

Adriatic Tourism and its Past



Petra Kavrečič, Turizem v Avstrijskem primorju. Zdravilišča, kopališča in kraške jame (1819–1914) [Tourism on the Austrian Coast. Spas, Beaches and Karst Caves], Koper 2017, 380 s.

A Slovenian historian Petra Kavrečič's book, published by the University of Primorska in Slovenia, is already the second modified edition of the author's dissertation defended at this university. Even on the initial reading of her thesis it was obvious this was a successful, systematic study of primary sources and of relevant secondary literature that would eventually deserve to be made available to a wider public. Therefore, the University of Primorska's decision to publish the dissertation in the form of a monograph, first as an e-book and now also in a print version, is more than welcomed.

In the recent decades, the history of tourism has become a matter of interest for Slovenian historians. This interest arose many years earlier in the Slovenian historiography than in the Czech historiography, which can still draw inspiration from the Slovenian production for many reasons. One of these reasons would certainly be the political background of former Yugoslavia where tourism was one of the important elements of the national economy. Nevertheless, the work of Associate Professor Petra Kavrečič holds a first in this field, as the first one to be published as a monograph. In the field of study of modernization trends in society, tourism holds a unique position.

Firstly, deserving of attention is the well-prepared and theoretically-methodologically firmly anchored chapter *Zgodovina Turizma* [History of Tourism]. The author puts tourism in the wider economic-social context of a modernizing European society, where tourism is one of its essential features. This construct is based on a deep knowledge of European historical literature related to the topic. The sub-chapter *Dejavniki in stalnice razvoja modernega turizma* [Factors and Deeds of Development of Modern Tourism] where author, based on existing study, summarizes each of the factors contributing to the development of tourism and creating the motivation for citizens to travel without a clearly given goal and reason is very clearly set out.

The geographic focus itself of the reviewed book can serve as an inspiration for the historiography of Central European countries. The area of the so-called Austrian Riviera, connected with the northern part of the Adriatic and belonging to the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, was an easily accessible location for Austrian, Czech and German tourists. The attractiveness of the Adriatic coast for a Czech tourist had at least two main dimensions. On one hand there was its geographic and administrative proximity (it used to be a territory of a single state) and on the other hand, it was the ethnic and linguistic proximity. For Czech historiography, following the history of tourism in the northern Adriatic is therefore desirable even at the level of exploring the development of Czech Tourism.

Although we can partly criticize the author's only marginal concern with Czech influences, at the same time, we must also admit that, judging by statistics; tourists



from the Czech lands were certainly not a major guiding force in the development of tourism in this region. Also, to be fair, it must be emphasized that the author has already devoted herself to the specifics of Czech tourist presence in the region in different journalistic studies.

The core of the reviewed monograph is the pivotal second chapter *Avstrijsko primorje: začetki in razvoj modernega turizma* [The Austrian coast: the beginnings and development of modern tourism]. The chapter is, as the title of the monograph itself indicates, divided into three parts dedicated to the individual forms of tourism, which boomed along the Austrian coast. In the introductory pages of this chapter, the author defines the development of the administrative organization and geographic delimitation of the Austrian Seaside, also known as the Austrian Riviera. The author clearly explains that as far as tourism is concerned, she could offer more than just the “seacoast”.

The case study in the subchapter *Toplice sv. Štefan* [St. Stephan spa resort] is dedicated to research of the development of spa resorts. Based on the example of the St. Stephan spa, Petra Kavrečič outlines the development of balneology in the region. In the case of the St. Stephan spa, we have a spa of only regional importance (cf. tables p. 99 et seq.), which can hardly compete with other important spas in the monarchy. The author is aware of this fact, which is evident from the scope of the entire subchapter.

The following subchapter is aptly titled *Na morju* [At Sea] and focuses on the main specifics of this region from the perspective of tourism. Basically, it was the most easily reachable region of the Habsburg monarchy (Cisleithanian), which could provide the sea and the beaches, and everything associated with them. The fact that coastal tourism was central to the entire region is also indicated by the overall extent of the longest sub-chapter (pp. 103–223). Using the example of the three seaside resorts of Opatija, Grada (Gradež) and Portorož, the author describes in detail the development of tourist accessibility and the development of the selected locations. The choice of resorts can be described as aptly representing the entire researched area.

Opatija was the main “sea spa” of the Habsburg monarchy. The Grada area, which lies near Trieste, became a kind of symbol with its sandy beaches suitable even for children. Today, Portorož is Slovenia’s only resort. Although Portorož lags the other two resorts mentioned above in visitor numbers, it has always been recommended to travellers looking for a more peaceful vacation. Already in the period guides, the climate and the stronger therapeutic effects of saltwater were highlighted. However, the sloping and stony coast was a drawback. The section of the book dealing with Portorož is the most comprehensive and examines the development of this location in detail. The text is supplemented not only with clear statistical tables, but also period postcards and photographs, showing its elasticity. The author’s focus somewhat sidelines the area of the permeation of entrepreneurial capital from various corners of the monarchy into the “tourism business” in the studied resorts. This is a pity, because it was the presence of entrepreneurs and services associated with a certain national group that enticed the people in this group to visit certain places, as tourists were not yet accustomed to experimenting and wanted the foods and services they were used to at home. It would be interesting to also see more of the services aspect.

The last subchapter, titled Pod zemljo [Under the Ground], follows the development of karst tourism. In more than 50 pages of text, the author describes the development of karst tourism again on an example of three caves, Vilenica, Škocjanske jame and Postojnske jame. It is argued that karst wealth was the first draw for Enlightenment period tourists to these parts.

The monograph is founded on a broad base of sources. This is stimulating not only from a methodological point of view, when the source materials, reflecting both regional and ideological specifics, increase the plasticity of the interpretation and provide firm support to the conclusions, but also from the content perspective. The author drew from the regional Slovenian, Italian and Croatian archives. Although this is understandable considering that the text was written as a dissertation, it would certainly be desirable to also probe to the Vienna State Archives, where the funds of the central Austrian authorities would be deserving of attention. Furthermore, the author used printed sources and periodicals. Source research was supplemented by the study of appropriate expert historical literature on the chosen topic. Finally, for easier orientation, a name index has been added at the end. It is also worth highlighting the annex containing further detailed statistical data on visitor numbers to the individual tourist sites examined in the monograph.

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