operates from 9 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the afternoon and tourists visiting it have the chance to talk with employees of the Municipality who they propose them different activities according to what each one of them wants to do and to see in the region. Every employee is well-informed and gives specific directions to tourists who want to visit Mastorohoria villages.

The center is well-organized offering information leaflets to tourists, and tourist guides both in Greek and English language. There is also a television showing videos from the region, activities

people doing on the mountain and in the river and as a result tourists get a picture of what they can do and see in the region and the villages around of it.



4. Source: Author, 04/2016
Aaos River and Gorge

Aaos River originates from the mountainous complex north of Metsovo and after crossing 68km in Greek territory passes to Albania and flows into the Adriatic Sea. The Aaos Gorge is in the province of Konitsa, and its width ranges from 2-5 km. It consists of slopes with steep slopes up to 2000-2400 m altitude and is flooded with vegetation. It is a harmonious ecosystem where a large number of plants and animals coexist, including rare species of flora and fauna.

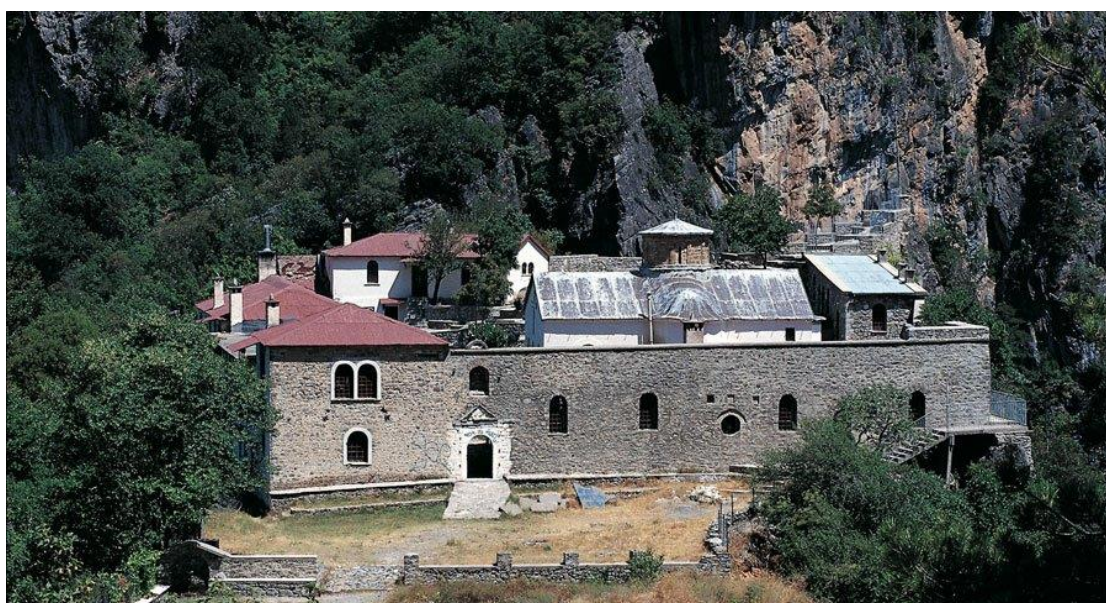
It belongs to global Geoparks Network of UNESCO with Vikos as well. According to UNESCO's information:

"The Geopark covers an area of unspoiled panoramic mountainous landscape including the most impressive gorges in northwestern Greece, Vikos and Aaos. The Geopark has high geological diversity and an exceptional variety of natural habitats, ranging from lowland to

Alpine landscape. The Geopark's management consortium is responsible for a sustainable tourist industry in which local communities are integrated¹⁰.

The trekking path of Aoos Gorge starts after passing across the Konitsa Bridge up to Stomio Monastery¹¹ after 5km of easy walking. It is an easy walking path and tourists need only an hour to reach Stomio Monastery.

On the way, hikers have the Aoos River on their left. As they progress along the route and the altitude rises, the river disappears and hikers find themselves in a dense forest surrounded by various kinds of trees and plants.



5. Source: Author, 04/2016
Stomio Monastery

Stomio Monastery is located in the end of Aoos Gorge and it is dedicated to Theotokos and was built in 1590 on the opposite side of the gorge. In 1774 it was moved to its present position because, it is said, the Holy Icon of the Monastery went miraculously there¹².

In Stomio Monastery, Saint Paisios lived for four years, from 1958 to 1962, at the beginning of his monastic life, before crossing the Sinai and ending on Mount Athos. In fact, he is considered the renovator of the monastery, having personally managed and restored it, even carrying heavy loads under the river, mobilizing and sensitizing the inhabitants of the surrounding

¹⁰ Eleven sites added to global Geoparks Network, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/eleven_sites_added_to_global_geoparks_network/

¹¹ Διαδρομές πεζοπορίας – Hiking trails, <https://mpourazani.eu/el/activ/diaromes-pezoporias/>

¹² Ιερά Μονή Παναγίας Στομίου – Κόνιτσα – Holy Monastery of Panayia of Stomio – Konitsa, <http://www.monastiria.gr/iera-moni-stomiou-konitsas/>

villages, collecting donations from pious people, gathering, making frames, floors, roofs, like a carpenter himself (Sotiropoulos, Journey to the Holy Monastery of Stomio Konitsa, where Saint Paisios practiced for 4 years, 2015).

The small church of the monastery is simple and devout. Although most of the frescoes have been destroyed, in the interior the time seems to have stopped. In the church the pilgrim can pray undistracted.

The Abbot of the Monastery with another monk formed the present Brotherhood and held the historic Monastery open.

For visitors who are interested in religious tourism, Stomio Monastery has to be the first stop in Konitsa. Moreover, in Konitsa there is also the house of Saint Paisios which everyone can visit it while next to it there is the house of his relatives who present Saint Paisios life to visitors.



6. Source: Author, 04/2016
Saint Paisios hagiography

Tourists can find a hagiography of unique beauty of Saint Paisios at Agia Varvara church. The small church of Agia Varvara is called by the locals as the "balcony" of Konitsa. The view is panoramic as tourists can see the whole area of Konitsa town.

To reach Agia Varvara church, the visitors pass through the beauty of the trees. Here again Saint Paisios made the journey and he was watching at this nave where the Virgin Mary was presented for the second time and gave him the Divine Grace of Providence¹³.



7. Source: Author, 08/2019
Panoramic view of Konitsa

In the photograph above, a panoramic view of Konitsa is presented. As anyone can see all the houses are built in an amphitheatric way so as everyone has a view of the valley and the river.

Especially in the past years, but even today, this is a very practical way of building the village, offering not only a view for all the inhabitants, but easier access for all to the cultivated areas around the river.

Much more today, visitors have the great opportunity to stay at hotels offering this view for a lot of past buildings became hotels nowadays and they are included in the existing data of the hotel numbers of the region.

¹³ Εκκλησιάκι Αγίας Βαρβάρας - The small church of Agia Varvara, <http://www.konitsa.gr/visit/ieroi-naoi-4/74-ekklesaki-agias-barbaras>



8. Source: Author, 08/2019
Sarantaporos River

Some kilometers out of Konitsa village, before arriving at Bourazani village, tourists can have a stop at this point of Sarantaporos River.

Until it joins the river Aoos, which is a tributary, it runs the land of Epirus for about 40km almost on the border of Greece with Albania, on the borders of the prefectures of Kastoria and Ioannina.

In the riparian forests live the wolf, the bear, the roe deer and the otter. In the past, and before the opening of the Konitsa - Kozani road, its waters lived among other species of fish fauna and abundant trout (Athanasiadis, Sarantaporos counts its villages, 2017).

Especially during the summer months, tourists can swim in the calm waters of Sarantaporos at this point. However, the water is really cold both during the winter and in the summer.



9. Source: Author, 10/2018
Pyrsoyianni village

After about an hour driving from Konitsa one can easily arrive at Pyrsoyianni village. Pyrsoyianni is the central village of Mastorohoria villages. As in Konitsa, so in Pyrsoyianni village, the houses are built in an amphitheatric way so as everyone can have a view to the valley.

From 1999 to 2010 it was the seat of the Municipality of Mastorohoria. Since 2011, under the law "Kallikratis", has been a Local Community of the Municipality of Konitsa¹⁴.

The houses in the village of Pyrsoyianni started being built in the 17th century. As it has been said before, Pyrsoyianni was one of the main villages from where craftsmen were leaving every spring in order to build stone buildings, such as churches, bridges etc and returned back in the beginning of the autumn, specifically on October.

Walking in Pyrsoyianni one can admire a harmonious set of old stone houses, with wooden frames, stone fountains, cobblestones, spliced walls, miter, and doors covered with slate, all of them marvelous architectural works of the craftsmen of stone.

¹⁴ Πυρσόγιαννη – Pyrsoyianni, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/pirsogianni>

In the entrance of the villages, visitors can admire the traditional square with stone buildings built from the craftsmen. After this, they can continue visiting some of the most important buildings of the village.



10. Source: Author, 10/2018
St. Nicholas church

The next stop is at St. Nicholas church. It is located in a very beautiful point with a stunning view. Outside of the church there is enough space where different cultural events are often organized. Its roof consists of three slopes and was built in 1772. In the loggia and the belfry there are stone figures. All these characteristics and details make it be a unique example of old church architecture¹⁵.

¹⁵ Πυρσόγιαννη – Pyrsoyianni, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/pyrsogianni>



11. Source: Author, 10/2018
St. Georgios church

Walking among the houses, high on the upper neighborhood dominates the temple St. George of 1904 in an older temple position of 1712. It impresses with its technique. Its wood-carved iconostasis is a work by the talisman Vassilis Skalistis from the village of Turnovo – Gorgopotamos, Konitsa. The icons of the iconostasis are the work of the painters-hagiographers brothers Christodoulou and Thomas, coming from Hionades. The impressive blue decoration was painted by Miltiades Nikolic at 1938 from Serbia, handicapped by one hand.

Another worth-making stop would be the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen”, located in an old primary school, built in 1845, but it hasn’t operated yet. It closed in 1986. The same year, at the initiative of the "Pyrsoyianni’s Progressive Union", repairs began to transform it into the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen”¹⁶.

¹⁶ Πυρσόγιαννη – Pyrsoyianni, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/pyrsogianni>



12. Source: Author, 10/2018
Museum of Chionadites Painters

Continuing from Pyrsoyianni village, after half an hour driving and passing through some Mastorohoria villages, such as Vourbiani and Asimohori, one can arrive at Hionades village. It is a beautiful and traditional village. It is located at an altitude of 1120m., and has only 42 inhabitants, according to the Municipality of Konitsa data.

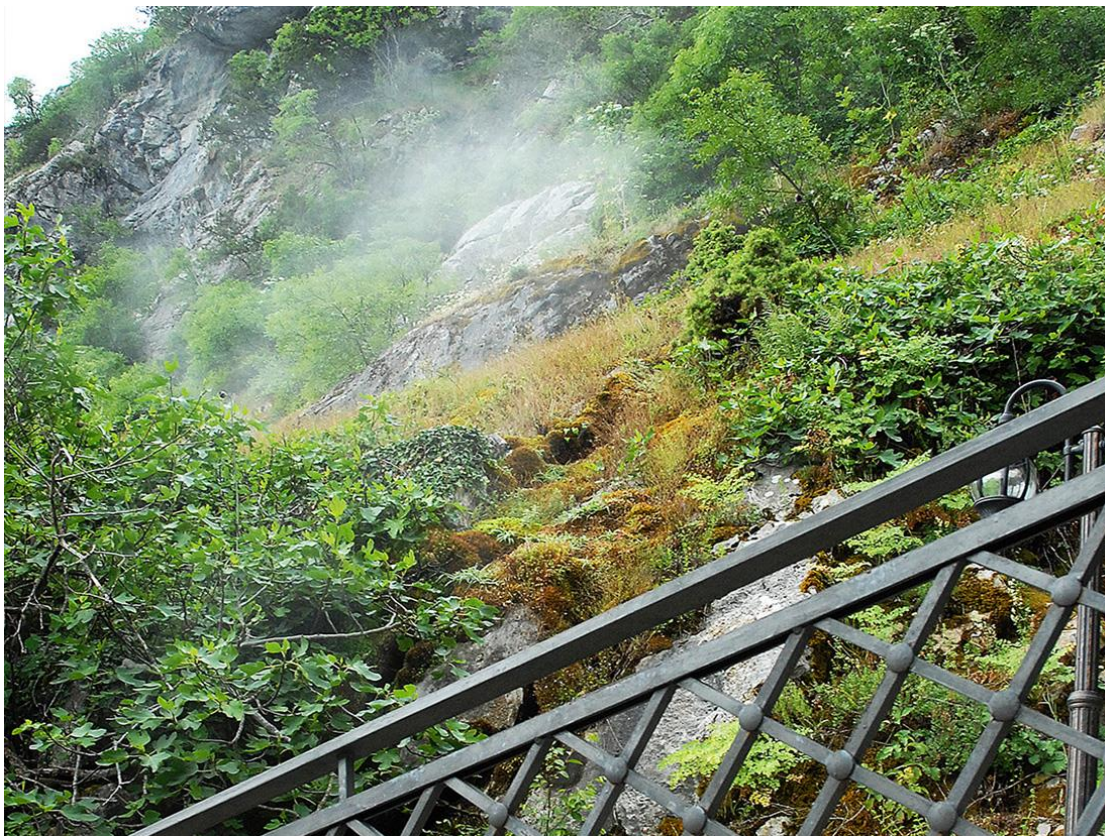
The small community of Hionades is linked in time to the family tradition of Hionades hagiographers or painters who have lived in the Balkans for nearly two and a half centuries creating elaborate ecclesiastical and folk paintings.

For this reason, a “Museum of Chionadites painters” is going to operate in the village. More specifically, the “Museum of Chionadites painters” is going to be housed in the building of the old school of Hionades which is being renovated for this purpose. Its collections include works by Chionadites painters and hagiographers such as portable wood and cloth icons, drawings and flowers, painters and carved chests, and more¹⁷.

It also includes their work accessories, standard notebooks, agreements, photos and other life and art documents. The Museum has important archives that will be used to promote the art of the snow painters.

Much more, visiting the village tourists one more time have the chance to admire the work of the craftsmen in the different building and houses as well as in the bridge of the village.

¹⁷ Οι Χιονάδες και το Μουσείο Χιοναδιτών ζωγράφων – αγιογράφων – Hionades and the Museum of Chionadites painters – hagiographers, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/ta-mouseia-ton-mastorohorion/mouseio-xioniaditon-zografon>

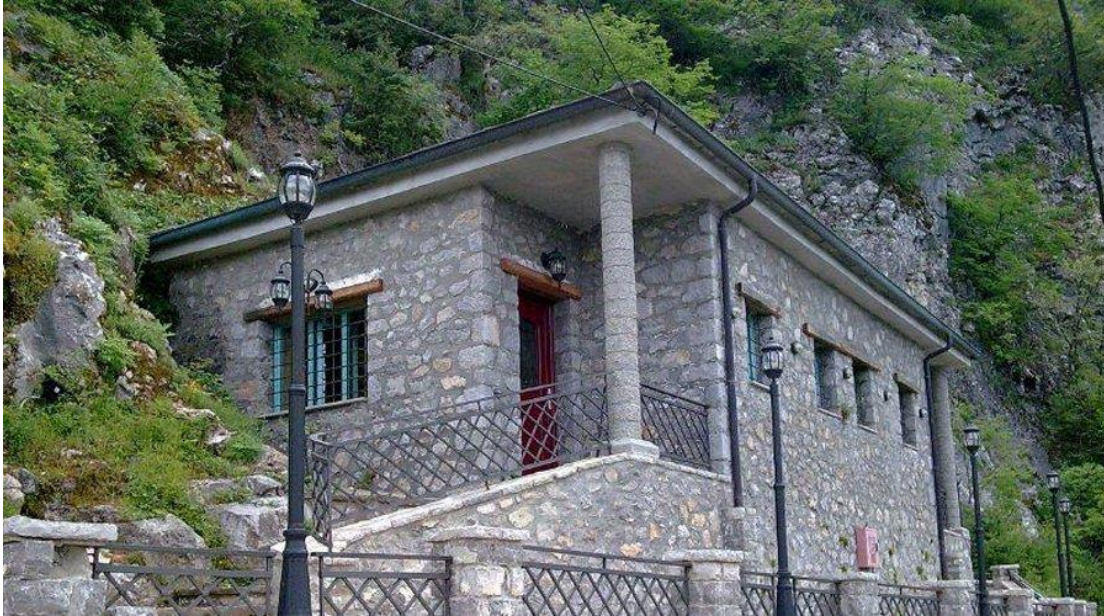


13. Source: Author, 10/2018
Hot baths of Amarantos village

Returning back to Konitsa, one can turn right at this point of the road that leads to Amarantos village with 110 inhabitants. It is a really difficult road but it worth making it. The impressive characteristic of this village is its natural thermal spa with hot steam coming from the ground 5km away from the center of the village at the altitude of 1260m where there are only 10 inhabitants.

Today the exploitation of resources is owned by the body that was created in the form of a Community-Based Community Company, in accordance with article 45 of Law 1416/84 under the name “Amarantos Development Company SA”. The Company's shareholders are: Amarantos Community with 55%, natural persons originating from Amaranth with 43%, and Epirus SA with 2%.

For the present exploitation and exploitation of the springs there is a 1940 building and then temporary accommodation was made by private individuals coming from Amarantos (Garagouni & Dimitroulia, 1981).



14. Source: Author, 10/2018
Thermal spa of Amarantos village

In the photograph above is the building of the thermal spa of Amarantos village. As it has been said before, the thermal spa of Amarantos village offers therapeutic properties. It operates mainly during the summer months, specifically from June to September, where the temperature is very low at this village because of the fact that it is located in an altitude of 1260m.



15. Source: Author, 10/2018
Dragon Lake at Amarantos village

Before leaving Amarantos village, one can pass his time doing trekking into the woods of the village. After an hour of walking, tourists can reach two Dragon Lakes. The landscape is ideal for relaxing and enjoying the tranquility as a lot of different trees and plants create unique scenery.

Much more, there are a lot of different species of birds living in the forest. People may not see them but they will surely have the chance to hear them.



16. Source: Author, 04/2016
Folklore Museum of Kerasovo

Another beautiful village worth visiting it is Kerasovo or Agia Paraskevi. Apart from the traditional architecture, tourists can also visit its Folklore Museum. The Museum has been operating in Agia Paraskevi since August 2010.

It is an important attraction as it houses more than 400 exhibits in a stone-built preserved building on the village square. The locals offered the best relics they had in their homes, and the result is that our Folklore Museum is included in the showcases of real treasures¹⁸.

More specifically, visitors have the chance to admire traditional costumes, centuries-old utensils, such as looms, velentzes as the wallets are named in Ioannina, even musical instruments and school objects.

¹⁸ Λαογραφικό Μουσείο – Folklore Museum, <http://www.kerasovo.gr/article.php?cat=122>



17. Source: Author, 04/2016
Mt. Smolikas

Climbing is perhaps the only activity in the mountain tourism sector, which has been well developed in recent years in the wider area of Konitsa. It occurs on most slopes, both at low and high altitudes (Lambris and Papaioannou, 2001).

The routes to Konitsa are characterized as local routes. These are reported at the regional level and to a lesser extent, utilize local resources and are dictated by the character of each region (Papaioannou, 1998).

The most usual trekking path is the one starting from Palioseli up to the Dragon Lake and to the top of Smolikas Mountain and finally down to Agia Paraskevi. This trekking path passes the Palioseli shelter at 1550m and the Dragon Lake at the altitude of 2150m and it can include reaching the top of the mountain depending on the experience of the hikers. The total journey time is estimated at eight and a half hours. Including the journey from the Dragon Lake to the top of Smolikas and back to the Dragon Lake is two hours longer.

Smolikas Mountain is the second higher mountain in Greece after the Olympus Mountain and it belongs and is protected by NATURA 2000 Network¹⁹ for its alpine landscape, a type of landscape that rarely one can find in Greece.

¹⁹ NATURA 2000 – Standard Data Form, <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=GR2130002>



18. Source: Author, 04/2016
The Dragon Lake on Mt. Smolikas

Reaching the Dragon Lake, which belongs and is protected by NATURA 2000 Network as well as Smolikas Mountain, being included in the category and region of Mount Tymfi²⁰, only some meters before the top of Smolikas Mountain, hikers have the chance to admire a lake in the shape of a heart and unique scenery while they can see up to Olympus Mountain. In all the way long, there are different signs so as hikers not to lose their way to the Dragon Lake of Smolikas Mountain.

²⁰ NATURA 2000 – Standard Data Form,
<http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=GR2130009#4>

Chapter.5: Management of cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is the past that human beings and their manifestations created. Cultural heritage can be the different monuments built by our ancestors and even small objects that people used to use in the past and which have now been replaced with more sophisticated ones.

Today, cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible heritage. As it has been said, tangible heritage can be buildings, rural landscapes, villages, art collections, artifacts in museums, handicrafts and antiques, but it can also be non material elements of culture, for example, traditional songs and dances, ceremonies, and folklore (Timothy, 2011, 3).

According to UNESCO, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes that:

“Cultural heritage is not limited to material manifestations, such as monuments and objects that have been preserved over time. This notion also encompasses living expressions and the traditions that countless groups and communities worldwide have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants, in most cases orally.” (UNESCO, 2003) (Akagawa & Smith, 2009, 45).

Moreover and in addition to the definitions above “cultural heritage management aims to preserve and care for a representative sample of humanity’s cultural heritage for future generations” (McKercher & Du Cros, 2012, 45) because of the reason that caring for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage is becoming increasingly important.

As it has been said and described above, Mastorohoria villages are rich in natural environment and cultural heritage tangible and intangible. Each one of the villages has its own unique beauty and history and manages this heritage in a different and autonomous way.

In Konitsa village, which is the main village, some important cultural and environmental associations operate with the aim to protect and enhance the environment and the history of the villages.

More specifically, these are the "Sports-cultural-ecological association - Tymfi", the "Decorative and progressive association of Konitsa", the "Mountaineering Association", "Cultural

association Saint Nicholas", the "Cultural association - The roots", and the "Cultural association - Panagia Stomiou"²¹.

The Municipality of Konitsa is moving forward to participate as a lead partner in the cross-border program "Interreg Greece-Albania 2014-2020" called "Stone Art". Participating partners are the University of Ioannina (Department of Architecture), the Municipality of Premetis in Albania and the University of Argyrokastró (Department of History/Geography). Such participation is very important firstly because of the fact that in this way it is easier to protect this cultural heritage and secondly it is a great chance Municipality of Konitsa to develop its cultural tourism²².

The Stone Art proposal by the Municipality of Konitsa includes the reconstruction of a building that will be used as a research center for the Art of Stone. Other actions will also be launched such as the digitized display of architectural monuments²³. The project is 100% funded – 85% European resources and 15% national participation – while the project budget will be indicative of 700,000€ where the Municipality of Konitsa is offering the amount of 351,000€.

As it concerns the village of Pyrsoyianni, the "Progressive Union of Pyrsoyianni" was found in 1926 by craftsmen. The idea was to build ornate works without any state sponsorship but with donations from the members of the association and volunteer work. In the 1970s, systematic research began on the Mastorohoria, their masters and their work. It was an initiative of the "Progressive Union of Pyrsoyianni" which evolved into a large collective work, involving actors and individuals from all the villages. Rare material was collected about technique, itineraries, tools, secret language – koudaritika –, agreements, craftsmanship and material from daily life and working conditions during their travels. They achieved their vision and as a result the "Progressive Union of Pyrsoyianni" was awarded by the Academy of Athens in 1997.

Nowadays, in Pyrsoyianni village, there are two museums; the one of the "Museum of Epirus Craftsmen" and the other one of the "Museum of Chionadites Painters and Hagiographers". Their activities and pursuits include all-round publications, electronic productions (multimedia, CD-ROM, internet), holding small scientific meetings, organizing educational programs, as well

²¹ Σύλλογοι – Associations, <http://www.konitsa.gr/clubs>

²² Ψηφιοποιώντας τα πέτρινα μνημεία – Digitalizing the stone museums, <https://www.agon.gr/epikairoτητα/13270/psifiopoiontas-ta-petrina-mnimeia/>

²³ Παραδοσιακές Σχολές για το τυρί και την πέτρα - Traditional schools of cheese and stone, https://www.economistas.gr/koinonia/10149_paradosiakes-sholes-tyrokomikis-kai-petras

as exhibitions, lectures and courses on folk architecture, woodcarving and painting. The aim of the two Museums is to continue, and complete, the detailed recording and synthetic highlighting of their rich material using modern methods and instruments (Papageorgiou, 2005, 112-113).

A Center for the Study of Traditional Architecture is also going to operate at Pyrsoyianni village and deal with the study of this cultural heritage and the history behind these buildings having built by these craftsmen.

More specifically, on the one hand, the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen” has been designed to meet all specifications of modern European museums. Functional, with conditions of safety, appropriate lighting and temperature, with original, comprehensible and explanatory classification of material, it will be a versatile space for research, curriculum development, events, periodical exhibitions and a study center for folk architecture. The aim is to contribute strongly to the promotion of inter-Balkan communication, being close to major centers of traditional architecture, such as the Mastorohoria villages of Vojo (Anaselitsa), Kastoria, Florina, Tzoumerka, but also outside borders, such as Cologne, Koronia, Opari, Elbasan and Dibra in Albania. The old Elementary School of the village will provide its roof for the installation of the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen”²⁴ and the Cultural Center.

On the other hand, the “Museum of Chionadites Painters and Hagiographers” is housed in the renovated former elementary school of the village. It has extensive collections, part of which, since 2012, is on display every August.

Painting in the village of Hionades in Konitsa was developed alongside other arts, such as the ones of the carpenter and the carving knifer, but it was the one that made the village more widely known. The Hionades painters toured the villages of the area and elsewhere in Epirus, reaching as far as Northern Epirus, Macedonia, Mount Athos, Thessaly, the former Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, where they painted churches and decorated temples.

²⁴ Μουσείο των Ηπειρωτών Μαστόρων – Museum of Epirus Craftsmen, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/ta-mouseia-ton-mastorohorion/mouseio-hpeiroton-mastoron>

Works of Hionades are also found in other areas of our country, such as Ionian Islands and Central Greece. There are testimonies that pictures been made by people having come from Hionades on Mount Athos were being sent to neighboring countries and to Russia²⁵.

As it concerns Kefalohori village, the descendants of Makaristos Papas-Thomas Fasoulis, Dimitris and Vassiliki, have established a folklore museum in their hometown, where they exhibit folk, rural, pastoral and warlike objects that they have collected in love. In the same area there is a rich library with photographic historical documents of the village and our wider area.

This Museum-House is dedicated to the old traditional way of life and survival of the inhabitants of the village. Agricultural, livestock and shepherd tools are also on display, as well as those of other traditional village professionals, such as tailor, shoemaker, thrower, conductor, carpenter, and harvester. At the same time, the presentation is combined with similar photographic material, but also with rare books of social and folklore interest about the village and the wider area.

Military and war material is also on display at the Museum, mainly from the period 1940-1949. There is also a landscaped room where a library of varying interest is housed. Rare books about the Civil War period and unique photographic material stand out (Provopoulos, "The Museum of Takis Fasoulis at Likorachi", 2013).

In Pyrsoyianni, the cultural contribution of the "Pyrsoyiannites Progressive Union" is important and has a long-term work to do. Theatrical, musical and poetic evening is organized in Kastaniani in summer. In Kefalohori a pure Community Enterprise has been established under the name "Kefalohori Cultural Center" to promote cultural, athletic and environmental issues and the elementary school room has been refurbished into a Folklore Museum.

Finally, in Kerasovo, Agia Paraskevi, of Konitsa the Brotherhood of Kerasovo has been operating since 1959. People who participate in this association try to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the village. Every year, they organize different themed festivals concerning the customs of Kerasovo village such as traditional dances and Epirus songs, the customs of the marriage etc.

²⁵ Οι Χιονιάδες & το Μουσείο Χιοναδιτών Ζωγράφων – Hionades people & the Museum of Hionades Painters and Hagiographers, <http://pyrsogianni.gr/ta-mouseia-ton-mastorohorion/mouseio-xioniaditon-zografon>

Thus, the positive impacts of cultural heritage management can be numerous. Reinvigoration of traditional culture can occur and opportunities can arise to develop local economies to be more entrepreneurial and self-reliant.

Moreover, revenue from tourism can be directed to local infrastructure improvement or it can be reinvested in documentation, planning, and management of heritage assets. This is important for the sustainability of assets that attract heavy visitation, as Paisios' or Hamko's house is.

Finally, it is also important the fact that cultural exchange with tourists can lead to greater tolerance of cultural differences in multicultural society (McKercher & Du Cros, 2012, 62). This is very significant for the region of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages because of the fact that in recent years, in these areas, large numbers of refugees have been host after the outbreak of war in Syria. So, although they were smoothly integrated into society, it is needed residents to come in touch with different cultures and to proceed to cultural exchange.

Chapter.6: Tourism in Mastorohoria villages

In 1976, the Study of the General Development of the Border Regions of Epirus, which deals with the area of Konitsa, is underway. The results and the conclusions of this study were on the one hand, the reduction of the population of Konitsa village between the years 1961-1971, and on the other hand, the abandonment of the land («Μελέτη Γενικής Αναπτύξεως των Παραμεθόριων περιοχών της Ηπείρου» - “Study on the General Development of the Border Regions of Epirus”, 1976).

A series of protection measures were proposed for the “traditional houses”. More specifically, some of these measures were the creation of a register of monuments and houses in each settlement, special incentives for repatriated immigrants to settle in their village, reward and special subsidy for those who repair or build traditional houses, purchase and distribution of traditional materials, creating local building conditions etc.

The development sectors included the natural environment and tourism with the potential to exploit traditional settlements, create winter tourism through the creation of a Winter Sports Center, and exploit the Vikos-Aoos mountainous area.

The study was important because it highlighted the value of traditional settlements as an investment with the incentives that it proposes to maintain the architectural style of the region so as the number of visitors to be increased.

After a decade, in 1989, the Agriculture Bank conducted a study entitled “Integrated Rural Development Program (Konitsa-Kavasila-Amarantos-Agia Varvara)”. The study describes the region of Konitsa as a developed region with young inhabitants who work in tourism sector as well. It refers to the natural and cultural environment of the destination and it notes that a lot of traditional houses offer some rooms as tourist settlements.

The functional unity of the area between the town of Konitsa and its villages is considered essential for its balanced development, as well as the utilization of the natural landscape and resources for tourist development. But it is also important to take into account the rich history and culture of the region, either as Byzantine or Ottoman monuments, or as modern cultural

production with the Extraterrestrial Cultural Association leading the way in events of cultural interest.

The next development study was compiled by local authorities in 1993. This was prepared in the context of the Special Development Program of Local Government (Rural Development Company Epirus SA, 1993, part I, 120, part II, 83).

In terms of productive structures, in 1993, the sector that contributed the most to generating local income was the primary sector with rising tertiary and in particular tourism sector. The involvement of the local element in investment initiatives under the "Leader Community Program" was also important. In regions such as Amarantos village or in spots like Aoos Gorge there was the potentiality of the development of different tourist products and types of tourism such as natural and thermal tourism.

Much more, the study also focuses on the cultural heritage of the region, focusing on the historical center of Konitsa, or "the agora" and its cultural center which provided a school of traditional dances, music and cultural events.

In parallel, the study also dealt with the individual villages of Mastorohoria (Dellaris, Hatzimeletiou & Alexaki, 1996, 319). After World War II, the damaged houses were restored by any means available. But the stone craftsmen began to decline from the 1960s onwards, until their final disappearance. So today the roofs of houses are now covered with either tigers or tiles.

This cultural richness of the region is increasingly being one of the main tourist products through cultural tourism, which seeks to protect and enhance the natural and structured environment and to revitalize and protect cultural heritage.

However, despite the significant available natural and cultural resources of the region, it hasn't developed significantly in the tourism sector. The main reasons for this delay are the general abandonment of the area during the post-war period, the lack of hotels and other tourist infrastructure and the non-promulgation and exploitation of monuments and sites of particular tourist interest in the area through organized publicity and advertising.

In 1997, according to the "Study of the Establishment of a Local Network of Consultants for the Promotion of Konitsa District and Investigation of Local Initiatives Development Opportunities",

in the framework of the Community Initiative “EMPLOYMENT” - Axis “HORIZON” conducted by Epirus SA Rural Development Society, different measures are proposed in order to succeed tourism development. More specifically, these measures are related to the development of infrastructure, mainly of hotels, designing infrastructure sites based on local principles architectural heritage, the preservation and promotion of traditional settlements, bridges and monasteries or churches, and the organization of activities, and redevelopment, improvements and enhancement of the surrounding area.

Nowadays, according to the data of INSETE, at Epirus region for the year of 2018, the number of overnight stays was 3,362, for the year 2017 were 3,643, and for the year 2016 were 3,621. That means that the previous year the overnight stays were 8.35% less compared to the year 2017. Concerning the people working in tourism industry in the region of Epirus, the year of 2018 were 2.4% more than in 2017. What concerns the number of hotels, specifically at Ioannina region, in 2018 there were 239 hotels, while in 2017 there were 227 hotels as well as in the years 2016 and 2015. Today, there even operate 11 five-star hotels.

Finally, concerning the arrivals, according to INSETE data, arrivals at Ioannina from abroad were zero until the year 2016, when 3 arrivals were noted in August. In 2018, the arrivals at Ioannina airport from abroad tripled compared 2017. In more details, in 2017 the total number of arrivals from abroad was 3,232. Most of these arrivals were noted during the summer and autumn period. However, in 2018, the total number of arrivals was 9,845. These arrivals are shared throughout the year although, again, during the summer period the arrivals are much more than in other periods of the year.

The reason why there is an interest in the arrivals at Ioannina region is because there are probably a percentage of people arriving at Ioannina airport visiting Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages. Besides, since there are an important number of visitors arriving at Ioannina airport, it is easier to find solutions in order to increase the number of tourists choosing and visiting Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

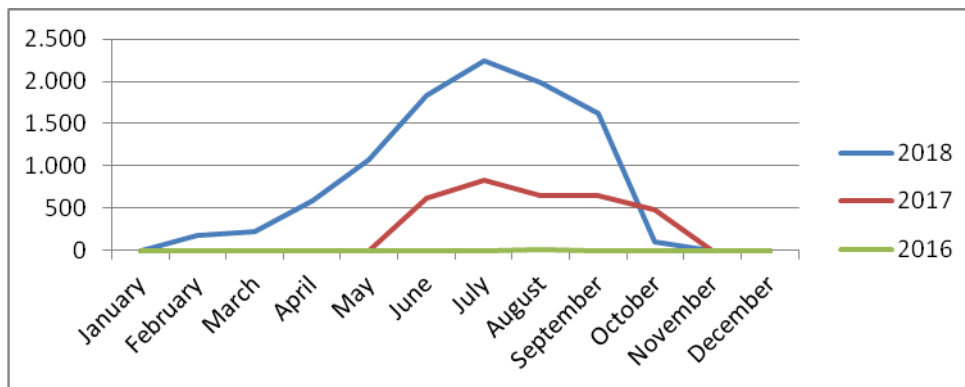


Table 3, Arrivals at Ioannina airport

However, as it concerns the Municipality of Konitsa, there aren't any data concerning the number of people visiting these villages. Residents' involvement in agriculture has been limited in livestock, breeding, and building activity. The tourist activity is being developed in the larger villages where hostels operate and are selected by visitors as both winter and summer destinations. The increase of alternative forms of tourism related to the mountains tumors of Tymfi, Smolikas, and Grammos is important where they grow hiking, mountaineering and climbing activities and, in the milder mountains, biking stage. There are also activities in the three rivers within the municipality such as rafting, kayaking, fly fishing etc. and thermal tourism due to the two thermal springs of Kavasila and Amarantos.

According to data coming from National Tourism Organization in 2017, this is the total number of hotel in the Municipality of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages:

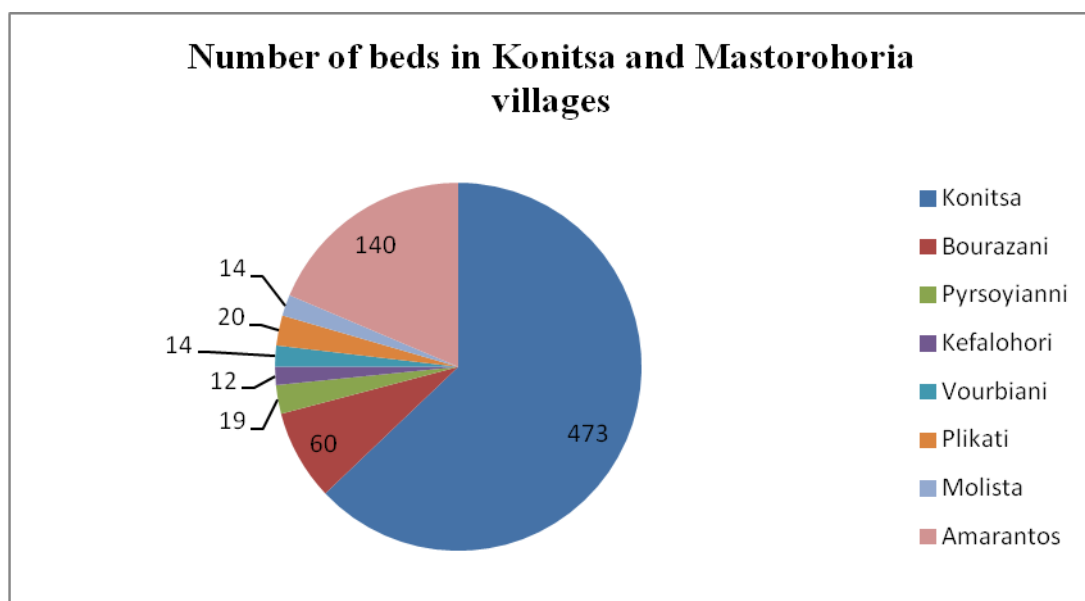


Table 4, Number of beds in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages

According to the diagram above, it is obvious that there are enough hotels being able to provide rooms to a significant number of tourists mainly in Konitsa, which is the central village

of Mastorohoria villages. There are also a lot of beds in Amarantos village where natural thermal spa is located, so health tourism is a type of tourism that Municipality of Konitsa seems to recognize it. Finally, there is also enough accommodation at Bourazani village, which is located close to Konitsa village.

Much more, in Bourazani, the one and only hotel operates as an Environmental Park²⁶ as well. It provides to tourists different activities concerning the natural environment and education on it as well as it also provides a natural history museum and a conference center.

However, during previous years an Information Center started operating in order visitors to ask information concerning what places they can visit and what activities they can do. Employees offer analytical tourist guides in English language to foreign visitors and they propose them different activities that take place to do; mainly activities into the natural environment.

In general, the tourism in Mastorohoria villages increases during the summer season in conjunction with the arrival of the inhabitants from the urban centers and the cultural organization of events, celebrations, festivals, and also tourist arrivals, according to oral information given by the deputy mayor of the Municipality of Konitsa.

In addition to this, it seems that a lot of foreign travelers choose to visit Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages mainly for their natural environment. Nowadays, more and more people choose to organize their vacations in a more alternative way (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017) visiting less popular places and doing activities like the ones offered in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages. Most of them seem to be interested in coming in touch with the residents and the culture of the region as well.

Finally, in Trip Advisor one can find reviews made mainly by Greek visitors concerning these villages. Most of the people are impressed by the region, the hotels and also the employees. The offered quality of the hotels and restaurants is very high and the prices are usually low and affordable²⁷.

²⁶ Bourazani Wild Life Resort, <http://mpourazani.eu/el/arxiki/>

²⁷ TripAdvisor: Κόνιτσα, Ελλάδα – TripAdvisor: Konitsa, Greece, <https://www.tripadvisor.com.gr/Home-g970275?fid=6b0a07ba-3c4c-4a2e-80e6-514e5aad1760>

Chapter.7: Comparison with the development of tourism in Metsovo village

Metsovo is a traditional village in eastern Ioannina. The Municipality of Metsovo, according to the Greek law 3852/2010, after the unification of the municipalities of Metsovo and Egnatia, includes the local communities of Anilio, Anthohori, Votonosi, Small and Big Gotista, Small and Big Peristeri, Sitsaina, Hrisovitsa, and Mileas.

Metsovo is located in a hub, geographically, a place which in the past was the only crossing point of Pindos and therefore a point of control and control. This is partly explained by its subsequent development, combined with the privileges – financial facilities, civil liberties and administrative autonomy – granted to the region during the Turkish occupation.

The climate of the region is continental and it is characterized by cold winters. Moreover, it is rich in rain in spring and summers are relatively warm with plenty of rain.

The region has been inhabited since the prehistoric years as well as Konitsa and Mastorohoria. Even here, in the 6th century, the Slavs arrived and inhabited Metsovo. After a lot of centuries, and specifically in 1854, Turks following Ali Passas' command destroyed Metsovo. In 1912, Metsovo village was released. Because of the two World Wars and the Greek Civil War the economy of Metsovo village had been hit.

However, a lot of benefactors from Metsovo financed a lot of organizations and institutions with the aim of the development of the region. A typical example of this is the Baron Michael Tositsas Foundation²⁸, which was founded in 1948, and its goal was the economic and cultural development of Metsovo village.

Another important foundation is the Averoff's Foundation. This foundation was established in 1979 by Evangelos Averoff, a prominent Metsovitan and an important politician of contemporary Greece. The Foundations operates the establishment of the Katogi Winery; the Foundation operates wine fields in Metsovo that produce the famous local "katogi" wine. The wine is locally consumed and together with local cheeses contributes to the famous Metsovitan cuisine. Another establishment is the Metsovo Art Gallery; the art gallery is one of the most

²⁸ Ίδρυμα Βαρόνου Μιχαήλ Τσσίτσα - Baron Michael Tositsas Foundation, <https://metsovomuseum.gr/tossizza-foundation/>

important private collections in Greece and attracts visitors from all over Greece (Rodrigues, A., et al., 2000, 99).

Finally, an important Foundation in Metsovo village is Egnatia-Epirus Foundation. This Foundation was established in 1991. It operates offices both in Athens and Ioannina. Its mission is to protect and promote the local cultural heritage. Its activities include economic, social and cultural activities compatible with the traditional and natural environment of the area. The two establishments that the Foundation operates are the Diaselo Convention Center which is constructed out of traditional materials such as stone and wood and offers a variety of facilities including convention rooms, traditional restaurants and other amenities, and the Office for Energy Technologies which undertakes initiatives related to the above activities that mainly work for the benefit of the broader Epirus area (Rodrigues, A., et al., 2000, 100).

Of course the Municipality of Metsovo has played a crucial role as it concerns not only the development of tourism sector in the region, but also the development of the town in general.

The Municipality of Metsovo operates various offices that manage development activities for the region. One of the most important offices run by the Municipality of Metsovo is the Metsovian Development Office. This is an office that mainly exploits development opportunities for the town basically through European Union funding programs.

Some of the projects that have been implemented some years ago are the town roads restoration; the entire city road network was restored to its original structure and appearance.

Another project was the building restorations; old buildings including the town hall, different service buildings such as schools and kindergartens, were restored to their traditional appearance using only stone and wood as the basic materials for reconstruction.

One more project was the fountain restorations; Metsovo had a very interesting water-supply system through fountains situated in various parts of the town. All these fountains were restored in a way to be easily accessed both by locals and tourists.

A final project that worth referring is the sports complex; two of the three ski resorts in Metsovo village are operated by local development office. Also in 1996 an indoor sports facility started to operate offering a broad range of sports activities. At the end of the year of 1998 four tennis courts started operate ((Rodrigues, A., et al., 2000, 100).

As it concerns the demographic data, it is impressive the fact that between the years of 1951-2011, the population of Metsovo seems to be steady. Not a big number of residents leave the village in order to move to the big urban centers.

The main occupations of the population of Metsovo are livestock, textiles, cheese, winemaking and tourism. As it concerns tourism, Metsovo village is rich in cultural heritage resources, such as traditional-built buildings, stone bridges and mills. The Municipality of Metsovo organizes a lot of festivals and cultural events around these places not only to preserve its cultural heritage but also in order to promote it and attract tourists (Zahou, 2015, 130).

Besides, Metsovo is today one of the main tourist destinations of Epirus with numerous tourists visiting it throughout the year. It is notable the fact that, despite the massive influx of tourism, Metsovo keeps the past alive harmoniously with the present, the tradition of modernization. A visitor can see women today in their traditional costumes. Impressive mansions, monasteries, and paved cobbled streets blend in with today as tradition continues with the region's renowned products, cultural events and the Pindos National Park developing tourism sector in a sustainable way.

As it concerns the architecture of the houses, the building materials and construction techniques in Metsovo show the general characteristics of Epirus architecture, with local particularities. The main building materials are the natural materials of the area: gray-brown or gray-green stone for masonry, gray-green slate for overlays and flooring, and beech, rhombol and pine wood.

The bulk of the house is oriented south or southeast, with special interest being the differentiation between winter and summer accommodation. Users of the building reside in different rooms to ensure optimum comfort. As a result, the whole family used the winter or “onda” in the winter, while in the summer the family lived in the “hodjare”, a room with more openings that provided ventilation²⁹. This offers to tourism sector a really strong asset as tourists have the opportunity to visit some of these houses which are operated as museums and come in touch with the culture of the region.

²⁹ Παραδοσιακή Αρχιτεκτονική – Traditional Architecture, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/paradosiaki-arxitektoniki/>

As it concerns the natural environment, in Metsovo there are the springs of Aoos River, and the artificial lake of Aoos springs. The construction of the project began in 1981 and finished in 1991. Moreover, there are some important mountains, such as Peristeri or Lakmos with the altitude of 2295m and Mavrovouni with the altitude of 2159m.

A tourist can also visit the Metsovitikos River which originates in the region of Katara and Anilio. The landscape is impressive as it is surrounded by high mountains and dense forests where there are a lot of species of the fauna of the area.

So, when tourists visit Metsovo village, they are offered plenty of organized activities to do while their stay there. In winter in the Metsovo area there are three ski resorts, one on Karakoli hill, which operates the old ski resort with two slopes, one on the Politses plateau, a full ski resort with six slopes and a new one. Ski resort in Zygos of Anilio where its slopes are at the highest altitude of the other two, between 1690 and 1870 meters. The Politses Plateau and the Aoos Valley during the summer months offer anyone who wishes to enjoy horse riding.

Moreover, there are numerous organized trekking paths characterized as European Trails. For example, The European Trail E6 crosses the Pindos Mountains from North to South. In the area of Metsovo it enters from Arkudorema and Valia Calda and crosses the O1 National Trail which ends in Syrrako (Samoilis, 2008, 69).

Also, nowadays, Municipality of Metsovo tries to develop spa and health tourism through synergies with travel agencies in Thessaloniki and with other countries in Balkans and with Russia as well³⁰.

As it concerns cultural heritage, Metsovo has rich cultural resources. First of all, in Metsovo, one can find a lot of impressive churches. One of them is the Monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary which is located in a short distance from the settlement of Metsovo, at the junction of the two tributaries of Arachthos, Metsovikos and Aneliotikos.

The Holy Monastery of the Assumption is a unique monastery located in Metsovo and it was built in 1754. It comprises two-storey cells, guesthouses, flat-level courtyards, magnificent

³⁰ Ιατρικός Τουρισμός – Health Tourism,
<http://www.metsovo.org/gr/page/%CE%99%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82-%CE%A4%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82/>

murals, iconostasis and 17th-century icons and a belfry overlooking it. It's wooden. It is said that his bell was built in Ioannina in 1870³¹.

One more monastery is Zoodochos Pigi Monastery which is located on the road to Anthohori village at the foot of Mount Peristeri, just 10km from Metsovo. The locals call it the Lady of Kiatra Rosa which in Vlach means Panagia on the red stone, due to the red rocks to the east of the Monastery which used to be hermitages.

It was probably founded in the 17th century and renovated in 1732. The cathedral-style cathedral is adorned with frescoes dating back to the early 19th century. The complex has been completely renovated recently and is a preserved monument. In 1820, a failed Greek attack on the Ottoman army against Ioannina against Ali Passa gave rise to the destruction of the monastery and the slaughter of monks³².

Also, in Metsovo there are plenty of museums in order tourists to have the chance to come in touch with the region's history and culture. First of all, there is the Tsanakas Folklore Museum which is housed in the old stone mansion of the Venetian family in the area of Agios Georgios and is a museum of Vlach-Art.

Completion of the restoration work and curatorship of the Museum was commissioned by the Metsovo Dance Association in February 2013.

The museum's exhibits include objects from the Venetis and Tsanakas families as well as many Metsovo families such as surviving manuscripts from the 17th century onwards, letters, Turkish hajjas, photographic material, and a collection of books referring to Metsovo and the Vlachs³³.

Another significant cultural point of Metsovo is the E. Averoff Gallery is a museum of Modern Greek art. It has been operating in Metsovo since August 1988. Today, several years after its foundation, the works of the Collection have more than doubled in number.

It offers permanent exhibitions of representative works of the most important Greek painters, engravers and sculptors of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Gyzi, Lytra, Volanaki, Iakovidis,

³¹ Ιερά Μονή Κοιμήσεως Θεοτόκου – Holy Monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/monastiria/moni-koimiseos-theotokou-metsovo/>

³² Μονή Ζωοδόχου Πηγής – Zoodochos Pigi Monastery, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/monastiria/moni-zoodoxou-pigis/>

³³ Λαογραφικό Μουσείο Τσανάκας - Tsanakas Folklore Museum, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/laografiko-mouseio-tsanaka/>

Partheni, Malea, Galani, Hatzikyriakou-Gika, Moralis, Tetali. The Museum's art collection is considered one of the most comprehensive and important of this period³⁴.

Moreover, The Museum of Folk Art is located in Metsovo and is housed in the renovated Mansion Tositsas. It is a sample of the organization and operation of an old Metsovo Mansion.

The museum houses a very large number of antique items of immense value. In addition to being able to curate a range of everyday objects, the visitor can explore the interiors of a true Metsovian mansion and understand its architecture. Tourists can visit the folklore museum throughout the week with a guided tour³⁵.

Finally, Metsovo is also rich in external cultural monuments. A characterized example of this is the fountains. In the city of Metsovo and the surrounding areas you will have the opportunity to see and admire about 20 traditional water fountains dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. A beautiful example of this is the "Fountain di Campuri di Dissupra" or City Hall fountain is located in Metsovo Square and was built in 1858. Its name, meaning "fountain above the square", came from its location on the square.

According to the built-in inscription, it was built according to the committees of George Iatropoulos, Kyriakos Kostakis, Michael Loukas and Anastasios Vartasis. The inscription lists the names of the donors Kostas Fernikas, Adamantis and Ioannis Potsou. The fountain is stone-built and adorned with reliefs on stone slabs, such as a two-headed eagle or hunting scenes³⁶.

One more site that tourists can visit is the Open Air Museum of Water in Anthohori in Metsovo highlights the importance of water in traditional society. It is an open air museum with old remodeled watermills, water mills and mandarins.

It focuses on the basic pre-industrial techniques that exploits and harnesses the power of water to produce a variety of products and connects them with the history and daily life of the local community over time.

³⁴ Πινακοθήκη Ε. Αβέρωφ – E. Averoff Art Gallery, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/pinakothiki-averof/>

³⁵ Λαογραφικό Μουσείο Μετσόβου – Metsovo Folklore Museum, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/laografiko-mouseio/>

³⁶ Οι βρύσες του Μετσόβου – The fountains of Metsovo, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/vryses-metsovou/>

It is well thought out, surrounded by very picturesque cobbled streets and small bridges. There tourists can find a coffee shop where they will have a break³⁷.

Not only in Metsovo but in the wider area of the prefecture of Ioannina, tourists can find many watermills and wells used by locals to irrigate their fields and drink water. Many watermills are still in good condition today, such as the Gina watermill.

Within a relatively short distance from Metsovo they will find the Gina watermill. It is located on the banks of the Arachthos River and it is one of the most famous watermills in the area while its connection to Metsovo and the adjacent monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos is made with a picturesque cobblestone cobbled path. This mill has for many decades used the power of the river's abundant water to turn it into mechanical energy for grinding cereals in the wider area. It has been designated as a historic preserved monument and after a complete refurbishment in 1997 it has a permanent guard who will provide you with some basic information during your visit³⁸.

It is impressive that Metsovo village has developed a type of theme park. More specifically, in Metsovo, the main street of Metsovo Square leads to the Garden of Averoff. It is a beautiful park flooded with trees and plants that make up the whole of Pindos flora. There you will be able to admire an excellent miniature of Pindos made with great care and effort.

Inside it, well kept, is the restored chapel of St. George, in front of which George Averoff prayed for help in 1840, before heading to the guesthouse. He has never returned since. But he kept his word, and with the money he sent, repaired the old church and built a garden with all the trees of Pindos all around it.

In the Garden of Averoff visitors can find pine, fir, beech, rhubarb, holly and many other species of trees and shrubs that grow in the area. An incomparable natural wealth that everyone admires.

In addition to the environmental interest, this park combines leisure as well as a playground where the younger guests will be able to get the best out of the area³⁹.

³⁷ Μουσείο υδροκίνησης – Water Power Museum, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/mouseio-ydrokinisis/>

³⁸ Νερόμυλος Γκίνας – Gkina Watermill, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/neromylos-gkina/>

³⁹ Αβερῳφείος Κήπος - The Garden of Averoff, <http://metsovo-ke.gr/museams/averofeios-kipos/>

As it concerns the hotels, in Metsovo tourists can choose among more or less 24 unique hotels offering qualitative amenities while most of them they are built with traditional architecture and a range in prices.

The average age of tourists who visit Metsovo village is about 30 years old, both men and women, in all the different marital statuses. More specifically, young people and couples without children are interested in leisure activities, relaxation and adventure. Older people and couples aged over 45 years (who usually have children and professional careers) are also motivated by leisure activities and relaxation. However, we should note here a major dispersion in the demand for domestic tourism, which is related to whether visitors do or do not have a family as well as their age.

Almost every visitor comes to Metsovo once, usually during winter, while half of the visitors also visit the area during summer. The average distance covered by visitors in order to reach the region is about 400 km. For more than half of the visitors, Metsovo is their permanent holiday location, while those who have been to Metsovo before prefer to do so on weekends and public holidays.

A mountainous region like Metsovo is a competitive destination and attracts more visitors than coastal regions do during winter. Another fact that emerges is that in Metsovo, as in other mountainous areas also, visitors make short trips during different seasons of the year, particularly during weekends and public holidays (Soutsas et al., 2006).

Metsovo is a living settlement that is constantly evolving. This makes it more difficult to protect and highlight elements of the past, given the increased new needs and technological changes. Not only proper planning and legislation are required, but effective monitoring of their implementation.

However, it seems that Metsovo village has succeed to develop tourism sector and to be included among the most well-known mainly winter destinations. All the funding and foundations established by the beneficiaries coming from Metsovo helped in this direction, in combination with the region's natural environment as well as its cultural heritage and history.

Thus, Metsovo village has succeeded to develop its tourism sector in a sustainable way thanks to the various legacies, as they were referred above, with the help of who managed to rebuild

traditional buildings, establish museums and create a small theme park environment. That means that, all these legacies started operating with the aim to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of the region.

Finally, in combination with the legacies, the well-organized management plan that Municipality of Metsovo seems to follow with cooperation with different travel agencies and the countries of Balkans and the successful marketing strategies providing stunning advertisements of the region helped it to achieve its goal for tourism development and as a result to maintain the permanent population and increase its annual revenue.

Chapter.8: Research design

After a brief literature review and the on-situ observation concerning the most important natural and cultural monuments of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages, the methodology for conducting the present research was to approach the subject, collect the data and analyze it with qualitative research. After the purpose of the survey and the research question were asked, the data were collected through personal interviews with stakeholders and tourists, as it has been mentioned above. The investigation was proposed and approved by the Municipality of Konitsa.

8a. Qualitative research method

Briefly, qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2019), while quantitative research seeks to control and predict phenomena using experimental designs and statistical analysis, qualitative research tends to focus on the physical history of events or relationships. Qualitative research first appeared about 100 years ago and is used by a variety of disciplines (Creswell, 1994).

8b. Differences between quantitative and qualitative research method

There are key differences between qualitative and quantitative research that usually have different objectives. Frankel and Devers (2000) argue that there are three main differences between qualitative and quantitative research. First of all, the logic that prevails in qualitative research is inductive. The main work focuses on describing and understanding the particular situations and experiences of people and groups. Yet their design focuses on understanding the concepts involved in particular situations and experiences before developing or examining more general theories. In quantitative research, however, the researcher moves on to existing knowledge and theories in order to understand specific situations or to predict what will happen to those people and why.

Moreover, quality research projects are often resultant and flexible. Often, qualitative research is also quite dynamic. The researcher, the research subjects, the relationship between them, the environment in which the research is carried out are subject to development and change and thus not all aspects of the research project can be regulated or controlled by the researcher. Although quantitative research projects are affected by similar changes, revision of the research plan is unusual and considered undesirable.

Finally, the qualitative research process is often non-linear and inconsistent, and in many cases data collection and analysis proceed at the same time. In these cases, taking into account the early conclusions, the next data collection and analysis procedures can be modified to collect more specific information, or to explore new and unexpected areas of interest that have emerged (Sofaer, 1999).

8c. The interview

As it concerns the research tool that was used in order the research to take place it is the tool of interview. The interview as a method of collecting research data is a special purpose discussion which is conducted between the researcher and the research subject in order to collect specific data. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999).

The difference of the research interview from other types of interviews, such as Journalism, is that the research interviewee systematically tries to collect the same information from all the research subjects. This means that the same questions are asked in the same way to all research subjects. The interviewer notes in a pre-designed form the answers given by the research subjects.

In this study, different questions have been designed and asked for stakeholders and tourists for these two groups are totally different concerning their point of view in tourism development of this specific destination. The former group is responsible for the tourist product while the latter is offered the tourist product.

Chapter.9: Population and data collection

The target population of this study was, on the one hand, the stakeholders of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages and more specifically the mayor and the deputy mayor of Konitsa, some presidents of Mastorohoria villages and the hotel owners and on the other hand, tourists as a snowball type of sample.

Initially, there was a telephone communication with the stakeholders where they were informed about my thesis, the research, the time when I would have arrived in the region, in late August, and the type of questions that I would ask them. In more details, when I arrived at Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages, I organized the interviews with the employees of the municipality and the tourists at the information center of the region while with the hotel owners at their hotels.

More specifically, as it concerns the employees of the Municipality of Konitsa, the interviewees were Mr. Exarchou Nicholas, the mayor of Konitsa, Mr. Papaspyrou Andreas, the former mayor of the region, Mr. Kallideris Georgios, the former deputy mayor, Mrs. Mitsi Ioanna, responsible for the Information Center of Konitsa, Mrs. Romaneli Evi, responsible for the Wine Museum of the Region.

As it concerns the hotel owners, interviews were taken by Mrs. Dafli Kassiani, owner of Gerakofolia Hotel of 16 rooms, Mr. Tassos Athanasios, owner of Bourazani Wild Life Resort of 20 rooms, Mr. Skoufias Georgios, owner of Agriolouloudo of Grammos Hotel of 6 stone traditional architecture small houses, and Mr. Exarchou Charalabos, owner of Konitsa Mountain Hotel of 23 rooms. These hotels were chosen because of the reason that they all are 3 or 4-star hotels.

Before starting the interview, participants were informed that there isn't right or wrong answers and that the purpose of the interview is the collection of their personal views. The questions were open-ended and the researcher omitted any commentary to avoid guidance. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes, and were recorded using a digital tape recorder. The researcher was keeping notes throughout the interview and the interviews were transcribed verbatim and kept confidential.

It is important to know that, while there was a great interest in my research, some stakeholders, mainly village leaders from four different Mastorohoria villages, didn't respond to my invitation for an interview.

Qualitative research aims to explore the diverse meanings of behavior and allows participants to analyze their views through their personal, professional and social contexts. The selection of a small sample is in line with the interpretative approach chosen as it is intended to find rich and meaningful data after in-depth analysis of the sample (Pharm, 2015).

In qualitative studies, the interview is one of the most common methods used to collect and analyze data. The interview enables the researcher to discover experiences and topics that can't be accessed through structured questionnaires. Interviews are conducted on a loose structure consisting of open-ended questions that determine the area to be explored, at least initially, and from which the researcher or respondent may deviate in order to pursue an idea in more detail. In this type of interviews there is no limit to the extent of the interviewee's answers and how they will be expressed (Packer, 2011), while the interviews are predetermined but the wording of the question can be partially differentiated and explained when asked the interviewer.

The protection of participants in each research is mandatory. Ensuring confidentiality means that the data collected will be used in such a way that no one other than the researcher knows the source. The researcher does not mention in the results any identifiable characteristics that may have been reported in the interview (Kaiser, 2009).

Chapter.10: Analysis of the research material

Qualitative data analysis is a process that encompasses all the processes of signifying, categorizing, and theorizing qualitative material in order to answer research questions, control research hypotheses, or interpret and understand phenomena, processes, and behaviors (Iosifides, 2003). Interviews were first transcribed verbatim and recorded in a Word program on a computer.

Secondly, the interviews were repeated repeatedly in order to establish a clear belief that no deliberate omissions had been made that could distort the outcome. The transcribed interviews were then read several times to familiarize the researcher with the material under analysis.

Subsequently, categories and subcategories were created based on the content of the material under analysis. After repeated checks, the original categories and subcategories were grouped according to their common characteristics and a list was created. The new categories and subcategories were finalized and the final list of categories and subcategories emerged.

The final step was to re-read the transcribed interviews together with the final list in order to find that no omission had been made regarding what was said by the research participants.

Digital interviews and transcripts are kept confidential by the researcher.

Chapter.11: SWOT analysis

After the end and the transcript of the interviews, the research comes to some conclusions both from the point of view of the stakeholders and from the point of view of tourists.

First of all, as it concerns the stakeholders, and mainly the hotel owners of the region, none of them are completely satisfied with the number of tourists staying in their hotels annually. On the contrary, everyone would like more tourists to visit the destination. Moreover, in their own words, the main pillars of the region's tourism sector are the environment, the religion and the culture, so tourists are offered a lot of activities to do on their vacation in the region.

Almost everyone agreed that it is the responsibility of the Municipality and its employees to promote and advertise the region and organize a successful marketing and management plan dedicated to these goals. Finally, in addition, most of the hotel owners try to promote their hotels via the Internet and through platforms such as Booking.gr or TripAdvisor by presenting not only their hotels but also the resources of the destination and what one can do when visiting it.

Secondly, as it concerns the second category of stakeholders, the employees of the Municipality, all of them agreed that although the fact that the region is rich in natural and cultural resources and that the tourists have the opportunity to do different kind of sports such as mountain climbing, trekking, rafting, they can also pass their time in religious tourism or doing activities concerning health such as hot baths at Amarantos village, tourism has not been developed as they would like to.

Almost none of them referred to the history of Mastorohoria villages as a tourist product. On the contrary, it is believed that an attempt to create the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen” and the other one of the “Museum of Chionadites Painters and Hagiographers” that presents the history and folklore of the place seems to remain stagnant.

Finally, most of them underlined different problems as an answer on the question why tourism hasn't been developed enough yet. Some of them accused former mayors, while others believe that the Ioannina Region has not helped enough on issues such as infrastructure to enable tourism to grow and others feel that it is very important young people to travel and come in

touch with different cultures and get ideas on how other regions in Greece or other countries manage tourism sector. Of course, some of them state that advertising of the region is the most important tool in order tourism to be developed but it seems that no one has worked on it.

Finally, from the point of view of tourists, all of them seemed to be really satisfied by the destination and the people living in it. The great majority of the tourists visited Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages mainly for their natural environment and the sports activities.

Moreover, some of them were proposed to visit also Paisios' and Hamko's house and they told that they would do so. Others who wanted to visit also Mastorohoria villages in order to come in touch with the history and the culture of "bouloukia" seemed to be a little disappointed because of the fact that the "Museum of Epirus Craftsmen" and the other one of the "Museum of Chionadites Painters and Hagiographers" is yet to operate.

Finally, it is important to have in mind that the tourists that participated in the interviews stated the problem of the bad road network of the region, especially in villages such as Amarantos. Most of them noted that they were really scared when driving to these villages.

Having in mind all the data coming from the three types of interviews – one given by the hotel owners, one given by the employees of the Municipality and one given by tourists – and different information coming from the literature review as well as the information given by the photographic analysis of the destination, it is now important to proceed with a SWOT analysis in order to better understand what are the main strengths, the weaknesses, the main opportunities and the threats.

11a. Strengths

Concerning all the data above, the strengths of the region of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages that could help tourism sector to be developed are numerous.

First and foremost, Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages have rich natural recourses. There are three high mountains, Grammos, Tymfi, and Smolikas, which is the second higher mountain in Greece, and one can find different Dragon lakes on their tops. Moreover, there are three rivers passing through Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages; Aoos, Voidomatis and Sarantaporos. The last natural characteristic of the destination is the existence of the natural thermal spa of the

village of Amarantos. They operate with the natural use of hot air flowing through the interior of the earth, making them the only baths of their kind in Europe. In general, either in the spring and the summer or in the autumn and the winter one can find a pure rich natural environment with a lot of green spaces.

A second strength of the region is its rich cultural heritage which consists of the history of Saint Paisios and Hamko – the mother of Ali Passas – the gastronomy of the destination and much more its architecture coming from the craftsmen – “bouloukia”. That is the reason why people gave this name to Mastorohoria villages. All the houses, the churches, the different buildings, and also the bridges were built by “bouloukia” with a unique style using stones as the basic material.

A last strength is the development of the society. In more details, residents are very friendly and kind when coming in touch with tourists and they are ready to help them in what they may need. Moreover, in Konitsa tourists can find several hotels offering a big variety of prices and excellent services. As it concerns the main road network that leads to the neighboring Prefecture of Kozani is easy to cross by car passing through central villages such as Konitsa, Pyrsoyianni, and Agia Paraskevi. Finally, a really important characteristic of the Municipality of Konitsa is the existence of the Information Center in the center of the village, offering information about what activities tourists can do and what they can see not only in Konitsa but also in all the Mastorohoria villages.

11b. Weaknesses

Of course there are several weaknesses concerning this destination.

First of all, while there is a rich natural environment, and there are different several trekking paths on the mountains, there are no security measures required by the Municipality and the Ioannina region. This neglect makes walking and climbing on the mountain dangerous.

Moreover, while the establishment of the “Museum of Epirus Craftsmen” in Pyrsoyianni village and the other one of the “Museum of Chionadites Painters and Hagiographers” in Hionades village was planned, they are yet to operate. As a result, tourists feel disappointed because they don’t have another chance to come in touch with the history of Mastorohoria villages and “bouloukia” in an organized way.

Another weakness, as it was often said, is the lack of advertisement of the region and of suitable management plan for its tourism development. Because of the reason that either the mayors didn't try enough or the Ioannina region doesn't deal with this issue, the result is that Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages aren't known not only on the abroad but also in Greece.

Last but not least, a great problem is the bad road network connecting less central villages such as Amarantos, Hionades, Plikati, etc. As a result, when someone wants to visit these villages feels scared, firstly because there aren't enough signs on the road and secondly because at many points these roads are damaged. This problem makes traveling very dangerous.

11c. Opportunities

The main opportunity of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages in order sustainable tourism to be developed isn't only the rich natural environment but much more the unique architecture of the villages and the intangible cultural heritage concerning the "bouloukia" history. Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages have this unique characteristic that they combine both natural and cultural environment in a harmonious way.

This is one characteristic that we can't find it anywhere else and as a result Mastorohoria villages can be easily competitive against Zagorohoria villages which offer mainly natural resources to tourists.

In addition, one more opportunity is the existence of the thermal spa of Amarantos village which is unique in the whole Europe. The hot baths have healing properties and they are suitable for many diseases, especially rheumatoid arthritis and septicemia. The temperature of the steam, rising from the depths of the Earth through 15 karstic rifts, reaches 32.6-38.1 degrees. In the Amarantos thermal spa, modern facilities with individual rooms and baths exist for bathing and inhalation.

Moreover, it is important to underline one more great opportunity for Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages is that all the houses, the hotels and other buildings are built with amphitheatric style. That means that everyone has the opportunity to see the unique scenery of the rivers and the mountains.

Finally, we can't bear in mind the fact that in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages there are a lot of permanent residents. This fact is very significant because permanent residents can develop sustainable tourism easier than in a region with no permanent residents. In this case, residents can develop and invest in establishing hotels, travel agencies organizing different activities both in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages, restaurants and other services for tourists. However, in parallel, new job positions can be offered both to unemployed residents and to people coming from other regions as a seasonal staff.

11d. Threats

As it concerns the threats of the destination, one important threat has to do with competition. In more details, Zagorohoria villages have been a very popular destination for a lot of decades. That means that it is more difficult for Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages to surpass Zagorohoria in popularity.

Another threat that we have to take into consideration is the severe weather conditions especially during the winter. The very cold and heavy snowfall combined with the bad road network in Konitsa and mostly in Mastorohoria villages can make the stay of tourists difficult and even dangerous.

Finally, the most significant threat may be the fact that a lot of young people either leave the villages and move to the big cities or aren't interested in working or starting their own businesses in the tourism sector. Moreover, as some stakeholders underlined, young people in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages are restricted enough and as a result they haven't traveled and come in touch with other cultures broadening their knowledge and mind returning back with fresh and innovative ideas.

Thus, the results of the research of this study concerning first and foremost the reasons why Mastorohoria villages haven't developed tourism as much as they can are summarized in the above SWOT analysis helping us to better understand what the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities, and the threats are in developing the tourism sector in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages in a sustainable way.

Chapter.12: Discussion

After the end of the literature review, the on-situ observation, and the analysis of the interviews using a SWOT analysis, it is time to reach to some conclusions and suggestions.

Briefly, after studying the rich natural and cultural resources of the destination of Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages, while it is obvious that it is a region with stunning natural environment and great history and culture, it has been confirmed that tourism has not been developed enough so as stakeholders to be satisfied.

Thus, a visitor is able to enjoy different tourist products, such as climbing the mountains, doing kayak and rafting at Aoos River, doing trekking and living the experience of the unique thermal spa of Europe at Amarantos village with hot steam coming from the ground while they can also visit the Wine Museum and other significant places such as Stomio Monastery, photographic exhibitions in traditional houses, Folklore Museums as the one in Kerasovo – Agia Paraskevi, and beautiful churches with unique architecture and hagiographies.

Of course, the architecture of the villages is such that it reminds tourists of visiting a living museum showing architectural exhibits. Stone bridges, stone traditional houses and different buildings, and cobbled streets are some of these architectural “exhibits” of Mastorohoria villages that tourists have the chance to admire while they explore the destination.

Moreover, it is important the fact that there are plenty of hotels in Konitsa region, the central village of Mastorohoria villages, because of the fact that this means that there are plenty of choices for tourists with the variety in prices starting from very low prices and reaching in higher ones.

Much more, the majority of hotels in Konitsa and the few hotels existing in Mastorohoria villages, they have maintained and preserved the traditional character of the architecture of the region. While there are some luxury hotels, hotel owners decided not to follow a modern style of architecture but to keep the traditional one.

As a result, tourists seem to be satisfied and happy as it concerns the hotels and the hotel amenities.

A few tourists in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages stated and noted the fact that people in villages, meaning the residents, were very friendly and they tried to help them when they need some information. The traditional way of living and people's warmth is some of the characteristics of Mastorohoria villages that impressed tourists.

The existence of the Information Center in the center of Konitsa village where tourists are offered information about the destination, directions, and also maps that help them to be oriented is a really positive aspect of the management plan of the region.

However, on the other hand, stakeholders, meaning hotel owners and the employees of the Municipality, aren't satisfied by the annual numbers of tourists visiting the region. The numbers of tourism in the region aren't enough in order tourism to be developed and economy to rise.

According to this delay, on the one hand, tourists believe that the bad road network is a negative aspect of the destination while it makes it very difficult to visit other villages except the central ones such as Konitsa, Pyrsoyianni and Kerasovo – Agia Paraskevi. This is a very significant problem because even if stakeholders make a more suitable management and marketing plan, without an appropriate road network, tourists won't be able to visit other villages than Konitsa or Pyrsoyianni and coming in touch with the cultural heritage of the region.

Another negative aspect coming from tourists' interviews is the bad marketing and management plan of the region. It is really difficult to find this destination on the Internet; there aren't a lot of organized and well informed Websites offering useful information in order people to choose to visit this destination. Much more, a lot of tourists were repeaters or others found this destination through their friends who have visited these villages before. Some of them they were informed about Mastorohoria villages when visited Ioannina region.

In parallel, one more problem, as it is referred above is the lack of a good management plan concerning the development of tourism not only in Konitsa which is the central village, but also in all Mastorohoria villages as well. Besides, each one of the villages has its own great history and culture and it is surrounded by unique environmental resources.

However, according to the interviews both of stakeholders and tourists there are some suggestions in order tourism in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages to be developed.

First of all, it is really significant to underline the role that tourism experiences play nowadays. All the people around the world travel with the aim to get away from their everyday life and routine. They travel in order to broaden their mind but much more to live unique experiences. They expect that they will get new and beautiful memories that come from their most unique moments; their holidays in a new destination (Doswell, 2002, 29).

According to the role of the experiences, stakeholders have to define their strategies, their goals and their desired results concerning the development of tourism in the region. To be more specific, the notion strategy, which comes from military terminology, has to do with the right definition of the goals.

In the case of this study, the goal is the sustainable development of tourism in Konitsa and Mastorohoria village through a “nexus” of tourist products. That means that it is very significant both the Municipality of Konitsa and the villages’ presidents to take advantage of the natural and cultural resources that are offered in the region and create tourist products having to do with sports tourism, health tourism, religion tourism, cultural tourism and of course environment tourism (Nastase, C., et al., 2010, 147).

There are several ways to achieve tourism development in the region. Some of them are the new job openings, where educated people will work on the development of the infrastructure and on the management and marketing plan of the destination in order to succeed the increase in revenue through tourism sector, new incentives to boost entrepreneurship, the use of tourism in order to preserve the uniqueness of destination’s cultural heritage both tangible and intangible, and also to protect natural environment. Moreover, it is vital to create a safer and modern road network not only to facilitate tourists but also in order to connect villages with one another and facilitate residents as well.

Of course, it is important to think about what kind of tourists Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages want to attract. They are destinations that couldn’t attract mass tourism. Only people who love environment and history and who want to come in touch with different culture could visit such villages.

Finally, it is useful to be coordination among the businesses, the organizations, and the various interest groups so as everyone to be able to make his own suggestions for the development of tourism sector in the region.

Of course, stakeholders couldn't bear in mind the tourist product. A tourist product includes the tangible and intangible components, the prices, the promotion, and the image that has to do with the creation of a strong brand name (Doswell, 2002, 63).

Besides, the product is the most significant part in marketing. It is really important to combine the offered tourist product with the needs and the wills of the market. In order to define which tourist product people need, it is important to see different characteristics of the destination's visitors. More specifically, in Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages there are visitors of all ages as we can see from the interviews. They are as many men as women, couples, very few families and individuals and most of them visit the region mainly for its natural environment.

Thus, numerous economic benefits will arise from the appropriate marketing and management plan, such as economic stability and growth, new jobs opening, and allocation of resources.

So, it would be a question how stakeholders can create a successful management plan. The steps that Municipality of Konitsa and the presidents of Mastorohoria village have to follow is first and foremost the creation of the plans, meaning to set the strategies and the goals, then the organization of these strategies, the management and coordination, and finally the monitoring in order to revise and renew the plans where it is needed (Doswell, 2002, 211).

The appropriate components of a management plan are the definition of the market. As it has been said before, it is important Mastorohoria villages to find out what kind of tourists attract and are able to attract. Secondly, it is important to define the product concerning the kind of tourist product that it is going to be developed so as stakeholders to improve appropriately the infrastructure. Finally, human resources it is very important in a management plan. In order to develop tourism, there is a great need in having qualified and trained staff.

As most of the stakeholders and a lot of tourists noted, Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages haven't been advertised enough. Advertisement is very important in order to promote a product and much more a tourist product and a destination. Nowadays, there are a lot of ways for a destination to be advertised through printed and audiovisual media, advertising e-mails, and tourist exhibitions and journalism (Doswell, 2002, 257-264). These ideas can also be applied to this case study.

Finally, one of the most important parts for the development of tourism is the appropriate education. All the residence will come in touch with tourists in one way or another so it is a good idea to provide tourism seminars and information to the residents about the benefits of sustainable tourism development in the region.

Chapter.13: Conclusion

To conclude, taking all the above into account, Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages do offer a unique “nexus” of tourist products having to do with a strong combination of natural and cultural environment just as Metsovo village.

However, it seems that tourism haven’t been developed enough, as stakeholders – hotel owners and employees of the Municipality – aren’t satisfied by the annual numbers of tourists visiting the region.

Most of them believe that the problem is the lack of a good and effective marketing and management plan combined with the lack of education on tourism sector and its often poor infrastructure.

On the other hand, although some tourists agreed to the lack of advertisement, most of them underlined the bad road network that in some cases it can be even dangerous for their safety.

As a result, it is really urgent the reconstruction of the road network. Moreover, stakeholders can agree to an effective management plan by following certain steps including the constant control of the plan and different changes in it when it is necessary.

Finally, Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages have all the necessary prerequisites in order to develop tourism sector in a sustainable way.

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Appendix

Stakeholders' interviews:

Stakeholder-Mrs. Dafli Kassiani, owner of Gerakofolia Hotel:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένη από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Είμαι ικανοποιημένη γιατί υπάρχει δουλειά σε όλη τη διάρκεια της χρονιάς, και τον χειμώνα και το καλοκαίρι. Παρ' όλα αυτά, τα έξοδα είναι πολλά. Χρήματα στη Booking για διαφήμιση του ξενοδοχείου, ζημιές, θέρμανση, επομένως τα καθαρά έσοδα είναι λίγα.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Πολλοί έρχονται γιατί έχουν καταγωγή από εδώ και μπορεί να ταξιδέψουν για κάποιο γάμο ή βάφτιση. Έρχονται επίσης ορειβατικοί σύλλογοι, άνθρωποι που θέλουν να κάνουν καγιάκ ή άλλα σπορ, ακόμη και για θρησκευτικό τουρισμό. Επιλέγουν την περιοχή γιατί είναι φθηνή.

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Δυστυχώς τα χωριά μας είναι απόμερα και υποβαθμισμένα.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Χρειάζεται διαφήμιση της περιοχής και αυτό είναι πρωτίστως ευθύνη του δήμου.

5. Πώς πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσατε από τη μεριά σας να συμβάλλετε στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού;

Ο δήμος πρέπει πρώτα να βοηθήσει. Εγώ ως ξενοδόχος προβάλλω την περιοχή μέσω της Booking και της ιστοσελίδας του ξενοδοχείου όπου αναφέρω ποια σημεία ενδιαφέροντος υπάρχουν και τι προσφέρει ο τόπος γενικά.

Stakeholder-Tassos Athanasios, owner of Bourazani Wild Life Resort:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένος από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Προσωπικά είμαι ευχαριστημένος, γιατί οι επισκέπτες επιλέγουν το ξενοδοχείο μου, αφού τους παρέχω πληθώρα εμπειριών.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Πολλές δραστηριότητες στη φύση, υπάρχει πλούσια πανίδα και χλωρίδα. Μπορεί να περάσει τις διακοπές του κάνοντας πεζοπορία σε διάφορα μονοπάτια ή και στο βουνό, μπάνιο στο ποτάμι τώρα το καλοκαίρι και διάφορα άλλα σπορ, ακόμα και να επισκεφτεί τα ατμόλουτρα στο χωριό Αμάραντος. Επίσης, μπορεί να επισκεφτεί τα μουσεία που υπάρχουν στα διάφορα χωριά και να μάθει την ιστορία μας.

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Οι περισσότεροι κάτοικοι στην Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια δεν έχουν τουριστική παιδεία. Έχουν αναπτύξει μόνο τον καταλυμματικό τουρισμό.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Ιδανικά θα έπρεπε όσοι ασχολούνται με τον τουρισμό ή θέλουν να ασχοληθούν, να επισκεφτούν μέρη και χώρες, όπως η Αυστρία, της οποίας το αλπικό τοπίο ομοιάζει με το δικό μας και από εκεί να εμπνευστούν και να εκπαιδευτούν.

5. Πώς πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσατε από τη μεριά σας να συμβάλλετε στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού;

Προσωπικά, προσπαθώ να παρέχω στους επισκέπτες μια ολοκληρωμένη τουριστική εμπειρία πέρα από τις διανυκτερεύσεις τους. Προσφέρω για παράδειγμα πρωινό με τοπικά προϊόντα και οργανώνω ομάδες trekking στα διάφορα μονοπάτια.

Stakeholder-Mr. Skoufias Georgios, owner of Agriolouloudo of Grammos Hotel:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένοι από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Είμαστε μετά από 9 χρόνια λειτουργίας σε ανοδική πορεία χάρη στην πολλή δουλειά, στις υψηλές παροχές και σε τιμές διαμονής στην μισή τιμή σε σχέση με το Ζαγόρι, όμως παλεύουμε μόνοι μας σε μία επαρχία σαν την Κόνιτσα που αποτελείται από τρία βουνά, τρία ποτάμια, τα ιαματικά λουτρά Καβασίων, το Μπουραζάνι, το μοναστήρι του Στομίου, τον Άγιο Παΐσιο και το τελωνείο Μέρτζιανης Αλβανίας, με μεγάλη ιστορία λόγω του εμφυλίου πολέμου στο Γράμμο και την ιστορία των μαστόρων, πετράδες, ξυλογλύπτες, ζωγράφοι, κατασκευαστές πέτρινων γεφυριών.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Αποτελούμε την αφετηρία του μονοπατιού προς την κορυφή του Γράμμου, αφετηρία για εκδρομές 4x4 και μηχανών στους δασικούς δρόμους, σημείο παρατήρησης άγριας ζωής, όπως αγριόγιδα, χρυσαετοί, αρκούδες, 2000 είδη βοτάνων, συλλογή από τσάι του βουνού, σαλέπι κ.λπ.. Υπάρχει επίσης ενδιαφέρον για την πεταλούδα Απόλλων και είναι σημείο εξόρμησης για κυνηγούς τρούφας, μανιταριών, κυνηγών για ορεινή πέρδικα, λαγών και αγριογούρουνων. Αποτελούμε σημείο εκτροφής της ελληνικής κυνηγετικής ράτσας "Ελληνικός ιχνηλάτης". Είναι χώρος απόλυτης ηρεμίας, αφού είμαστε δύο χιλιόμετρα έξω από το χωριό μέσα στο βουνό και αποτελούμε σημείο δροσιάς για το καλοκαίρι αφού είμαστε σε υψόμετρο 1350μ..

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Το μεγαλύτερο εμπόδιο που αντιμετωπίζει ο Δήμος Κόνιτσας είναι η έλλειψη οράματος, παραδείγματος χάρη σήμερα στα Καβάσιλα στα λουτρά, τα οποία είναι γνωστά από τον Ηρόδοτο, υπάρχει ένα οίκημα της δεκαετίας του '70 και ανάλογες πισίνες οι οποίες θεωρούνται αυτή τη στιγμή ακατάλληλες αν ο δήμος δεν προβεί σε ένα διεθνή διαγωνισμό, ώστε να παραχωρήσει το χώρο σε ιδιώτες δηλαδή ιδιωτικά και valley, ώστε να μεταμορφώσουν το χώρο. Άλλο παράδειγμα αποτελεί το μουσείο Πέτρας στην Πυρσόγιαννη. Ενώ έχει ανακοινωθεί η ίδρυσή του από το 2006, 19 χρόνια μετά ακόμη ψάχνουν να βρουν κάποια χρηματοδότηση. Και να βρεθεί όμως η χρηματοδότηση ο Δήμος δεν έχει την δυνατότητα να λειτουργήσει αυτό το μουσείο ειδικά Σαββατοκύριακα και αργίες, οπότε και σε αυτή την περίπτωση πρέπει να παραχωρηθεί σε ιδιώτη, ώστε να υπάρξει προσπάθεια για να γίνει λειτουργικό και αποδοτικό. Οι επεμβάσεις του Δήμου πρέπει να είναι τέτοιες ώστε να

βοηθούν την επιχειρηματικότητα η οποία μπορεί να αλλάξει τα πράγματα. Να φανταστείτε ότι ο δήμος Κόνιτσας διαθέτει 80 υπαλλήλους από τους οποίους ελάχιστοι προσφέρουν έμπρακτη δουλειά. Είναι κρίμα αυτή η επαρχία με τρία ποτάμια να μην έχει ανάπτυξη ανάλογη με αυτή του Μετσόβου. Ένα άλλο πρόβλημα είναι η αρνητικότητα των κατοίκων.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Με καλύτερη οργάνωση του δήμου στο κομμάτι του τουρισμού. Χρειάζεται να δούμε τι πόρους διαθέτουμε, πώς μπορούμε να τους αξιοποιήσουμε και φυσικά να τους διαφημίσουμε. Οι άνθρωποι σήμερα ενδιαφέρονται για εναλλακτικές μορφές τουρισμού και τα δικά μας μέρη ενδείκνυνται για κάτι τέτοιο. Είναι σημαντικό να στηριχτούμε πρωτίστως στο κομμάτι του φυσικού περιβάλλοντος, που είναι κάτι που αρκετοί γνωρίζουν, και παράλληλα να προβάλλουμε την πλούσια πολιτιστική μας κληρονομιά.

5. Πώς πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσατε από τη μεριά σας να συμβάλλετε στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού;

Αυτό που κάνω εγώ είναι ταυτόχρονα με τη διαφήμιση του ξενοδοχείου μου στις διάφορες πλατφόρμες και τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης, να παρέχω πληροφορίες για το τι μπορεί να κάνει και να δει ο επισκέπτης στα χωριά.

Stakeholder-Mr. Exarchou Charalabos, owner of Konitsa Mountain Hotel:

1. Κατ' αρχάς θα ήθελα να μου πείτε αν είστε ικανοποιημένος από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που έρχονται και διαμένουν στο ξενοδοχείο σας.

Όχι βέβαια, γιατί η πληρότητα είναι πολύ χαμηλή. Σε αυτό βέβαια φταίμε κι εμείς σαν περιοχή κι επειδή έχω χρηματίσει και τέσσερα χρόνια δήμαρχος, εδώ στην περιοχή, δεν έχει προβληθεί η Κόνιτσα και τα χωριά της όσο θα έπρεπε, με αποτέλεσμα να είναι πολύ πίσω και σε υποδομές και στην όλη τουριστική προβολή σε σχέση με τις άλλες περιοχές της Ηπείρου όπως είναι το Ζαγόρι, τα Τζουμέρκα τελευταία, το Μέτσοβο κ.λπ..

2. Εδώ τι μπορεί κάποιος επισκέπτης να κάνει; Δηλαδή οι τουρίστες που έχετε στο ξενοδοχείο σας και μιλάτε τι βλέπετε ότι θέλουν να κάνουν;

Κοιτάξτε, οι άνθρωποι που έρχονται στην Κόνιτσα αρέσκονται στη φύση και η Κόνιτσα είναι η φύση (έντονα) και τα γύρω χωριά. Κατ' αρχήν έχει έναν εθνικό δρυμό, τη χαράδρα Βίκου και Αωού που είναι μοναδικά στην Ελλάδα, μην πω και στην Ευρώπη. Έχουν γίνει μερικές προσπάθειες, έχει τελειώσει το μονοπάτι προς τη Μονή Στομίου που διανύει το μισό της διαδρομής της χαράδρας του Αωού. Περιμέναμε να το εγκαινιάσει ο προηγούμενος δήμαρχος -δεν τα κατάφερε- ελπίζω ο επόμενος να το εγκαινιάσει. Κι αυτό ξεκίνησε επί ημερών μου σαν

έργο και είναι ένα από τα καλύτερα που θα δώσουν καλή ώθηση στην περιοχή. Έχει να περπατήσει, να επισκεφτεί χωριά τα οποία είναι παραδοσιακά και μη τουριστικά, ό,τι καλύτερο για έναν επισκέπτη, να πάει στη δρακόλιμνη του Σμόλικα, στη δρακόλιμνη της Τύμφης, να κυνηγήσει γιατί έχει και πολύ κυνήγι η περιοχή μας. Έχει πολλές φυγές για τον επισκέπτη. Έχει πολλά μοναστήρια, πολλές παραδοσιακές εκκλησίες, πολύ παλιές, και όλα αυτά.

3. Παρ' όλα αυτά μου είπατε ότι δεν έχει αρκετό τουρισμό, οπότε τι πιστεύετε ότι φταίει; Ποιο είναι το εμπόδιο που δεν έχει αναπτυχθεί ο τουρισμός όσο θα μπορούσε και όσο θα έπρεπε; Σας τα είπα πριν, δεν φρόντισαν οι προηγούμενοι δήμαρχοι όσο θα έπρεπε να δημιουργηθούν οι υποδομές που χρειάζονται και δεν φρόντισαν οι υψηλά ιστάμενοι να αξιοποιηθεί ετούτη η περιοχή. Οι προσπάθειές τους περισσότερο προσανατολίζονται στο να μείνουν όπως έχουν τα πράγματα στην επαρχία Κόνιτσας. Δεν βοηθούν προς αυτή την κατεύθυνση.

4. Εσείς από τη μεριά σας τι θα μπορούσατε ή τι ήδη κάνετε για να προσελκύσετε κόσμο, ως ξενοδόχος δηλαδή;

Κοιτάξτε, εγώ, παρ' όλο που το ξεκίνησα πολύ αργά το ξενοδοχείο εδώ, λειτούργησε αρχές του '07, του 2007, δηλαδή έχουμε 10-12 χρόνια που λειτουργεί, το παλεύουμε από μόνοι μας μέσω των τουριστικών γραφείων, μέσω άλλων προβολών με περιοδικά και με τέτοια, και προσπαθούμε να φέρουμε ει δυνατόν περισσότερο κόσμο και το κυριότερο είναι να μην μπαίνουμε μέσα. Αυτή είναι η αγωνία μας.

Stakeholder-Romaneli Evi, Responsible of the Wine Museum:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένοι από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Είμαστε ικανοποιημένοι όχι τόσο με τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που φτάνουν στα μέρη μας, αλλά με το γεγονός ότι κάθε χρόνο, όλο και περισσότεροι άνθρωποι μαθαίνουν και θέλουν να γνωρίσουν την Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Υπάρχει αύξηση ενδιαφέροντος στον θρησκευτικό τουρισμό. Έρχονται ατομικά ή και με γκρουπ για να επισκεφτούν το σπίτι του Αγίου Παϊσίου, κυρίως Ρώσοι τουρίστες, οι οποίοι θέλουν να δουν τα μέρη που έζησε. Επίσης, αρκετά γκρουπ επισκέπτονται το Μουσείο Οίνου της περιοχής μιας και στην περιοχή διατηρείται ποικιλία η οποία αναπτύσσεται μόνη της χωρίς ανθρώπινη παρέμβαση και υπάρχει εκεί από τα χρόνια του Αλή Πασά. Φυσικά οι περισσότεροι

επισκέπτες επισκέπτονται και θαυμάζουν το μονότοξο γεφύρι της Κόνιτσας και κάνουν πεζοπορία στη χαράδρα του Αωού φτάνοντας στη Μονή του Στομίου. Επίσης, η περιοχή διαθέτει φυσικά ατμόλουτρα στο χωριό του Αμάραντου και φωτογραφικές εκθέσεις.

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Το κυριότερο πρόβλημα είναι ότι η Κόνιτσα και κατ' επέκταση τα Μαστοροχώρια δεν έχουν προβληθεί όσο θα έπρεπε. Επίσης, είναι σημαντικό το ότι το Μουσείο μας δεν προσφέρει την εμπειρία της γευσιγνωσίας στους επισκέπτες.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Με σωστή διαφήμιση και τη χρήση των νέων τεχνολογιών. Ήδη έχει αποσταλεί άρθρο σχετικά με το Μουσείο μας και τη φωτογραφική έκθεσή του στην Περιφέρεια Ηπείρου.

5. Πώς πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσατε από τη μεριά σας να συμβάλλετε στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού;

Εμάς το πλάνο μας είναι να εντάξουμε το κομμάτι της γευσιγνωσίας στο Μουσείο, την πώληση τοπικών προϊόντων σχετικών με το σταφύλι και τη συνεργασία με άλλα χωριά όπως η Ζίτσα και το Μέτσοβο, ώστε να παρακολουθεί ο επισκέπτης τη διαδικασία της απόσταξης. Γενικότερα ο σκοπός μας είναι η ανάπτυξη παλιών ποικιλιών κρασιού που έχουν χαθεί, όπως το Βλάχικο, το Δεκάρι και το Μπαμπαχασάν.

Stakeholder-Mr. Papaspyrou Andreas, former mayor:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένος από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Σε έναν βαθμό ναι, είμαι ικανοποιημένος, όμως σίγουρα ο τουρισμός δεν έχει αναπτυχθεί αρκετά. Μπορεί να αναπτυχθεί πολύ περισσότερο.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Οι τρεις βασικοί πυλώνες του τουρισμού στην Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια είναι ο οικοτουρισμός, ο ιαματικός τουρισμός και ο θρησκευτικός τουρισμός. Υπάρχει πληθώρα δραστηριοτήτων σε αυτές τις μορφές τουρισμού. Βέβαια, υπάρχει και μεγάλη πολιτιστική κληρονομιά που όμως ακόμα δεν έχει δεχτεί την κατάλληλη διαχείριση για να προβληθεί.

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Ένα εμπόδιο είναι το ότι οι κάτοικοι και κυρίως όσοι απασχολούνται με κάποιο τρόπο στον τουρισμό δεν δέχονται να προβούν σε αλλαγές με στόχο τη βελτίωση. Πολλές φορές δηλώνουν ότι δεν θέλουν περισσότερο τουρισμό από αυτόν που ήδη έχουμε.

Επίσης, συχνά οι σύμβουλοι του τουρισμού προσπαθούν να επιβάλλουν ρυθμίσεις και αλλαγές προς ίδιον όφελος.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Μια δραστική λύση είναι να εργαστούν στον δήμο άνθρωποι σχετικοί με τον τομέα του τουρισμού, ώστε να δημιουργήσουν ενημερωτικές ημερίδες για τις εναλλακτικές μορφές τουρισμού και να ενημερωθούν οι κάτοικοι και όσοι απασχολούνται στον τουρισμό, αλλά και να προτείνουν λύσεις που θα εξυπηρετούν πράγματι την βιώσιμη ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού.

5. Υπάρχει κάποιο σχέδιο για την επίλυση των προβλημάτων;

Αυτή τη στιγμή λόγω των αλλαγών που έγιναν με τις εκλογές βρισκόμαστε σε μια φάση αναδιοργάνωσης. Ένας όμως από τους κύριους στόχους είναι η συνέχιση της προσπάθειας για προβολή του τόπου.

Stakeholder-Mrs. Mitsi Ioanna, Responsible of the Information Center:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένη από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και για ποιο λόγο;

Όχι δεν είμαι ικανοποιημένη, θα μπορούσαμε να πάμε και καλύτερα. Ο λόγος είναι ότι δεν έχουμε πολλούς επαγγελματίες, όχι ότι δεν προβάλλεται η περιοχή, δεν είναι αυτό το θέμα. Και λιγότερο προβεβλημένα χωριά πάνε πολύ καλύτερα. Πιστεύω ότι είναι καθαρά θέμα επαγγελματισμού, ναι.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του είτε στην Κόνιτσα είτε και στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Στα Μαστοροχώρια τώρα, για να επικεντρωθούμε σε αυτό το κομμάτι, γιατί Κόνιτσα πλατειάζουμε μετά πάρα πολύ, και Μαστοροχώρια, η αρχιτεκτονική και όλη η ιστορία των μπουλουκιών, όλες αυτές οι μικρές συντεχνίες που έφευγαν κάθε Καθαρά Δευτέρα και γύρναγαν πίσω του Αγίου Δημητρίου. Όλο αυτό το κομμάτι λείπει, ας πούμε κι εδώ το αναφέρουμε πολύ λίγο γιατί επικεντρωνόμαστε στην Κόνιτσα. Θα μπορούσαν βέβαια να υπάρχουν περισσότερες πινακίδες πάνω που να λένε όλη την ιστορία αυτή. Είναι πάρα πολύ ωραία, είναι τέλεια ιστορία γιατί υπάρχουν δημιουργήματά τους παντού, σε όλο τον κόσμο, γι' αυτό, μόνο γι' αυτό, είναι πάρα πολύ ωραίο κομμάτι.

3. Ποιο πιστεύετε ότι είναι το εμπόδιο για ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού στην περιοχή -ένα από τα εμπόδια;

Όπως είπε και ο κύριος Τάσος είναι θέμα παιδείας. Είναι θέμα παιδείας, πολιτισμού, νοοτροπίας. Πρέπει να ξεκινήσει από μέσα από την οικογένεια όλο αυτό και να μεγαλώνει και

να ανθίσει τελικά κάποια στιγμή. Αλλιώς θα έρθουν ξένοι επαγγελματίες και θα τα πάρουν όλα από τα δικά μας χέρια και τελείωσε, εμείς θα είμαστε απλώς υπάλληλοι.

4. Και με ποιο τρόπο πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσε να ξεπεραστεί αυτό το εμπόδιο; Πώς μπορεί κάποιος να γίνει επαγγελματίας;

Με την παιδεία, αυτό είναι ένα μεγάλο θέμα. Πρέπει ουσιαστικά να ξεκινήσουμε και να αλλάξουμε τον τρόπο σκέψέως μας, γιατί, εδώ συνάντησα ένα φαινόμενο που δεν το έχω συναντήσει πουθενά αλλού. Λένε συνεχώς τα παιδιά να μην φύγουν από 'δώ πέρα! Οι γονείς! Είναι τόσο υπερπροστατευτικοί που τα εγκλωβίζουν εδώ κι έτσι δεν πηγαίνουν πουθενά, δεν έχουν εικόνες, δεν έχουν ιδέα τι γίνεται έξω στον κόσμο. Πρέπει να αλλάξει αυτή η νοοτροπία, να φεύγουν τα παιδιά, όσο το δυνατόν γρηγορότερα για να γυρίσουν πίσω.

5. Και τελευταία ερώτηση. Υπάρχει κάποιο σχέδιο, κάποιο πλάνο, απ' τη μεριά τη δική σας, του δήμου ευρύτερα, για να προωθηθεί, να αναπτυχθεί ο τουρισμός στην περιοχή;

Λοιπόν, κάθε φορά που αλλάζει η δημοτική αρχή φέρνει ένα καινούριο πλάνο, το οποίο βέβαια είναι βραχυπρόθεσμο. Δεν υπάρχουν μακροπρόθεσμα πλάνα που να λένε θα κάνουμε αυτό, θα κάνουμε εκείνο και μετά από δέκα χρόνια θα έχει γίνει αυτό. Δεν υπάρχει (γέλια). Δυστυχώς. Ο κάθε αντιδήμαρχος επικεντρώνεται σε αυτό που του αρέσει πάρα πολύ. Δεν ξέρω ο καινούριος αντιδήμαρχος τι θα κάνει. Ο προηγούμενος είχε επικεντρωθεί στον θρησκευτικό τουρισμό. Είναι άνθρωπος της εκκλησίας, του αρέσει πάρα πολύ, δεν το συζητάμε, είναι ένα κομμάτι του τουρισμού και αυτό, αλλά όταν βλέπεις ότι τα αποτελέσματα βάσει στατιστικών σε οδηγούν αλλού, πρέπει να ακολουθήσεις εκείνο το μονοπάτι κατά μεγαλύτερο ποσοστό απ' ό,τι το κομμάτι του θρησκευτικού τουρισμού. Το θέμα είναι το βουνό, η φύση. Πρέπει να το καταλάβουμε και πρέπει να την προστατέψουμε τη φύση, να έχουμε λίγο καλύτερες υποδομές για τους ανθρώπους που πηγαίνουν απάνω στο βουνό. Γενικότερα, πρέπει να φτιάξουμε ορισμένα πράγματα βάσει Ευρωπαϊκών προδιαγραφών - αυτό ζητάνε- και όχι νεωτερισμούς, τσιμέντα και αυτά που γίνονται πάντα. Καλό είναι να φάνε και οι εργολάβοι, βεβαίως, πάρα πολύ ωραία, αλλά με μέτρο. Αυτό.

Stakeholder-Mr. Exarchou Nicholas, mayor:

1. Θα ήθελα να μου πείτε εάν είστε ευχαριστημένος από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που έρχονται στην Κόνιτσα και στα Μαστοροχώρια κατ' αρχάς.

Είναι γεγονός ότι η περιοχή μας, κατά την προσωπική μου άποψη είναι ίσως η πιο όμορφη περιοχή της Ελλάδος. Το ορεινό συγκρότημα της περιοχής συμπεριλαμβάνει τρία από τα σπουδαιότερα και ψηλότερα βουνά της χώρας, τον Σμόλικα, την Τύμφη και τον Γράμμο. Τα

πολιτιστικά δρώμενα της περιοχής είναι σπουδαία, η περιοχή μας έχει μεγάλη πολιτιστική παράδοση, σε όλους τους τομείς, οι ομορφιές είναι απίστευτες, τα μοναστήρια μας, τα γεφύρια μας και κατά την άποψή μου δυστυχώς έχουμε μείνει πίσω, θα έπρεπε να ήταν σίγουρα πολύ περισσότερα άτομα που θα επισκέπτονταν την περιοχή και σε αυτό δυστυχώς έχουμε ευθύνη κι εμείς οι αιρετοί εδώ και πολλά χρόνια.

2. Οπότε, λίγο πιο συγκεκριμένα, τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης; Πώς περνάει τον χρόνο του στην περιοχή; Τι δυνατότητες έχει; Ίσως τα πιο βασικά αν θέλετε μόνο.

Ναι, κοιτάξτε να δείτε. Η περιοχή μπορεί να συνδυάσει όλων των ειδών τουρισμού. Να ξεκινήσουμε από τον θρησκευτικό τουρισμό, όπου πραγματικά έχουμε αρκετά μοναστήρια σε σπουδαία κατάσταση, τον Όσιο Παΐσιο, τον Άγιο μας, της Κόνιτσας και της περιοχής μας. Περιπατητικός τουρισμός, ορειβατικός τουρισμός, αναρριχητικός τουρισμός. Τα καλοκαίρια ειδικά έχουμε πάρα πολλές πολιτιστικές εκδηλώσεις, τα πανέμορφα πανηγύρια μας στα χωριά, υπάρχουν χωριά με σπουδαία πολιτιστική παράδοση και κατά την άποψή μου μπορεί να συνδεθεί πολύ όμορφα το κέντρο, δηλαδή η πόλη, με τα χωριά. Αν αυτό συμβεί τα επρχόμενα χρόνια, πιστεύω ότι θα έχουμε εκτόξευση της τουριστικής ανάπτυξης της περιοχής μας. Είναι πραγματικά σπουδαία η περιοχή μας και νομίζω ότι με συγκροτημένα βήματα θα πάμε μπροστά.

3. Ποιο πιστεύετε ότι είναι ένα από τα εμπόδια που έχουν κρατήσει πίσω την ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού στην περιοχή;

Ότι είναι πολύ μεγάλη η περιοχή μας, είναι μακριά από βασικά κέντρα, δηλαδή είναι τα Γιάννενα κοντά, μια μεγάλη πόλη, πανέμορφη πόλη, είναι στην παραμεθόριο. Μην ξεχνάμε ότι εδώ έγιναν οι μεγάλες μάχες του Εμφυλίου. Δυστυχώς τα σύνδρομα του Εμφυλίου άφησαν την περιοχή μας πίσω εδώ και πολλά χρόνια. Και επειδή τα χωριά μας από τη δεκαετία του '60, του '70, του '80 και μετά ερημώσανε, ειδικά τον χειμώνα είναι πολύ λίγοι οι διαμένοντες στα χωριά, αυτό βέβαια είχε αντίκτυπο και στην τουριστική ανάπτυξη της περιοχής. Αυτοί κατά την άποψή μου είναι οι λόγοι και οι βασικοί όμως θεωρώ ότι είναι ότι δεν υπήρχε και όραμα από όλους μας τι πρέπει να γίνει τέλος πάντων σε αυτή την περιοχή. Δηλαδή είναι πρόβλημα που στην Κόνιτσα δεν υπάρχει ένα σπουδαίο λαογραφικό μουσείο και ένα μουσείο φυσικής ιστορίας. Θα έπρεπε το κέντρο της περιοχής της επαρχίας να έχει και λαογραφικό μουσείο και μουσείο φυσικής ιστορίας. Το οποίο λαογραφικό μουσείο θα μπορούσε να έχει την ιστορία όλων των χωριών μας κατά ενότητες. Θα ήταν ένα σπουδαίο έργο, το οποίο, κατά την άποψή μου, θα έπρεπε να έχει γίνει εδώ και πολλά χρόνια. Μην ξεχνάμε και το πανέμορφο μονότοξο γεφύρι μας, που είναι από τα πιο όμορφα της Ελλάδος, τα μοναστήρια μας, η Μονή Στομίου, η

Μονή στη Μολυβδοσκεπταστη, η (Μονή) Κλαδόρμης. Η περιοχή έχει τρομερά πράγματα για να δείξεις στον οποιονδήποτε τουρίστα, σε όλες τις μορφές τουρισμού.

4. Εσείς από τη μεριά σας, ποιο είναι ένα πλάνο ή κάποια κίνηση που μπορείτε να κάνετε για να αναπτυχθεί σιγά-σιγά ο τουρισμός;

Μην πούμε ότι δεν έχουμε τουρισμό. Έχουμε κάποια τουριστική ανάπτυξη τα τελευταία χρόνια, εδώ και αρκετά χρόνια θα έλεγα, απλώς δεν είναι ικανοποιητικός ο αριθμός των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται την περιοχή μας. Παρατηρώ δηλαδή τα τελευταία χρόνια έρχονται αρκετοί Εβραίοι. Αυτό είναι κάτι το ευχάριστο. Εάν, παράδειγμα, μπορέσουμε να συνδεθούμε οδικά και με τη γείτονα χώρα της Αλβανίας από τη Βόρεια Ήπειρο, από τη μεριά τη δική μας, δηλαδή έχουμε έναν σύγχρονο αυτοκινητόδρομο, μέχρι την Μέρτζιανη, είναι σίγουρο ότι όλα τα Βαλκάνια θα επισκέπτονται πιο εύκολα την περιοχή μας.

Από την πλευρά μου, εδώ στον δήμο, μιας και είμαι και ο Δήμαρχος από σήμερα, οι πρώτες μου κινήσεις θα είναι να οργανώσω πολύ καλύτερα το τουριστικό προϊόν της περιοχής, θα προσλάβουμε και ειδικό συνεργάτη του Δημάρχου, ο οποίος θα ασχολείται με τουριστικά θέματα, ώστε να ξεφύγουμε λιγάκι, γιατί είμαστε μια πολύ συντηρητική κοινωνία, που δυστυχώς δεν βλέπαμε εδώ και πολλά χρόνια έξω απ' ό,τι βλέπει το μάτι μας. Μείναμε λιγάκι πίσω. Φέρουμε κι εμείς μεγάλες ευθύνες. Θα γίνει προσπάθεια μεγάλη και συνεργασία με ανθρώπους που ασχολούνται με τον τουρισμό, ξενοδόχους, εστιατορές και με την αναβάθμιση της επιτροπής τουρισμού και με τον ειδικό συνεργάτη που θα προσλάβουμε πιστεύω τα πράγματα θα πάνε πολύ καλύτερα.

Stakeholder-Mr. Kallideris Georgios, former deputy mayor:

1. Είστε ικανοποιημένοι από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά και γιατί;

Δυστυχώς δεν είμαστε ικανοποιημένοι από τον ετήσιο αριθμό των τουριστών που επισκέπτονται τα χωριά μας. Πολλές είναι οι αιτίες. Επιγραμματικά να σας αναφέρω τις εξής:

Την ερήμωση των χωριών μας και ιδιαίτερα την έλλειψη νέων στα χωριά μας.

Την έλλειψη υποδομών για τουρίστες (μερικά χωριά δεν έχουν ούτε καφεενείο, ούτε ξενώνες).

Την έλλειψη καλού οδικού δικτύου.

Και την μη ανάδειξη σε μεγάλο βαθμό των επισκέψιμων σημείων.

2. Τι μπορεί να κάνει ένας επισκέπτης κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στα Μαστοροχώρια;

Μπορεί να περιηγηθεί στα λιθόκτιστα δρομάκια των χωριών, να κάνει περιήγηση στα αξιοθέατα των χωριών στα πέτρινα γεφύρια, σε κεντρικές πετρόκτιστες εκκλησίες, σε πολλά πέτρινα εξωκλήσια. Να κάνει πεζοπορίες σε μονοπάτια που οδηγούν σε δάση, χαράδρες, λίμνες και σε ποταμούς. Να συμμετάσχει στα τοπικά πανηγύρια και σε πολιτιστικές εκδηλώσεις.

3. Τι πιστεύετε ότι αποτελεί εμπόδιο στην ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και γιατί;

Μεγάλο εμπόδιο είναι η ερήμωση των χωριών με αποτέλεσμα να μην υπάρχουν νέοι για την οργάνωση του τουρισμού. Σε λίγες περιπτώσεις που νέοι αποφάσισαν να έλθουν στα χωριά και να ανοίξουν τουριστικές επιχειρήσεις με μεγάλο ρίσκο, έχουμε καλά αποτελέσματα.

Πρόβλημα επίσης αποτελεί η μη υποστήριξη της πολιτείας. Έπρεπε να υπάρχουν προγράμματα ενίσχυσης και μείωση φόρων και εισφορών για νέους που θα αποφάσιζαν να επιστρέψουν στα χωριά για να δημιουργήσουν κάποιες δουλιές είτε τουριστικές είτε πρωτογενούς τομέα. [Ενδεικτικά σας αναφέρω ότι για οικία στην Καστάνιανη πετρόκτιστη που θέλει αρκετά χρήματα για συντήρηση πληρώνω 450 ευρώ].

Ένα ακόμη πρόβλημα είναι η έλλειψη καλού οδικού δικτύου, όπως ανέφερα και πιο πάνω, καθώς και η ανεπαρκής διαφήμιση.

4. Με ποιο τρόπο νομίζετε ότι θα μπορούσαν να ξεπεραστούν τα εμπόδια;

Η πολιτεία πρέπει να αναλάβει το μέρος που της ανήκει, όπως ανέφερα και πιο πάνω. Να γίνει ενημέρωση των νέων μας και να προσφερθεί βοήθεια εκ μέρους του Δήμου και της πολιτείας ώστε να καταλάβουν ότι μπορούν να επιβιώσουν και να σταδιοδρομήσουν στην επαρχία καλύτερα από τις μεγάλες πόλεις. Ακόμη να βάλουμε σε προγράμματα τα χωριά ώστε να διατηρηθεί ο παραδοσιακός τους χαρακτήρας. Και τέλος, να γίνει πρόσληψη από τους Δήμους εξειδικευμένου προσωπικού ώστε να αναδείξει και να προβάλει τα τουριστικά σημεία των χωριών μας αλλά και όλου του Δήμου.

5. Υπάρχει κάποιο σχέδιο για την επίλυση των προβλημάτων;

Ο Δήμος κατ' αρχήν πιέζει ώστε να γίνει καλύτερο το οδικό δίκτυο. Ήδη αυτό τον καιρό βελτιώθηκε ο δρόμος για την Καστάνιανη. Βρίσκονται σε εξέλιξη δύο μουσεία σε δύο Μαστοροχώρια. Στην Πυρσόγιαννη θα ολοκληρωθεί το μουσείο των μαστόρων μέσω προγράμματος Leader και στους Χιονάδες είναι έτοιμο να λειτουργήσει το Μουσείο των Χιοναδιτών Ζωγράφων - Αγιογράφων. Γίνονται επίσης προσπάθειες να λειτουργήσει Σχολή Πέτρας στη Βούρμπιανη. Και τέλος, γίνεται προβολή των Μαστοροχωρίων μέσω της ιστοσελίδας του Δήμου, ιστοσελίδων των ίδιων των χωριών και λειτουργεί ο «ηλεκτρονικός

ξεναγός» σε τρία χωριά, την Πυρσόγιαννη, την Καστάνιανη και το Γαναδιό με εφαρμογή στο κινητό.

Tourists' interviews:

Tourist 1:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

I am Italian, 35 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time I'm visiting Mastorohoria

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

I'm an author so most of the times I spend time searching for different destinations through books or the Internet because I need to broaden my experiences.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

This place has numerous of trekking paths and a lot of less or more high mountains so I really like walking a lot of hours every day. I'm going to visit most of the villages.

5. What do you like the most?

I really love their traditional music.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

Well I had a difficulty to approach some of the villages like Amarantos. It would be better if the roads were safer with more signs in some cases.

Tourist 2:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We come from Czech Republic and we are 52 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the second time we visit Mastorohoria.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We know a Greek couple. They proposed us to visit Ioannina and these villages.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We spend our time doing trekking. These days we are going to walk through Aoos gorge arriving Stomio, we are going to visit Molivoskepasti and also Kavasila hot springs.

5. What do you like the most?

We like all these green paths. The place here is very clean and the buildings are gorgeous.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

If you don't have your own car, there isn't any chance to visit the small villages around Konitsa.

Tourist 3:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Greeks but we have been living in Australia for 20 years. We are about 50 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

We come here almost every year.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We knew about Mastorohoria villages because we were born in a region next to them; Grevena.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We mainly pass our time doing trekking.

5. What do you like the most?

We love visiting Dragon Lake on the top of Smolikas.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

There aren't enough signs on the road and we often feel that we got lost.

Tourist 4:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are from Israel and we are 26 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we visit Mastorohoria.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

Most of the people of our country visit Konitsa and Mastorohoria because we love this natural environment.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We do trekking. We are going to visit Papigo, Dragon Lake, Monodendri and other villages.

5. What do you like the most?

We like all these paths full of green.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

It's difficult to move from one village to another if you don't have your own car.

Tourist 5:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

I am Albanian and I am 36 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

I have been in Mastorohoria villages 5 years before.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

I was living in Albania so I know the region of Ioannina.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

I visited the house of Hamko and Housein.

5. What do you like the most?

I like the history of the region.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

I tried to visit some very interesting museums with photo collections but they were closed.

Tourist 6:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Polish and we are about 35 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we visit these villages.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We are used to climbing mountains so we found Smolikas Mountain on the internet and we decided to come.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We are going to climb Smolikas Mountain and I don't know yet what else to be honest.

5. What do you like the most?

We like the fact that there are so many green spaces.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

They told us that there are a lot of hunters on the mountains of the region and we are afraid of this. We totally disagree to let hunters hunt among trekking paths on the mountains.

Tourist 7:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We come from Israel and we are 50 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the second time we visit Mastorohoria villages and Konitsa.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

In Israel where we come from most of people know these places. It is a nearby and cheap destination.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We mainly did trekking through Aoos Gorge and also

5. What do you like the most?

We love the nature and the tranquility of this place.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

Unfortunately, there isn't a good road network and thus we were afraid to visit some villages.

Tourist 8:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Italians and we are about 45 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time being here, second in Greece.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We came again 3 years ago to climb Olybos Mountain. People told as that that was the highest mountain in Greece and that Smolikas Mountain is the second one. So that's why we are here.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

As I mentioned before, we love climbing mountains so we climbed Smolikas Mountain yesterday. You have plenty of activities to do here. Tomorrow we will go trekking to Aoos Gorge.

5. What do you like the most?

We like the nature. There are a lot of green spaces here. We can have a walk into the woods or next to the river.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region?/What would you like to be better in the region?

In some cases, the roads here were dangerous enough. They are old and because of the intense weather in the winter they have been broken in several points.

Tourist 9:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We come from Israel, I am 22 years old and my parents are about 50 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time that we have been here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We are foresters so we knew about this region and we were interested in visiting it.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We mostly do trekking. We want to observe every little detail of the natural environment

5. What do you like the most?

We like that the places here are very clean and attentive.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

We observed that there isn't any security into the woods or along the different paths.

Tourist 10:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Polish. We all are 24 years old; we study together in Poland.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the second time we visit Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We had heard about Smolikas Mountain and the Dragon Lake on it and we wanted to see it. We liked the place so that's why we came again.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

This time we tried to do rafting and horse riding into the river. It was amazing!

5. What do you like the most?

We like the natural environment. It's really pure.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

There aren't enough signs on the roads so it was difficult to us to be oriented.

Tourist 11:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We come from Netherlands and we are 63 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's our first time here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We arrived at Thessaloniki some days ago, we have visited Meteora and they urged us to visit also Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We did trekking along Aoos Gorge, saw Stomio Monastery and we would also like to visit the thermal spa of Amarantos.

5. What do you like the most?

All these different things you do and see here. There is plenty of natural environment, rich history, and amazing architecture.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

Because of the long distances we don't have enough time to see all the villages, but we know that such a problem can't be improved.

Tourist 12:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Dutch and we are 27 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we visit this region.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We travel a lot and we were searching places where we can do trekking so one destination we found was Smolikas Mountain.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

As I told you before, we did trekking on Smolikas Mountain, we are going to walk along Aoos Gorge and see Konitsa's bridge.

5. What do you like the most?

We like this pure natural environment.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

The roads to the villages are a bit dangerous.

Tourist 13:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Albanians and we are about 40-50 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

We have visited Mastorohoria villages some years ago.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We work in the Ministry of Tourism in Albania so we were searching for local gastronomy and cultural resources.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We want to taste local gastronomy first of all. Then we are going to visit some buildings like Hamko's house and other villages such as Pyrsoyianni etc for their architecture.

5. What do you like the most?

We like that people here are friendly. They try to help you and give you any information you ask. Also there is a great architecture.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

I believe that stakeholders don't try enough to highlight the region and its natural and cultural resources.

Tourist 14:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are from Italy and we are about 40 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we come here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We traveled to Ioannina and they told us to visit these villages mostly because of their natural environment.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We visited the monastery of Stomio, so we walked along Aoos Gorge; we want to visit the house of Saint Paisios as well as other villages to admire the architecture.

5. What do you like the most?

We like the architecture of these villages. They are built with stones. It is very stunning. Also the history is very interesting.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region?/What would you like to be better in the region?

We didn't find enough information on the Internet. If we haven't decided to visit Ioannina, we would never discover this place.

Tourist 15:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Italians and we are 25 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we come here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We have done rafting at Acherontas river and they told us to come also here doing rafting at Aoos river.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

Of course rafting but the weather is great so we can also go swimming at the river. But anyway, we want to see Hamko's house and Amarantos baths.

5. What do you like the most?

The landscape is pure. You can see a lot of green spaces and the houses are so harmoniously built.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

It would be better if people here had a better marketing strategy. Very few people know this place, why?

Tourist 16:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are Germans and we are 54 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we are here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We have a company offering parachute activities and we were searching for something similar to take some ideas.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We did trekking along Aoos Gorge, we visited Amarantos baths and we want to visit some buildings as well, for example Hamko's house and the Wine Museum.

5. What do you like the most?

The villages here are a unique combination of natural environment and culture. People also are very kind.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

There is a lack of signs and we had a difficulty to arrive to some villages.

Tourist 17:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are from Israel and we are 28 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the second time we visit Konitsa and its villages.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We found information on the Internet when searching for alternative style of vacations.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We saw Stomio Monastery at the end of Aoos Gorge. Of course we admired Konitsa's bridge and we want to climb Smolikas Mountain.

5. What do you like the most?

During our previous visit, we visited most of Mastorohoria villages. They are very beautiful. This time we wanted to admire the natural environment.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

Some museums were closed and some others haven't operated yet, such as the Stone Museum.

Tourist 18:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are from Italy and we are about 40 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time we visit these villages.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We had talked with a Greek couple coming from Ioannina and they told us to visit Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We want to taste Greek gastronomy. We want also to visit the house of Paisios and we have just seen Konitsa's bridge and visited Plikati and Pyrsoyianni villages.

5. What do you like the most?

We love the culture and the history of these places. We also feel more carefree.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

It is very difficult to go from one village to another. I think that they have to build new, safer roads.

Tourist 19:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We come from Germany and we are 53 years old.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

It's the first time being here.

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

We are involved in mountaineering so we organize travels to places with high mountains.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

First of all, we climbed Smolikas Mountain. Tomorrow we want to walk along Aaos gorge and reach Stomio Monastery. If we have enough time, we want also to visit some villages, like Pyrsoyianni. We have heard the history of Mastorohoria villages and we want to come in touch with the people and get to know more.

5. What do you like the most?

We love the natural environment, really pure and clean. But as I mentioned before we admire the history of the region as well.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

I think that really few people know this destination. They need to organize a better marketing strategy.

Tourist 20:

1. Where are you from and what your age is?

We are English at the age of 60.

2. How often do you visit Mastorohoria villages?

We traveled to Ioannina and thus we visited

3. Where did you find information about the villages?

People from Ioannina recommended us to visit Konitsa and Mastorohoria villages.

4. What kind of activities do you do here?

We did rafting at Aoos river and tomorrow we will see Konitsa's bridge and do trekking along Aoos Gorge until arriving at Stomio Monastery.

5. What do you like the most?

We like that people here are very welcoming. The food is tasty and the place combines both nature and culture.

6. Which is one problem that you would note concerning the region? What would you like to be better in the region?

Well, if we haven't visited Ioannina, we wouldn't have known about Mastorohoria villages. There is no advertising.

Tourist 21:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Είμαστε από την Πελοπόννησο και γύρω στα 30 και οι δυο.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Βασικά είναι πρώτη φορά που ερχόμαστε σε αυτά τα μέρη. Στα Γιάννενα και στα Ζαγοροχώρια έχουμε έρθει κάποιες φορές, αλλά σε αυτά τα χωριά ποτέ.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Την τελευταία φορά που επισκεφτήκαμε την πόλη των Ιωαννίνων, κάποιος ντόπιος μας πρότεινε την Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Έχουμε δει ήδη το γεφύρι της Κόνιτσας, η αρχιτεκτονική του είναι φανταστική και θέλουμε να επισκεφτούμε και το σπίτι του Οσίου Παϊσίου, την Αγία Βαρβάρα και τον Προφήτη Ηλία.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Γενικώς είμαστε φυσιολάτρες, όμως εδώ μας εντυπωσίασε πολύ και η αρχιτεκτονική των χωριών, τα πέτρινα σπίτια και η αμφιθεατρική διάταξή τους.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή; Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Δυσκολευτήκαμε αρκετά όταν αποφασίσαμε να πάμε στο χωριό Αμάραντος. Σε πολλά σημεία ο δρόμος ήταν κακός και φοβηθήκαμε ότι δεν κατευθυνόμασταν σωστά.

Tourist 22:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Ήρθαμε από την Αθήνα, από το Πικέρμι για την ακρίβεια. και είμαστε 43 ετών.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Είναι πρώτη φορά που ερχόμαστε σε αυτά τα μέρη. Μένουμε συγκεκριμένα λίγο πιο έξω από την Κόνιτσα, στο Μπουραζάνι και δυστυχώς δεν έχουμε προλάβει να δούμε όλα τα χωριά.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Επειδή αγαπάμε τη φύση, ψάχναμε να βρούμε έναν προορισμό για διακοπές. Σκεφτόμασταν τα Ζαγοροχώρια, αλλά η διαμονή εκεί ήταν ακριβή για εμάς, όμως στις προτάσεις του ίντερνετ βγήκε αυτό το ξενοδοχείο που μένουμε, είδαμε και φωτογραφίες από το μέρος και τα γύρω χωριά, μας άρεσε και έτσι κλείσαμε εδώ τη διαμονή μας.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Τη δεύτερη μέρα πήγαμε στα λουτρά των Καβασίων και ήταν μοναδική εμπειρία να είσαι μέσα σε θερμά λουτρά, μπροστά σου να βρίσκεται το ποτάμι και πίσω σου το βουνό. Επίσης, πήγαμε στο γεφύρι της Κόνιτσας και θέλουμε να επισκεφτούμε και τη Μονή Στομίου. Όταν ρωτήσαμε στο Κέντρο Πληροφοριών μας πρότειναν να επισκεφτούμε και πολλά από τα Μαστοροχώρια, γιατί έχουν εντυπωσιακή αρχιτεκτονική.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Μας αρέσει πολύ η φύση εδώ. Έχει βουνά, ποτάμια. Δεν φανταζόμασταν ποτέ ότι θα μπορούσε να είναι και χειμερινός, αλλά και καλοκαιρινός προορισμός. Επίσης οι άνθρωποι εδώ είναι πολύ φιλόξενοι και πρόθυμοι να σε βοηθήσουν.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή; Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Απογοητευτήκαμε όταν είδαμε ότι κάποια μουσεία που παρουσιάζουν φωτογραφικές εκθέσεις είναι κλειστά και μάλιστα ανοίγουν σπάνια.

Tourist 23:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Είμαστε από την Αθήνα και 32 χρονών.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Δεν έχουμε επισκεφτεί ξανά τα Μαστοροχώρια, μόνο την πόλη των Ιωαννίνων πριν κάποια χρόνια.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Όταν ήρθαμε στα Γιάννενα μας είχαν πει για την Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια, οπότε αποφασίσαμε φέτος να έρθουμε.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Την πρώτη μέρα περπατήσαμε στα δρομάκια της Κόνιτσας, είδαμε το σπίτι της Χάγκως, της μαμάς του Αλή Πασά, το σπίτι του Οσίου Παΐσιου και το γεφύρι της Κόνιτσας. Σήμερα περπατήσαμε στο φαράγγι του Αωού μέχρι τη μονή Στομίου και αύριο αποφασίσαμε να ξεκινήσουμε νωρίς για να ανέβουμε τον Σμόλικα.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Μας αρέσει πολύ η φύση εδώ. Μπορείς να δεις πολλά. Δάση, βουνά, ποτάμια. Μπορείς να κάνεις πεζοπορίες, να θαυμάσεις τα πέτρινα κτίσματα κι αν θες να κάνεις και μπάνιο στο ποτάμι. Είδαμε πολλούς ανθρώπους το μεσημέρι μέσα στο ποτάμι.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή;

Ή: Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Πέρα από τη φύση, όπως μάθαμε, η περιοχή έχει και πλούσια ιστορία. Όμως δυστυχώς δεν βρήκαμε κάποια μουσείο σχετικό με αυτό το κομμάτι. Ακούσαμε ότι στην Πυρσόγιαννη ετοιμάζεται να ανοίξει μουσείο πέτρας, αλλά ακόμη δεν είναι έτοιμο.

Tourist 24:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Είμαστε από τα Τρίκαλα και οι ηλικίες μας κυμαίνονται από 28 ο πιο νέος μέχρι 43 ο μεγαλύτερος.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Σαν Σύλλογος, πρώτη φορά ερχόμαστε. Προσωπικά εγώ έχω έρθει στο παρελθόν ξανά μια φορά.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Όπως σας είπα είχα βρεθεί ξανά σε αυτό το μέρος, οπότε πρότεινα να το επισκεφτούμε και με τον Μουσικό μας Σύλλογο.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Η περιοχή προσφέρει πληθώρα δραστηριοτήτων στους επισκέπτες, κυρίως σε ό,τι αφορά τη φύση. Εμείς αποφασίσαμε να περιηγηθούμε στα Μαστοροχώρια και να γνωρίσουμε την ιστορία τους.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Μας αρέσει πολύ η ελληνική λαογραφία κι έτσι κι εδώ αυτό που θαυμάσαμε πολύ είναι η ιστορία όλων αυτών των ανθρώπων που έφευγαν από την πατρίδα τους για να προσφέρουν την τεχνογνωσία τους σε άλλες πόλεις, ακόμα και χώρες. Το εντυπωσιακό βέβαια στην περίπτωση αυτών των ανθρώπων είναι ότι είχαν αναπτύξει έναν ολόκληρο πολιτισμό στη βάση της τέχνης τους.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή; Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Δυσκολευόμαστε πολύ να μετακινηθούμε από το ένα χωριό στο άλλο. Το οδικό δίκτυο δεν είναι αρκετά καλό και πολλές φορές δεν ξέρεις αν κατευθύνεσαι σωστά. Επίσης, θα ήταν πολύ σημαντικό να υπάρξουν κάποια μουσεία που να αφορούν στους μαστόρους της πέτρας και σε όλες αυτές τις τέχνες που αναπτύχθηκαν σε αυτές τις περιοχές.

Tourist 25:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Είμαστε από τη Λάρισα και είμαστε 42 ετών εγώ και 40 η σύζυγός μου.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Όχι, μάλιστα μένουμε στο Πάπιγκο, αλλά σκεφτήκαμε να επισκεφτούμε και τα χωριά εδώ που βρίσκονται σε κοντινή απόσταση.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Ρωτήσαμε στο ξενοδοχείο για το τι μπορούμε να δούμε και μας πρότειναν να επισκεφτούμε την Κόνιτσα και τα Μαστοροχώρια.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Κάναμε πεζοπορία στο φαράγγι του Αωού, είδαμε το σπίτι του Οσίου Παϊσίου και επισκεφτήκαμε και την Πυρσόγιαννη, το μεγαλύτερο από τα Μαστοροχώρια.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Τα μέρη εδώ έχουν πλούσια φύση και αρχιτεκτονική και σπουδαία ιστορία που δεν γνωρίζαμε. Αυτό όμως που μας εντυπωσίασε πιο πολύ είναι το ότι υπάρχουν αρκετά ξενοδοχεία ενώ σαν μέρος δεν θεωρείται πολύ γνωστό.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή; Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Θα θέλαμε να έχει ανοίξει το μουσείο των μαστόρων στην Πυρσόγιαννη για να δούμε φωτογραφικό υλικό και τα εργαλεία που χρησιμοποιούσαν οι μάστορες στην εργασία τους.

Tourist 26:

1. Από πού κατάγεστε και ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Είμαστε από την Αθήνα. Εγώ είμαι 40 ετών και η συνάδελφος 42.

2. Επισκέπτεστε συχνά τα Μαστοροχώρια;

Ερχόμαστε πρώτη φορά στα χωριά, αν και στα Γιάννενα έχουμε έρθει κάποιες φορές.

3. Από πού μάθατε πληροφορίες για αυτά τα χωριά;

Είμαστε καθηγήτριες στο Μετσόβιο Πολυτεχνείο και έχουμε έρθει για να μελετήσουμε το κομμάτι της αρχιτεκτονικής.

4. Τι δραστηριότητες μπορείτε να κάνετε;

Αν και υπάρχουν πολλές δραστηριότητες που θα μπορούσαμε να κάνουμε στη φύση, σε αυτήν την επίσκεψη θα μελετήσουμε την αρχιτεκτονική-οικοδομική των Μαστοροχωρίων.

5. Τι είναι αυτό που σας αρέσει περισσότερο;

Θαυμάζουμε όλα αυτά τα χωριά που είναι χτισμένα με απλά υλικά όπως η πέτρα και το πώς αυτοί οι άνθρωποι κατάφεραν να δημιουργήσουν και να εξελίξουν την τέχνη της οικοδομικής τόσα χρόνια πριν.

6. Ποιο είναι ένα πρόβλημα που εντοπίζετε στην περιοχή; Τι θα θέλατε να είναι διαφορετικό/καλύτερο σε αυτόν τον προορισμό;

Θέλαμε να επισκεφτούμε το Μουσείο της Πέτρας, αλλά ενημερωθήκαμε ότι δεν έχει ανοίξει ακόμα, αν και το προετοιμάζαν εδώ και αρκετά χρόνια. Θα έπρεπε να λειτουργεί ήδη.