



# SEVEN DAYS IN BARANJA

How to be successful in rural tourism

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A wooden boat is moored on a calm lake during sunset. The water is still, reflecting the golden light of the setting sun. A vertical wooden post is attached to the boat. The background is a dense line of green trees.

How to be successful in rural tourism?



## Introduction

Bordered by the Drava and the Danube rivers and divided by the Croatian-Hungarian state border, in the East charmed by a swamp<sup>1</sup>; in the South and South-East sheltered by mouths of the river and in the North and North-East open for connection via wine roads and paths - Baranja is somewhat closed even today, almost secluded, more mystical than ever before. Despite some old bridges having been renovated and some new ones being built, regardless of the fact that it is dappled with several international road routes and that it is becoming an ever more interesting tourist destination - up to this day Baranja has managed to preserve a unique note since its people jealously keep their existential secrets.

They strongly and clearly remember the tales older than their own families, secrets of life and survival, of love and dying, wines, hot peppers, special kind of fishing, weddings, buše (traditional masks from Baranja), pudarine (guarding ripening grapes), paunići (embroidered motifs of small peacocks on traditional folk costumes), slamnjače (straw beds) and kandile (hanging candles).

Owing to this still existent ethnographic magic which can be read from the faces of people living outside main roads, Baranja is capable of attracting, yet never revealing itself to the fullest.

<sup>1</sup>Topić, D.: Magnificent Baranja, Croatian National Tourist Board, p. 14

## Tourism in Baranja

Baranja is a micro-region in Eastern continental Croatia and part of Osijek-Baranja County.



*In the pictures above there are maps which show location of Osijek-Baranja County (on the left) and location of Baranja region (on right coloured green).*

Tourism in Baranja has been growing at steady rates over the years. Tourism is based on protected nature, rural lifestyle, traditional culture, gastronomy and oenology. Many people are starting their own small tourism businesses: boarding houses, guided tours, selling own agricultural products to tourists and other many interesting projects.

Main geographical characteristics important for this publication are:

- The area of: 1.149 km<sup>2</sup>, number of inhabitants: 39.261<sup>2</sup>
- The borders with Hungary and Serbia
- Surrounded by Drava and Danube rivers
- important **Nature Park "Kopački rit"** is located in Municipality of Bilje, featuring special zoological reserve, protected marshes and is one of the main tourism attractions
- majority agricultural and rural area
- inland location, far away from main Croatian summer tourist destinations on the coast

<sup>2</sup>Census 2011.

**Our success in tourism is  
due to the fact that:**

- we are creative and innovative,
- we differentiate and diversify,
- we combine new / modern and old / traditional,
- we use new technologies and internet marketing,
- we use social media marketing in various social networks, do not concentrate only on main ones (Facebook, Twitter) but also use specialised networks (Foursquare),
- we include all relevant stakeholders and local population,
- local community involvement and volunteering reduces all cost and promotes community cohesion,
- we use momentum of ending one project as opportunity to plan and start new project,
- we don't forget about pets and animals,
- we combine large and small projects to achieve synergy.



Kopački rit

# DAY ONE



5 6 7 1 2 3 4

## Meet friendly people and our traditions...

When you arrive to Baranja it is best to stay in one of the many traditional tourism-rural-households. The families that own them will take good care for you, just as they would a long known friend. Right upon entering their home, the landlady and the landowner will offer you their homemade plum, walnut or cherry schnapps and langos (a kind of flat bread) and the kids will enjoy the beloved elder-flower juice.

Visit the village of Karanac. This ethnic village with preserved traditional architecture is the place where most of tourism-rural-households, bed & breakfasts, pensions, houses and rooms for rent are located. A few times per year interesting village fairs are held, like the Spring and Winter fair where you can find all kinds of home-made products like the "Kulen" sausage, ham, jam and cakes, schnapps and wine.

While you are in Karanac visit the restaurant "Baranjska kuća" (The Baranja House) and try the specialties like fish-paprikash, Čobanac (wild game stew, wine goulash), rural tourism household OPG Sklepici and stay in their typical "Swabian" Baranja house, go to the OPG Tri Mudraca (The Three Wise Men) and taste their dishes made of wild game and river fish or try out the off-road drive over the near-by Baranja hill and also with their help, organize "team-buildings" for your colleagues, friends and family. Also visit the OPG Ivica and Marica (Hansel and Gretel) and try horse riding, rides through the village in a carriage and many other activities.

In the villages nearby, interesting traditional festivals are held throughout the year. Be sure to visit the "Bushari" festival in Baranjsko Petrovo Selo. This traditional carnival parade in February with people dressed in "scary" masks that resemble wild animals and monsters is supposed to bring an end to the long and cold winter.





Buše



Children in traditional clothing

# DAY TWO



6 7 1 2 3 4 5

## Visit our villages with preserved traditional architecture...

You will see traditional houses belonging to Croats, Hungarians, Serbs and Germans, because this is a region famous for its multiculturalism.

While in Baranja try to see as many traditional villages as you can. Popovac is one of the villages that managed to preserve the look of a typical Baranja village for the last two centuries. Wide streets lined up with walnut and linden trees and houses with long porches (Croatian: Ganjak; German: Gang) coloured in white, yellow or green colours prevail in this village.

While you're here be sure to visit the tourism-rural-household OPG Novacic and the agricultural-family-estate OPG Goldberg (the Golden Hill) where you should taste their "rakija" schnapps made from the wild fruit and herbs that grow on the nearby Baranja hill, also known as the Golden hill.

Our region has always been "wealthy". To prove that we have beautiful churches, castles and mansions that used to be centres of big agricultural estates, such as the Belje Estate established in 1697. Baroque castles that are located in the villages of Bilje and Darda have rich history thanks to their owners the Eszterhazy Family and Prince Eugen of Savoy. Beautiful baroque and medieval churches are scattered around all the villages in the region. They make unique spaces for various cultural events such as music recitals on the famous Josef Angster organs, our local organ builder from the 19th century.



Esterhazy castle in Darda



St. Peter and Paul Church

# DAY THREE



7 1 2 3 4 5 6

## Let's explore the diverse and unspoiled nature along the mighty Danube...

The Danube and Drava rivers spill their waters all over the South and West of Baranja. The confluence of these two rivers makes one of the most beautiful nature parks in the Danube region - Kopački rit Nature Park. This continental "delta" is rich in wildlife, especially the 290 species of protected birds...

Kopacki rit Nature Park is a God given natural pearl on the mouth of the Danube and Drava rivers. The vast marshland with lakes, fields and forests can be toured by tourist ships, traditional "čikl" fisherman's boats, kayaks, on foot or on bikes. In some areas of the park and also on many other similar natural grounds all around Baranja fishing is possible while the most popular activities include teambuilding in nature. Hunting is possible in many open hunting grounds along the Drava and Danube rivers, in woods full of game such as wild boar and deer.



Swan





Protected birds in Kopački rit Nature Park



Horse

# DAY FOUR



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

## Taste the rich cuisine that describes our history...

The history in these parts of Europe has always been very turbulent. As the “invaders” never came empty-handed today we enjoy their rich heritage both in culture and gastronomy. From time to time in Baranja you might think you are in Hungary as you try paprika-red and spicy “fish-paprikash” or that you stepped back into the old Ottoman Empire when you taste the tasty Sauer-kraut rolls or “Sarma”...

It is believed that in Suza village a golden carriage that used to belong to the Ottoman ruler and invader of central Europe in the 16th century, Suleiman the Great is buried under the church. While here visit the restaurant and pension Piros Cizma (the Red Boot) for their traditional cuisine, wild game and river fish prepared in a modern restaurant manner. Also an interesting wine cellar can be toured within the pension, located on the upper floor, buried deep into the nearby hill. Another superb typical fisherman’s restaurant is also to be found in the village, so for the best fish-paprikash or spicy perkelt visit the Kovac-Carda restaurant.

Our famous traditional “Kulen” sausage can be found in the family-estate OPG Matijevic and if you are looking for wine you can find the finest quality Welsh Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot or Blaufränkisch in the family-winery OPG Kolar. Their wine-cellar is dug deep into the hill. Its architecture is typical for the Baranja region and it is called the „gator“.



Preparation of fish-paprikash



Traditional preparation of carp fish

# DAY FIVE



2 3 4 5 6 7 1

## Enjoy the finest wines this region has to offer...

The wine has been produced here ever since the Roman times but the oldest existing vineyard dates back from 1526. The premium quality Grasevina (Welsh Riesling), Chardonnay, Merlot or Blaufränkisch will serve as great introduction to the good times ahead with your new friends on the Croatian Danube!

The municipality and the village of Knezevi Vinogradi (English: The Dukes Vineyards) is the centre of wine production in Baranja. While here be sure to visit the Belje winery founded in the late 17th century by the famous prince Eugene of Savoy and their vast vineyards that spread gently like green waves over the nearby Ban hill. In the village of Zmajevac visit the "Wine Marathon" festival. It is a first class wine spectacle and the best known wine and gastro event in continental Croatia. The event takes place every first weekend in October. During the festival typical wine streets in the village, the so called "surduk", turn into real wine-arenas and hundreds of wine and food lovers visit the wine cellars with one main goal - to taste as many wine sorts as they can and to guess what kind of wine they are tasting. The programme is enriched with miniature open-air concerts of traditional folk music as well as ethno and pop-rock sounds.

In this municipality don't miss the opportunity to see the famous family-owned wine cellars: Kolar, Josić, Gerštmajer, Kusić, Medić, Pinkert and Čočić as well as some of the many smaller wine cellars in the nearby villages: Suza, Kamenac, Batina... Thanks to them Baranja is true to its name which in Hungarian means: The Wine Mother

While here visit the tourism-rural-households: OPG Stara Baranja and OPG Jurini Dvori in Knezevi Vinogradi and OPG Baranjski Dvori in Zmajevac as well as the famous restaurant Josić located in an old wine-cellar.





Belje vinery cellar



Vineyard

# DAY SIX



3 4 5 6 7 1 2

## Active holiday in connection with surrounding nature...

Baranja offers a full set of outdoor activities for every person starting from adventurous off-roading, biking, kayaking, hiking, walking, horseback riding and other activities in the amazing nature.

Our region is suitable for all life ages, both families and individuals, both high performance athletes in training or relaxed retired couples.

You can start the tour on your bike in plain land fields with golden sunflowers and wheat, go on foot over hilly areas with vineyards, go down through "surduks" and then visit thick green forests and kayak or boat in Danube, Drava and Kopačevo marshes.

The green Baranja triangle is dotted by many bike routes, including major EuroVelo route; during the warm season you will see many cyclist on those roads.

All local communities are working hard to provide new possibilities and infrastructure for outdoor activities. There are road signs, parks, outdoor activities areas like Lake Šećeransko, paths and

accommodation available and fitted for various target groups. Your touring bike will be safe and your hosts can call bike repair specialists to help you with your problems.

There is variety of events organized for an active holiday, for instance you can participate in the demanding "Combat Race" or organized slow village walks.

If you want to use new technologies you can try geocaching in Baranja, an outdoor activity where you can use your mobile phone or GPS device to guide you to hidden "treasure boxes" placed near tourism hot-spots and thus be part of global geocaching community.

There are further activities planned to expand further outdoor opportunities for the tourist, including new paths with educational content, trails connected with local folk myths, outdoor infrastructure that is synergy of modern and natural like a geodesic dome-roofed resting places and more high-tech geolocation games.



Geocaches



Enjoying kajak rides in Kopački rit Nature Park

# DAY SEVEN



4 5 6 7 1 2 3

## Fishing and hunting in triangle between Bansko Hill, Danube and Drava...

Fishing as a sport is quite well developed in the Baranja Region. One can visit several associations, get a fishing licence and with the entire equipment start fishing. Expect to catch catfish, carp, perch and pike while enjoying the old Danube and Drava branches or even fishing on the Danube or Drava. Zlatna Greda is one of a few destinations that is offering boat and kayak rides, so make sure you try that while staying in Baranja.

Today, fishing as a sport is organized in more than 45 thousand registered fishing associations with Croatian Sport Fishing Association as an umbrella association.<sup>3</sup>

Hunting is the most well-known pleasure of all rich people, and Baranja is a must see destination in Europe. There are so many urban myths about who has already visited Baranja for the purpose of hunting. Rumour has it that the Norwegian prince, owner of Müller Drug Stores, some famous actors, artists and politicians belong to this group. Hunting is possible in cooperation with 22 hunting<sup>4</sup> associations across the Baranja Region. Over 74,5 hectare of hunting surfaces are available to hunters across Europe and the wild game that they can find on these surfaces are regular deer, fallow deer, roe deer, mouflon, wild boar, wild rabbit, pheasant and partridge bird.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.ribolovni-savez.hr/index.html>

<sup>4</sup>[https://lovistarh.mps.hr/lovstvo\\_javnost/Lovista.aspx?mode=2&zup=14](https://lovistarh.mps.hr/lovstvo_javnost/Lovista.aspx?mode=2&zup=14)





Fishing in Baranja

# Map of Baranja



BUDIMPEŠTA  
(250 km)

ZAGREB  
320 km

SARAJEVO  
(300 km)

OSIJEK

BEOGRAD  
(220 km)

created by: ZADRUGA PODUZETNIČKA MREŽA, BILJE  
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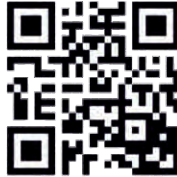
## Links and QR codes

To find more information on Baranja and places to visit, go to:

Baranja Tourism board



Baranja Tourism board Facebook fan page



Download Baranja Android app



Download Baranja iOS mobile phone app:



Municipality Bilje Tourism board



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MIESTNA AKČNÁ SKUPINA CHOPOK-JUH



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