



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evolution of Alternative Tourism in Epirus

In Epirus, due to the geomorphological characteristics and the different climatic conditions in the coastal areas and the inland, different tourism models have prevailed. In the coastal areas of the Regional Units of Preveza and Thesprotia the strongly seasonal pattern of mass - summer tourism prevails while in the Regional Unit of Ioannina the model of alternative tourism forms prevails, for the development of which the region has excellent conditions and significant comparative advantages, given that the natural and cultural assets have excellent dynamic range and dispersion in space.

Seven (7) geographical units of the Region present great interest for the development of alternative forms of tourism:

- ❖ **Konitsa:** river and mountain formations as well as stone architecture, which is reflected in important architectural monuments, dominates.
- ❖ **Zagori:** natural resources important to the National Park of Vikos Gorge and the unique architecture of around forty (40) villages of the area (settlements, bridges, sacred monuments, etc) dominate
- ❖ **Metsovo:** Main characteristics are the local traditional architecture, the breathtaking natural environment with the National Park "Valia Kalda", ski infrastructure, manufacturing of many local traditional food products, beverages, wood, significant cultural and conference infrastructure etc.
- ❖ **Tzoumerka:** One of the most beautiful areas of Epirus, which is not sufficiently exploited. Dominating are the river and mountain natural formations, the stone architecture, the important traditional settlements (Syrrako Kalarrytes etc) and the Byzantine and modern religious monuments. Organic part of this area is the river Arachtos, which is particularly interesting and can offer a wide variety of alternative tourism activities, including sports and other activities.
- ❖ **Amvrakikos:** It is considered the most important natural habitat in the country, which is protected by the International Ramsar Convention. It is located very close

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to Arta, Preveza and ancient Nicopolis where there are important ancient and Byzantine monuments.

❖ **Acherontas:** The area is characterized as a great monument of nature and history, dominated by the namesake river, the known necromancy and the wonderful marine formations (Ammoudia, Parga etc). An organic part of the area is the historic Souli.

❖ **Kalamas:** The entire area, crossed by the homonymous river, has scarce natural, historical and cultural resources (ancient Byzantine and modern monuments, etc.) that are unknown to most visitors and largely untapped.

In addition, the city of Ioannina, the castle and the historic center, the lake and the island, the cave of Perama and neighboring Dodoni, offers great alternatives to the many visitors who arrive in the city for commercial purposes, for conferences, for health reasons and scientific activities and collaborations with the University, the University Hospital etc.

Alternative forms of tourism have made their appearance timid in the area in the past decades almost together with summer and mass tourism, coexisted and functioned mainly complementary with the previous two major categories of tourists without a separate organization and mostly without specifications. Alternative forms of tourism were organized as happenings by big hotels or tour operators. The saturation of the coastal mass tourism, observed in the 1980s and 1990s, in conjunction with the need of tourists from large urban centers for organized visits to the nature, forced tourism professionals to organize this sector and invest in alternative forms of tourism. The firms that achieved their objective acted, at first, as pilot and for the rest people were created by those who made their hobby a profession.

During the last twenty years, alternative forms of tourism have considerably developed. Considerable investments and sufficient infrastructure was created in some areas. There was considerable support for the effort by specific Community programs and the Community Initiative “Leader”, from which agrotourism activities, conservation and improvement of the environment, local population training, as well as parallel activities that enhance or complement agrotourism and mainly the creation of small manufacturing companies that utilize local product of the primary sector mainly. Most

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of these businesses are scattered in the hinterland with a higher concentration in Konitsa, Zagoria, Tzoumerka and Acheron. In these areas, the customers enjoy the natural beauty, traditional architecture, local customs and events, attractions and local products.

In these areas, the seasonality is very muted compared to that of the coastal areas. This confirms the view that the activities of alternative tourism are developed throughout the year and can be extended even further in time, with organized and continuous promotion.

The table below shows schematically the most important actions of the alternative tourism developed in Epirus.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM. NATURAL - CULTURAL RESOURCES

I. ALTERNATIVE TOURISM FORM	Konitsa	Zagori	Metsovo	Tzoumerka - Arabhos	Amvrakikos	Acheron	Kalamas	Ioannina
Agrotourism	●	●	●					
Ecotourism	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Specialist marine					●	●		
Winter (Skiing)	●		●					
Adventure	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Touring		●			●	●		●
Medicinal	●				●			
Athletic								●
Education - Cultural	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Religious	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conference			●					●
Exhibit								●
Cities					●			●
Weekend	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
II. NATURAL CULTURAL RESOURCES ETC.								
Archaeological sites					●	●	●	●

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Byzantine monuments	●		●	●	●		●	●
Traditional Settlements	●	●	●	●				●
Stone bridges	●	●		●	●		●	
Watermills	●		●	●			●	
Museums - reports	●	●	●		●		●	●
Natural Resources - Environmental Activities - infrastructure	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

SOURCE: - Brochures EOT (Office of Ioannina) - OTA areas

Alternative activities related to nature recorded significant growth (ecotourism - outdoor activities). Significant infrastructure was created and additional events are planned and organized nation-and worldwide as the "Evathlos" in Konitsa. The following table depicts the most important of these activities.

ECOTOURIST ACTIVITIES

I. ALTERNATIVE TOURISM FORM	Konitsa	Zagori	Metsovo	Tzoumerka	Amvrakiko	Acheron	Kalamas	Ioannina
Rafting - Kayaking	●	●		●	●		●	
Canyoning	●	●		●		●		
Flying fox	●			●				
Bird watching			●		●			
Hang Gliding	●	●		●	●	●		
Climb	●	●		●				
Climbing	●	●	●	●				●
Leisure riding	●	●	●	●			●	
Archery	●			●				
Mountain biking	●	●	●	●				
Cross-country skiing		●	●	●				
National trails	●	●	●					
Trails marked						●	●	
Ski slopes	●		●					

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Water Sports					●	●	●	
Traditional activities.	●	●	●			●	●	

SOURCE: NA Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Thesprotia: "Epirus - Place of Bridges" (Guide ecotourism - www.ecotour-epirus.gr)

From the total tourist activity of Epirus, the analysis of the existing infrastructure, patterns of tourism development and tourism market in general, only a relatively small percentage regards to alternative forms of tourism.

It is appropriate at this point to highlight the following points:

Alternative forms of tourism, and especially agrotourism activities, are mainly located in the periphery of the Regional Unit (R.U.) of Ioannina, relatively few are presented in R.U. Arta, while it is almost non-existent in the other two R.U. of Epirus (Preveza and Thesprotia).

- ◆ Tourist traffic to alternative forms of tourism is extremely difficult to separate, especially in areas where there are alongside with mass tourism or in areas that do not have such obvious characteristics. Any assessment is risky and involves the possibility of serious errors.
- ◆ Based on the previous observation, purely or largely characteristics of alternative forms of tourism, are shown in non-coastal and mountainous regions of Thesprotia, Preveza and Arta and mountainous areas of Ioannina.
- ◆ According to processed primary data, it is estimated that overall the above mentioned areas of Arta, Thesprotia and Preveza, hold a rate that does not exceed 1% of the total tourism market of Epirus and a percentage from 12.5 to 15% of the agrotourism market of the same region. We can therefore conclude that the largest share of the tourism market of alternative forms of tourism holds the prefecture of Ioannina.
- ◆ From the above mentioned tourism analysis in Epirus, the vast majority of the total beds offered is in areas in which mass tourism has developed, mainly concerns summer tourism and in a very small degree alternative forms of tourism and agrotourism.

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- ◆ The tourism and the general infrastructure in areas that have characteristics of alternative forms of tourism were initiated by individuals, local governments, etc. The investments were financed entirely by the bodies who undertook the creation of the investment in equity and the rest by grants obtained from inclusion in programs or regulations of the European Union or National Development Laws relating to such investments.
- ◆ The above infrastructure is relatively sufficient, especially qualitatively, but not quantitatively, given the size of the potential market and the fact that most areas in Epirus qualify for further development of alternative forms of tourism activities which demand is growing steadily.
- ◆ The activities of alternative forms of tourism in Epirus are mainly in mountainous villages, areas of outstanding natural beauty, traditional villages, etc. In many cases combinations of special forms of tourism are exercised such as mountaineering tourism and agro-tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc.
- ◆ The tourism product of the region regarding alternative forms of tourism, with few exceptions, has not been adequately promoted.

Presentation of general developments in the field of alternative tourism

Tourism as a social phenomenon is not new, but has existed since antiquity until today for various reasons:

- ❖ The ancient athletic competitions (Olympic, Nemean, Isthmian, etc.),
- ❖ The pilgrimage to the ancient Greek (and not only) holy places (Oracle of Delphi, Eleusis, Dodona, Samothrace, Egypt, etc.),
- ❖ The tours - Explorations (Pausanias, Nearchus, etc.),
- ❖ spa tourism of the Roman era ("heat" of the emperors)
- ❖ religious pilgrimage in medieval times (eg Holy Land, Mecca)
- ❖ The new places (after exploring the 'new' countries - America, Australia, India, etc.)
- ❖ The romantic journeys of 18th and 19th century. (The famous "Grand Tour") (Littlewood, 1990)
- ❖ The exotic adventure of any kind in earthly paradises that have been discovered in remote countries (such as Belle Époque), (Littlewood, 1990)
- ❖ Mass tourism of the 20th century.

The term "mass tourism" means the phase of the tourism phenomenon, the beginning of which can be dated to the 1920s and 1930s in the U.S.A, and in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s and is characterized by extending practices and culture tourism at all levels of society so that they can generate income (Zarilli, 2011).

At this stage, tourism is no longer the privilege of the aristocracy and upper middle class, as in the era of "Grand Tour" and later "Belle Époque", but it is accessible to workers employed in manufacturing and services.

The above definition is given in the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism (Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works, 2009), whereas "mass" is defined the tourism that meets the cumulative following:

for the general tourist public, shaped and processed in an organized way by tour operators and companies under the current dominant forms.

The reasons that contributed to this growth are many (Zarilli, 2011), such as:

- ❖ The overall economic growth and, consequently, greater availability of income for workers, categories hitherto excluded from the tourism circuits mainly for economic reasons
- ❖ The adoption of the institution of paid leave, and then the existence of availability of free time to be used in recreational activities outside the place of residence
- ❖ The great development of transport, particularly cars, as a result of improved economic conditions and infrastructure
- ❖ The development of urbanization, and consequently resulting to the desire to escape from the daily routine of city
- ❖ The dissemination of ideas and models of urban culture (among tourism)

In 1950 in Greece, tourism developed initially as seasonal, touring and cultural having given particular attention in setting up infrastructure projects (XENIA) near coasts and remarkable cultural monuments.

These forms of tourism continued to grow in the '60s from the public sector, mainly by the National Tourism Organization (NTO). There were also some additional infrastructure for the development of therapeutic and mountain tourism and later with facilities for berthing and refueling yachts vessels in existing ports for the development of marine tourism, while cruises to the islands have already begun.

At the same period, the Thessaloniki International Fair was established, enabling development of tourism exhibition in Thessaloniki. Also, the creation of the casino of Parnes and two others in Rhodes and Corfu, gave Athens and both tourist islands a cosmopolitan character of the famous resorts of the time.

In the early '70s large-scale programs of multiple tourist activities on land owned by the NTO were programmed. These programs for tourism development, 15 in number, were related to the marina, spas and golf courses

After 1975, programs and corresponding special tourism infrastructure projects were suspended and skiing holidays were promoted by creating ski resorts in Parnassos and in northern Greece. After 1975 there was a shift of tourism to cultural and natural values. NTO promotes Agrotourism Conversion programs by the Ministry of Agriculture and the

creation of the institutional framework for commercial tourist boats.

In the 80s begins the application of Social Tourism, as state-subsidized holidays for pensioners and low-paid employees and extends the application of Rural Tourism with funding from the EEC. Institutional frameworks for naturism, timeshare and Casino were processed, from which the first two were introduced as Laws.

Also marinas, ski resorts and spas are planned for the development of sea, winter and therapeutic tourism. Incentives are provided for the development of Sports, Marine and Conference Tourism. Finally, since 1990 Marine tourism is promoted in priority by construction projects of marinas. Incentives are given to private industry to combine hotel complexes with marinas, ski centers, conference centers, and spas. Also, the implementation of Social and Rural tourism is continued with more intense efforts.

The emergence of new forms of tourism with specialized content and targeted audience is a phenomenon that has been observed since the late 20th century. Alternative forms of tourism are a new and powerful trend in tourism market, which enables the modern tourist to cover not just fun and recreation but also personal especially interesting. Alternative tourism is directly related to the modern tourist and refers to a multitude of different forms of tourism where people are looking for a different type of holiday, connected with the protection the natural and human environment and finding new values and lifestyles (Hare, 2005).

The main characteristics of alternative forms of tourism are the quest for authenticity and contact with nature, the enhancement of cultural heritage protection of the environment and the small scale development derived and organized by local people or local organizations and attracts tourists with special interests.

In another aspect (Pires, 2002), alternative tourism is considered to be all tourism options that share common differences compared to conventional forms due to factors such as:

- ❖ the location of the tourist destination in the natural environment and / or in rural areas,
- ❖ active participation (physical, mental and emotional) of tourist
- ❖ the creation of socio-economic benefits for the hosts and appreciation of their cultural identity

Current Trends in the International, European and Greek Market of Alternative Tourism

Main features and trends

Tourism is one of the most important pillars of development and revenue streams of the Greek economy. Tourism's contribution to the GDP is estimated to 16.2% for 2009, which corresponds to approximately € 35 billion. According to the World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals (inbound tourism) in 2007 amounted to € 17,52 million, an increase of 9.23% compared to 2006, while in 2008 a decline in arrivals of 1% was recorded. The proceeds from all tourism businesses in 2008 amounted to € 11,66 billion compared to € 11,32 billion in 2007 while the rate of change in revenue in 2008 rose by 3%. The average per capita expenditure for 2007 amounted to € 743 while the estimate for 2008 predicts a small increase to € 773. Due to the global economic downturn, expenditure of tourists in Greece in the first half of 2009 decreased, according to the

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data of the current account balance, by 14.7%, dragging the net travel receipts down by € 463billion. In any case, and considering that the results of domestic tourism are not recorded accurately, the contribution of tourism to the sustainability of the Greek economy becomes of substantially greater importance not only quantitative but and qualitatively. The quality parameter specifically relates mainly to subversive influence of domestic tourism in the phenomenon of seasonality that characterizes the Greek tourist product.

Approaching critically the main historical stages of development of Greek tourism, it becomes clear that it is now at a stage where the tourist production presents elements of 'industrialization', mainly from the strategic choice of adopting the model of mass tourism by a large percentage of the tourist destinations of the country. This stage began in the mid '80s and was associated with the significant increase in arrivals (which now exceeds the total population of the country), primarily via air charter. This led to the formulation and largely homogenization of the tourist offer, in an attempt to adapt to characteristics and requirements demand.

Homogenization did not allow the differentiation of the product offered. As a result, the national tourist product was handled directly competitive with the corresponding product of neighboring destinations, with clearly less tourist experience. Negative social and environmental impact of not organized-coordinated development of tourism became apparent and the way out is sought in sporadic, in their majority, efforts to develop specialized tourism products, such as special and alternative forms of tourism (Tsartas, 2010).

But Greek tourism, beyond the classical-structural weaknesses and problems that for decades has failed to resolve, is currently confronted with the damaging circumstances prevailing internationally. The circumstances are expected to affect the performance of the Greek Tourism and the Greek tourism businesses in the long run, which is not easily assessable to current data.

An enduring weakness of Greece's tourism product is the geographic maldistribution of tourism infrastructure and tourist facilities within the country. More specifically, and considering the parameter of the distribution of hotel units in various areas, the intense concentration of hotel supply in some areas (eg Crete, Macedonia, Dodecanese, etc.) is easily perceived and conversely limited presence in others (eg Thrace, Epirus, etc.). It

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should be noted that the geographical imbalance in the case of tourism supply is not located only in level areas - regions but also within regions or even county.

The geographic maldistribution of tourist is largely due to, and in turn supplies, the unequal distribution of tourist flows to various areas of the country. Thus, the tourism demand is monopolized by specific regions (eg Crete, South Aegean) against others (eg Epirus, West Macedonia). These data directly affect both the competitiveness and efficiency of the Greek tourism product.

The position of the Greek Tourism Product at the International Competition

As it is known the tourist product is a composite product, which is composed of mixture of material goods (eg food, beverages), intangible services (eg hotel accommodation, entertainment of tourists, transportation of tourists), but natural elements (sun, sea, climate, attractions, etc.), consumed or used to varying degrees by tourists (Hare 2005:82). The tourist product is the result of the production process and is looking for consumption by tourists. The production takes place from 'producers' and requires the combination of different factors of production - capital, labor and tourist resources - as is the case with the production of each product (Bull 2002:23-25).

The characteristics of the Greek tourism product, which determines the level of competitiveness, are:

- ❖ The main motive of the trip to Greece that remains "sun and sea" (sunlust). This means that the Greek tourism product remains typical "Mediterranean" and has not yet met to diversify to mitigate its dependence on the organized tourism resort and lengthen the period of demand.
- ❖ The dependence of the organized tourism resort, characterized by low package price and low conversion efficiency for the country - destination, and determining aggregate demand at time (high seasonality) and space (destinations become only the locations that accept charter flights).
- ❖ Deficiencies in general infrastructure and transport (mainly regional airports, and roads, ports, state railways, coastal, lack air charter flights, etc.).

The position of Greece in the international tourism markets has been directly influenced by the incentives of mainly foreign tourists. In the first post-war period (1950-1960),

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incentives strengthened the standard of "wanderlust" (trips aimed at browsing and getting to know new places and cultures). Then, the rapid shift in demand for summer vacation imposed the standard of «sun lust» (trips aimed at search of sun and relaxation). This allowed the gradual predominance of one type of demand that tourists are now opting based on incentive tourism in the summer holidays and not the specifics of each tourist destination. The change does not invalidate the cultural dimension of incentives for culture Trips to Greece, but gradually, and particularly after 1980, forming a more complex image of Greece as a country holiday with specific features offers the 4S (sun, sand, sea, sex) and the standard "sun lust". Thus, Greece ranks to a wider group of countries, along with Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Tunisia, Turkey, etc., that belong to the "regions of enjoyment and entertainment" and offer products with "package" (Package tour) with similar characteristics of these "holiday tourism". Obviously, in this case, supply of infrastructure and services geared to the demand for travel Holiday and shapes relatively quickly a similar picture of "product" Greece. In this, both the natural and built environment helped and the policy of large travel agencies (tour operators) in the Mediterranean region. Dominant feature of this model of tourism development is the direct dependence of countries developing this model of tourism development of countries sending tourists.

Today, this model of tourism development is in crisis. The cycle theory life (Butler, 1980) can serve as an interpretative tool of this crisis and confirm the logic of the development process. Under this theory, the life cycle of the tourism product (model 4S) seems to often satisfy the development and democratization of the holiday, where tourism demand is addressed in increasingly lower income strata. Relative demand has been increasing for a long number of years. Therefore, a mass tourism offer is rapidly expanding to meet the ever increasing tourism demand. The result is the creation of a tourism developing rapidly, focused on specific tourism destinations which its relative rate stops at the stage of maturity (according to Butler). At this stage, the tourism product is offered to large population strata. The attempt to form a new tourism demand should be based on increased investment funds, if the existing structure of a new demand that will come from low-income people is known. However, the model of a stable tourism development cannot be sustained long term, because at the end of the cycle life of the tourism product of the 4S prices tend to rise, which depends on the degree of openness of the country internationalized / globalized financial system and

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the stage of economic development. Additional factors affecting this development logic, is the cost of labor, the tourist resources and maintenance costs, costs of land and massive imports tourism goods and services, the use of charter flights and low cost accommodations. Therefore, the difference in prices between countries origin and host countries gradually disappears, while the offered tour product becomes more expensive and of lower quality.

In case of problematic production of tourist services, productivity growth of tourist services is extremely difficult, except for some transport services. This productivity increases slowly and focuses on an increase in the cost of labor that increases the prices of the tourist product. Essentially, in this process, the model 4S mass tourism not only creates a higher cost than previously, but gradually its quality deteriorates. Therefore, a state of saturation is formed, resulting in the onset of the crisis that can be combined with the crisis of the "model of 4S". Greece is a country hosting tourists, aware of the decline of the 4S model and the standard "sun lust" and should be directed years ago at a conversion / diversification / enrichment of the tourist product.

The current model of tourism development is based on mass organized tourism and a type of consumption focused on mimicry. The uniformity of this model of tourism development leaves little room to personalization of behaviors, preferences and desires of potential tourists. The coastal resort tourism, as a traditional model of development cannot satisfy any longer the new requirements of the tourist clientele. This is proven by the slow increase in the number of tourists in the Mediterranean countries and the low occupancy of hotel accommodations.

In the case of a structural type crisis, which is mainly a result of economic circumstances, it is proposed to search for new long-term standard tourist development, dominated by the emergence of quality over quantity and diversification towards homogenization. Thus, in contrast to the existing standard "sun lust" with the specific characteristics of the tourist offer of the 4S, a new model of differentiated tourism offer is proposed with new characteristics. This model should derive from the same searches of tourists and the tourist product of the spatial unit of hospitality and focus on the following four variables that establish the new characteristics of tourist offer of 4E (Cuvelier et al., 1994, Deprest 1997, Morucc1 2003, Varvaresos 2009):

- ❖ Environment and clean nature.

- ❖ Educational tourism, culture and history.
- ❖ Events and mega events.
- ❖ Entertainment and fun.

The proposed model of tourism development has become a major strategy for a large number of countries in order to have access to the 'new tourism'. The significant difference compared with the previous model, is in general perception formed on tourism in a host country. The tourism industry is often characterized as heavy industry and therefore seems to require a high degree of planning. Thus, a process of replacement of one model from another is a necessity imposed de facto and which is a new emerging tourist reality. In this context, the proposed model needs further refinement on the basis of these four variables characteristic of tourist to construct the new tourism industrial development-oriented and sustainable dimension. This requires the restructuring of the characteristics of the tourism offer in a new direction enrichment of the tourist product and diversification of tourist offer. The redefinition of tourism policy should be based on a standard tourism development that respects human environment, preserves natural and cultural heritage and serves the objectives of competitiveness and quality.

It is obvious that this new model of tourism development makes the institutional transformations necessary (eg network organization of tourism enterprises, virtual tourism businesses, e-commerce in tourism, electronic governance) that favors tourism entrepreneurship and improves long-term the competitiveness of the tourism industry. This requires a specialized tourism policy 'transition' which is a complex "grid" of all individual policies of the central state with a regional dimension. This leads to the view that tourism, in terms of production, is a complex socioeconomic phenomenon expressed as a yearly particular form of private consumption in the Greek economy. Logical consequence of the economic nature of tourism phenomenon is a complex policy type, as a cumulative policy of almost all individual policies to develop and regulate the production and disposal of tourism consumption (Zacharatos 2000:41).

The crisis of Greek tourism for more than one decade has made conscious a large number of producers of the tourism product, and stakeholders, of the need to transform the Greek tourism model with characteristics of 4S endogenous integrated tourism development, based on new characteristics of the supply of 4E that determine the

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background of the new tourism development. It is therefore necessary that objectives of tourism policy to redefine in such a direction that our country faces the modern challenges of globalization of economies to exploit the comparative advantage with respect to other Mediterranean countries and upgrade its tourism infrastructure and superstructure to attract tourists of high income level.

A basic condition of improving the competitiveness of Greek tourism product is the enrichment of products and services that will convince consumers that the relationship “value for money” is correct and competitive at a time when the average tourist is very well informed and usually experienced. There are several researches which have been made about the competitiveness of the product of our country and highlight problems regarding pricing, provided services, infrastructure (directly and indirectly tourism), environmental variety product offerings, manpower etc. The development of Special and Alternative Forms of Tourism, most of them exist as products in our country.

The course of development in the country has faced many challenges and only during the last 15 years, when most international experience and demand highlighted the importance of them, they were developed in our country. Two key factors that contributed in this direction is that within the tourism policy principles of sustainability related directly, mostly at local level, with the development of these products and that our country possessed an impressive wealth of resources that can provide a basis for a structured dynamic supply. Regarding our competitors (mainly Europe and in particular in the Mediterranean) Greece presented a lag in developing these products.

The main factors which contributed to the development of Special and Alternative Forms of Tourism in our country

1. The questioning of the dominant development model

In the period after 1980, there is growing scientific controversies of the dominant model of tourism development (organized mass tourism) as adopted and developed in the country. Excluding the impact of this type of development on society and culture, strong is the question about the substantive benefits of their development to the economy (Krippendorf 1987, Fountain K et al 1989, Weiler & Hall 1992, SmithVand Eadington 1992, Tsartas 1996 SETE 2004). The reflections on economic benefits is associated with both tour operators policy as well as with that of the state, which led many people to

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organized tourism, but without an accordingly increase of profit margins in the tourist areas. The enrichment of this type of development with products of Special and Alternative Forms of Tourism (SAFT) was assumed to contribute the long-term sustainability of this model.

2. The policy of international organizations and EU

Already since 1970, but especially after 1980, many international organizations (United Nations, WTO, OECD) pointed out the need for a shift from mass tourism standards to more sustainable and integrated into local economic, cultural, environmental and social scale. Crucial, in this context to Greece, was the EU policy, which (with various actions, policies and funding) directly and indirectly enhances the development of SAFT in Member States - eg Ecotourism, Naturalist Ecotourism, Cultural Tourism. Common component of these policies is the consideration that they are products that contribute to sustainability, local development and protection the environment, while responding to changes in motivation tourists.

3. Concerns about the impact of tourism development on the environment

Organized tourism, mainly because of the massiveness and the frequent use the natural environment as a single receptor infrastructure, was seen as a major cause of many adverse environmental impacts. This issue is of particular importance in countries like Greece, where the design, planning and management of tourism development on environmental issues lacked behind many of our competitors. Moreover, our country has many extremely rich natural environmental resources, which require the development of tourism standards that are respected and will highlight them for the benefit of our tourist product. The vast majority of SAFT - especially alternative forms - are considered, not accidentally, a balanced and quality way of development at local level while protecting the environment.

4. Changes in motivation of tourists

A clear change in the motivation of tourists is recorded, particularly after 1980. From the search of organized and often passive - regarding activities - holidays, tourists turn to travel more independently and in parallel search for activities (sports, tour, education, natural and healthy life) during the holidays. Two developments were critical to this change from the tourist who travels with a mostly dominant motive to a multi-

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motivated tourist: the emergence of the environment as a factor of particular importance in demand option and the increase of the number of trips - mainly short term - on an annual basis. We see therefore a dynamic increasing demand both for autonomous specialized trips of SAFT, and for trips and activities of this type, combined with the Organized Bulk Travel Deals.

5. The gradual development of a significant number of SAFT

EU policy combined with the pressure of many local authorities (LAs, Development Agencies, new investors) brings in a relatively short time - beginning with the 70s - multiple destinations and businesses of "another" Greece of SAFT. Without a systematic policy and promotion, and with demand concerned initially and primarily about national tourists, a significant number of destinations is formed - especially in landlocked areas - that provide infrastructure, services, activities and agrotourism, ecotourism, skiing, conferences, nature tourism, religious, cultural, adventure, sports, marine etc. The local dimension of this development is a key feature, while dynamic presence of the internet in supply and demand after 1990 contributed instrumental in extending this model of development in areas with organized tourism summer vacation (as a complementary or independent offered activity).

Parameters enhancing the contribution of SAFT competitiveness of Greek Tourism product

There are some data and some necessary policies that should be applied consistently so that SAFT can contribute - as it is estimated that they can based on available data - to the upgrading and modernization of the country's tourism product. Specifically:

1. High quality resources and a significant number of infrastructure and services in many of the SAFT, which were developed in the country. The country has significant in number and rich variety of resources to develop even more of the SAFT operating in the country but also those with less presence eg adventure, bird watching, speleology etc.

1. Greece has a significant number (73) of castles which can be visited, mainly from Byzantine and Venetian rule, with very interesting architecture and history. The geographical dispersion highlights the Peloponnese, Crete and Epirus as the regions with the most castles

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2. The traditional settlements available in the country are of high quality. The important ones, which attract and interest many tourists, are 160. The specified as Protected Traditional Villages of High or Significant Protection, according to a study by the Technical Chamber of Greece, were 616 in 1974. The geographical dispersion highlights mainly the Aegean islands, the Peloponnese and Eastern Macedonia and Thraki as the regions with the largest number of traditional settlements with tourism and cultural importance.

3. Of particular interest is a particularly rich - and often forgotten - for our country, but also complex regarding the establishment resource: the landscape. This resource is connected with lots of natural resources and the built environment available to the country and constitutes cause for a trip - such as holiday tourism, special and alternative tourism.

The agritourism product of Greece has very positive features compared to the European countries. Key features are the social dimension and low operational level of farmers compared to Europe. We observe that infrastructure that serve as farms are relatively scarce, unlike the wine tourism where there is fairly wide geographical dispersion of wineries throughout the country with the main concentration areas in Macedonia, the Cyclades prefecture and northern Peloponnese, Magnesia and Evia.

Regarding ski centers, their number is sufficient. It should be noted, however, that problems on the roads hinder the influx of visitors to and from these, the specialization of staff etc.

From the 60s and 70s when the country had few conference rooms and stand-alone convention centers, we reached the last decade where the number of hotels that have conference rooms and high standards but small and large stand-alone convention centers grow by leaps and bounds across the country while also the demand for various types of conferences rises. Specifically in 2007, there were 74 Convention Centers with 246 rooms and 419 hotels with 1324 conference operating in the country. The international conferences of international scope than doubled in the decade 1996-2005 (from 44 became 94), but again Greece is ranked 22 in the global ranking. Most of the rooms are in large urban centers (Athens, Thessaloniki) and the most developed tourist areas (Rhodes, Corfu, Halkidiki), mainly insular and coastal, of the country. The notably positive contribution of the conference alleviates problems of seasonality that

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characterize Greek tourism. In any case, Business Tourism, despite the privileged position of our country as a destination of international repute, there are problems regarding institutional framework and infrastructure (lack of large independent conference centers), which are obstacles to the further development of an industry with multipurpose development and economic prospects for the country.

Also important is the growth in numbers and variety of tourist services businesses, which serve throughout the country tourist traffic especially foreign - such as agencies, car rental companies and companies that have touristic buses. Important note therefore is that the country has rich resources, even with sufficient geographic dispersion, capable serve demand (which often has annual duration) of both domestic and foreign tourists, whether it manifests itself as an autonomous demand for a particular product or as demand for short trip together, e.g. with tourism holiday.

Three main deficiencies: institutional framework, human resources and structured policy projection

There are significant lags in the institutional framework for the development and operation of many of the SAFT operating in our country (Tsartas 1996, 2010, & Kokkosis & Tsartas 2001). This is often an obstacle to providing professional and quality services at a time when competition and the demand for such products increases. Equally important is the problem in human resources, which require specialized knowledge in the organization, management and the provision of services to SAFT, something missing - in most cases - in the educational system of our country. On the issue of promotion, important efforts have been made at local level in recent years (local authorities of tourist areas, SAFT businesses), while important is the role of the internet in this field because tourists - and destinations and businesses - use systematically its services. But what is lacking is coordination at local and national level, which acts negatively on the competitiveness of the Greek tourism product.

Locality and complementarity: two positive aspects of the development of SAFT.

The development of SAFT reinforces key local development, which has particular importance to EU policies, which strongly with funding, actions, programs and policies reinforce areas and sectors that contribute to locality (Tsartas & Parpairis 1996 Kokkosis & Tsartas 2001). The successful local development of course is connected with a careful

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planning - something which is not usually - that will examine the resources, real and necessary infrastructure and mainly the combined grid (Parpairis 1984 Kokkosis & Tsartas 2001) of development and promotion of SAFT. The operation, autonomous or grid, of some SAFT every case has another important - as proven during the last two decades - positive contribution to both the development at local level and the development of organized mass tourism vacation, that of complementarity. It works as a parallel product that, either autonomously or complementary, attracts additional demand and ultimately enhances the total supply of the area, either it is already touristic developed or it is a landlocked region with rich resources for SAFT.

The harmonization of SAFT with the principles of sustainable development policy

In the last 30 years, substantial efforts have been made at international, European and national level to promote and implement the policy of sustainable tourism development (Parpairis 1984, Weiler B. & Hall M. 1992, Kokkosis - Tsartas 2001). A key parameter of a long-term sustainable tourism development at national and local level is a balanced relationship between economy, society, culture and environment. A SAFT grid is believed, based on both international and national experience (either independently or complementary), to operate only positive in this direction, upgrading the tourist product. A second equally important for our country parameter is the absolute need to raise our tourist product which is often considered saturated spatially and of environmental degraded quality, too traditional, without variety in services and offering products etc. In all these - the basically correct - reviews, development of SAFT may constitute an appropriate response to be upgraded, revitalized, modernized and eventually become competitive rich - based resources - our product.

Segments of Alternative Tourism

General Concept

The specific forms of tourism existed time both mass tourism and new forms of tourism. Operation but in most cases as an additional form of mass tourism, while new forms occurred predominantly in recent years in response to changing incentives for tourists with an emphasis on those related to the ecology and environment.

The specific forms of tourism are characterized by the existence of a particular sovereign incentive to demand and the development of a corresponding relevant infrastructure in tourist areas, designed to serve the tourists of any special form. Alternative forms are part of special tourism forms, additionally tourists often choose how to organize and lead the trip, which dominates the range of options and browsing with little use of services organized tourism (*Tsartas 1999*).

Alternative forms of tourism are the antithesis of mass tourism especially international tourism market model characterized by massiveness, the burden on the environment, reduce the quality of service and seek to maximize profit at the expense of local communities, local economy and environment. Alternative forms include those whose primary characteristic contrast to classical type of mass tourism, having as starting point the need to protect the natural environment, preservation of cultural heritage and the natural way of living. Now put in the forefront of tourism development with natural and cultural resources.

Each special form of tourism has a special feature, which acting as a motivation becomes an integral component and gives its name to this special form. The majority of these forms involves the active participation of tourists in the activities of these alternative

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forms. Also in special forms of tourism, the determining motive can be distinguished and other characteristics, such as organization and operation and the required infrastructure designed to meet the specific needs of tourists-visitors. Many of these forms developed under the influence of the environmental movement, and are common while developing alternative forms of linking ecology and culture (eg ecotourism-cultural tourism) (*Velissariou 2000*).

Regional variation in countries or regions and frequent coexistence of two or three specific forms of a common model development proved to be critical factors in the development of special interest tourism

On the other hand, some of the special and alternative forms of tourism might have negative impacts and effects on the environment and lead to overexploitation of local resources and concentrating activities in sensitive areas.

Types of alternative forms of tourism

I. Therapeutic - Spa Tourism

The therapeutic - spa tourism in recent decades developed into one of the most basic forms of tourism. It involves visiting areas with spas, springs, thalassotherapy centers, spas, etc, in order to cure some disease or visiting for cosmetic reasons and relaxation.

This new specialization of health tourism is attracting increasingly more customers in developed countries, particularly in Central and Northern Europe. The key features of this form of tourism are reported from one side to the composition of their clientele, consisting not only of individuals of the second and third age but also by younger people who want to combine their vacations with a comprehensive program. The new "product" occurs renewed, enriched with decent facilities ranging up to five-star accommodation and services and the emphasis is on regeneration and the beneficial effects of a whole program of activities and education supported by specialists in psychosomatic medicine and hygiene. This form of tourism, except of special bath installations and lodging claims with additional facilities, requires special medical and physiotherapy services including services relating to health, medical testing, special dietary, treatment with

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vitamins, herbology, gymnastics, special treatments such as anti-smoking, anxiety treatment, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, relaxation, sleep learning, aesthetics etc.

Nature, except of rare landscapes and special natural beauties, 'gave' Greece springs with important therapeutic properties. Spas are part of the national wealth of the country, while their therapeutic properties have been known since ancient times. The medicinal natural resources are scattered in the Greek territory, while the waters of these springs differ from the ordinary, either due to high temperature or to the presence of rare active ingredients. These waters are characterized as metal due to temperature or general chemical composition. Apart from cold mineral springs there are springs, with which in therapeutic treatment, spa hydrotherapy (thermalism).

The geographical distribution of sources is not random, as it is associated either with tectonic events, such as, for example, where the sources of Kaiaphas, the Kyllinis and Langadas, or volcanic activities as, for example, where the sources of Methanon, Milos, Lesbos, Samothrace and Lemnos. Hydrotherapy is particularly important for the treatment of multiple diseases, such as arthritis and rheumatism, and is divided into two kinds: a) internal, which includes drinking therapy (drinking natural mineral waters), inhalation (breathing fumes or droplets of mineral water) and washes (oral, nasal, gynecological), b) external, which includes baths, jet showers (for a certain time the body receives the thermal mineral water under high or low pressure) hydromassaging (the body receives water pressure), hydrokinesotherapy (combining hydrotherapy and physical therapy as the body is in the water) and mud therapy (application of mud, which has "matured" in body parts with various diseases).

II. Religious Tourism

According to the National Tourism Organization (NTO), it is a kind of tourism that involves a group of people visiting religious places including churches, monasteries, fairs or in the country of residence or any other reasons for worship or to participate in religious events. The monuments of Greek Orthodoxy are an integral part of the national heritage and a valuable tourist attraction. The Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches with remarkable iconography, mosaics, frescoes and rare photos, the imposing cathedrals, chapels and shrines of the countryside, the monasteries and cloisters dependencies, the

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unique monastic state of Mount Athos and the monasteries of Meteora (Thessaly), witness the intense dedication to our traditions and our close and long interconnection between art and religious worship.

In many areas of the country, the visitor has the opportunity to meet, also buildings and places of worship of different faiths and religions, which coexist in a constant dialogue, highlighting the rare historical and cultural palimpsest of the Greek area. Greece is probably one of the few countries in the world that can develop this form of tourism, as the Greek monasteries are wonderful items of art and technique, built from the 10th century and still combine the Greek Orthodox tradition with the evolution of architecture and painting in the Greek area. The Orthodox monasticism has offered in every corner of Greece monuments perfectly adapted to its geographical location, topography and natural landscape.

The format of this tourism has usually a limited duration of one to three days. It is worth mentioning that the package tours for religious tourism is relatively cheaper than other forms of tourism, and the economic benefits to religious sites are important (<http://www.gnto.gr>).

III. Business (Conference - Exhibition) Tourism

This form includes various forms of travel, made for business reasons and the organization of conferences, international reports and holding meetings with large or small number of participants at any level local, regional, national or international. Specifically these trips involving special section of the tourist market, characterized by highly motivated, require appropriate logistics and special organization and staff.

We can distinguish three forms of business tourism:

- > Conference tourism: It involves meeting people from different places usually for one or more days, to exchange scientific and specialized knowledge within a predetermined program.
- > Exhibit tourism: it involves the organization of exhibitions by enterprises, institutions, organizations, states, foundations, associations, to exploit the communication capacity of the exhibitions in order to create the appropriate conditions for the dissemination of information to the desired target. Exhibitions incorporate three basic tools of marketing: advertising, public relations and sales promotion and made straight or in exhibition spaces suitable for such events.

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- > Incentives: they are integrated into the overall category of corporate travel and they are holiday expenses covered by enterprises, as a reward for excellent performance in the frame of an energy-motivation. These travel incentives are for a mean of stimulation, leading to increased employee performance. These luxurious trips of limited duration (three to four days) are undertaken by travel agencies aiming at meeting the various business executives, providing high quality services to tourist destinations, preferably distinguished from ordinary (*Velissariou 2000*).

IV. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism in which people have the purpose of participation in cultural events in general. Specifically this type of tourism, showing upward trends internationally, includes visits to historical monuments, archaeological sites, museums, galleries, attend concerts, plays and opera, as well as participation in cultural events or seminars linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology etc. but also the development of this form of tourism requires not only basic tourist infrastructure and special facilities such as cultural programs with rich cultural and artistic events.

V. Agritourism

Agritourism is a mild form of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas, in which the visitor has the opportunity to experience the rural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional cuisine and daily lives of residents, the culture and authentic features of the site, while always friendly and tradition. Also, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and outdoor pursuits, which may be involved, entertained and feel the joy of touring, learning and discovery, and generally integrated with local conditions the region visited.

In particular, there are two forms of rural tourism at international level:

A. That where guests are accommodated in large farms and participate in farm work and in everyday life and the lifestyle of the farmers themselves. This form is known as «Farmhouse holidays» (farm holidays) and occurs in countries with large farms.

B. That where hospitality is provided in small accommodations along with breakfast. This form of agritourism is known as «Bed and breakfast» and occurs in countries with

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small surface areas (*Velissariou 2000*). Greek reality is approached in the form «Bed and Breakfast» in agritourism. This finding suggests that Greek rural areas would be difficult to assimilate programs aimed at "big farms" (Vafeiadis, 1992).

Throughout Greek territory, many companies that offer the opportunity to enjoy the unique advantages of the Greek countryside have been created with the help of special programs of agritourism. These firms are pretty much sorted in the following categories (<http://www.gnto.gr>):

- ❖ Retail / Showrooms of agro products
- ❖ Agritourism centers of catering and leisure
- ❖ Travel agencies, engaging the organization or implementation of programs of outdoor activities, ecotourism tours and cultural interest,
- ❖ Farmhouses,
- ❖ Enterprises producing traditional products
- ❖ Workshops of folk art.

In Greece until recently, agritourism activities were limited to providing just one facility, while in recent years the situation seems to be improving. A policy is beginning to be established around rural tourism products that adopts the concept of these products, which apart from the specific services offered agritourism and local products, and integrates the entire image area, as recorded in the rural landscape, the lifestyle and unique local culture (*Iakovidou 2003*).

The objectives of ecotourist programs widely applied in the European Union are:

1. The completion and improvement of farm incomes.
2. Improving working and living conditions of the rural population.
3. The retention of the rural population in the place of residence.
4. The improvement and utilization of local agricultural and craft products.
5. The protection and management of the natural environment.
6. The preservation, promotion and development of architectural and cultural heritage "
7. The development of rural tourism, which shows a growing demand in the international market as well and the interior.

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Frater supports that *“four main reasons led farmers to provide accommodation for tourism: to increase their annual income, to offset the reduced income from agriculture, to exploit unused resources and to enjoy the company of visitors” (Pearce 1997).*

Agritourism is clear that we seek authenticity and uniqueness in every form. Greece has a significant and remarkable diversity in particular local characteristics that make it a unique place. In Greece there is an untapped potential that can create a specialized agritourism model for each region. The country has the unique privilege to have inexhaustible resources that differ from region to region, rare natural beauty, history, tradition, cuisine, architecture, traditional crafts, music, tradition, culture, religious monuments, villages, traditional villages, festivals, seas, mountains , forests and canyons.

All these characteristics form a rare and colorful mosaic of experiences that only locals can identify and highlight creating a blessed place. Greece is a country with uniqueness and variety and this agritourism gives the advantage of highlighting this uniqueness. The concept of agritourism, except for specific agritourism services offered and local products, integrates the entire image area, as it is recorded in the rural landscape, lifestyles and culture (Tsartas, 2000).

VI. Ecotourism - Ecological tourism

Although the concept of ecotourism is increasingly used today, it has not been determined accurately the true sense of the term. Occasionally, there have been several definitions that try to deliver the characteristics of ecotourism.

According to one aspect, ecotourism is based on the promotion and use of natural resources of a country. The combination of agritourism is a mild form of rural tourism and a sustainable form of tourism. The product of ecotourism grows in areas with special characteristics, such as high ecological importance, geology, forests, caves, canyons, cultural data etc (Technical Chamber of Greece, 2000).

Another formulation of the concept of ecotourism is: "Ecotourism is tourism in nature that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and governed by the principles of sustainable management of the environment" (Dagkonaki, 1998).

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But what should be noted is that in each case the application of ecotourism should lead to the protection of the natural environment and socio - cultural fabric of a region, of course ensuring the sustainable use of the tourism resource. The relationship that should exist between, not only ecotourism but every form of tourism, with environment, recognized in the last decades of almost all international organizations aimed at protecting the environment (Dagkonaki, 1998).

Ecotourism is considered the tourism that contributes to the conservation of habitats and species of flora and fauna either directly through a contribution to preserving the environment or indirectly by ensuring revenue to the local community enough for its residents, thus protecting their natural heritage as a source of revenue. Tourism combining local economic development, preservation of the environment and the promotion of natural advantages and history of an area.

Greece has a particularly rich and diverse natural environment, despite its small area of a rare geomorphology, with many striking contrasts and areas of high ecological value. Thousands indented coastline, majestic mountains, caves and gorges, lakes, rivers, habitats of exceptional beauty and unique ecosystems "endow" the Greek land with spectacular scenery, which in conjunction with the country's temperate climate, make Greece the ideal destination for lovers of eco-alternative tourism. Visiting different parts of the country, the naturalist traveler has the opportunity to:

- ❖ wander in the forests or explore national parks in the mountainous hinterland and some islands or near rivers and lakes
- ❖ enjoy the wonderful natural monuments, gorges, caves and waterfalls
- ❖ observe and admire the rare species of birds that nest or resorting to distant ecosystems,
- ❖ study the great variety of flora in the Greek countryside
- ❖ visit the unique National Parks, Geoparks and other protected areas
- ❖ take part in extreme sports activities (canoeing, rafting, monoraft, hydrospeed, canyoning, mountain biking, etc.) in recent years have seen a sharp rise in Greece
- ❖ reside in agrotourist units deployed throughout the country and afford visitors the opportunity to experience the local architectural, cultural and culinary tradition, products, agricultural activities and the daily life of local inhabitants.

Guests of protected areas must observe all the conditions for the protection of the environment from pollution, to avoid any disturbance of natural habitats and

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disturbance of the equilibrium of ecosystems. Information on how one can visit protected areas and to participate in special programs, can be provided by local information centers, local authorities and specialized agencies.

The combinations of all or some of the types of tourism mentioned above can greatly contribute to the development of tourism in our country. The offering of package tours with gastronomy, entertainment and information about the cultural richness that Greece has to be a priority for tour operators as it will lessen the spatial concentration of tourism activity, and will enhance and enrich the tourist product offered by it.

(<http://www.gnto.gr>)

VII. Marine Tourism

Marine tourism is all tourism activities conducted at the sea of a country, and includes two special forms of cruises and yachting. Nautical tourism is a special form of tourism, particularly important for Greece with huge growth potential, but has nothing to do with the area of interest, other than just the possibility of short appearance ratings of the coastal zone in the interior of Epirus.

VIII. Cultural Tourism

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) considers that cultural tourism is the journey that is motivated by basic education including cultural tours, theater, festivals, pilgrimages, visits to archaeological sites, monuments and museums, as well as special interest elements of the natural environment, popular culture and art. It could therefore be assumed that cultural tourism occurs when the visitor wishes to understand and appreciate the basic character of a place and its culture as a whole, including at least:

- History and archeology,
- The local population and lifestyle,
- Cultural evolution,
- Arts and architecture,
- Local cuisine, local varieties of wine and other local products,
- The social, economic and political structure,

-Morphology of the region,

-The various festivals and events.

Estimates that cultural tourism is growing by 15% a year and that 37% of all international trips include a cultural element. On the other hand, mass tourism is growing by only 8% a year. Greece has a great cultural heritage and is the largest comparative advantage over other countries, if the appropriate exploit will attract a large part of global tourism. Traditional architecture, traditional villages and historic city centers are key elements of cultural heritage and physiognomy of our country.

The preservation and enhancement of the architectural heritage is a component of tourism development and supply options for every kind of tourist activity. Many traditional buildings have now acquired new uses and accommodate various functions, such as tourist accommodation, museums, exhibitions, restaurants, public and municipal services etc. The historic centers of Greek cities are revitalized with renovations of buildings, pavements and landscaping becoming attractive places visited.

Greece has a number of ancient monuments, unique museums and themed archaeological sites offering the opportunity for a historic wandering through the centuries, the probability for a mental flashback to the myth, history and culture from the classical period to today. Many travel agencies organize tours of archaeological interest, visits to excavation sites and meetings with residents for participation of visitors in joint cultural events. (<http://www.gnto.gr>)

IX. Geotourism

Geotourism is a new form of alternative tourism that grows in areas with significant geological sites, which could be an area of special interest to attract tourists. A key feature of geotourism is the connection of geologic heritage of a place with the other elements of the natural environment, monuments, history and traditions. The ultimate goal of geotourism is to link all the characteristics of a site with focus on geological and geomorphological heritage tourism.

Typical cases highlighting and exploiting geological monuments exist throughout Europe. Main example of geotourism activity in Greece is the petrified forest of Lesvos and multiple activities in there from the Museum of Natural History of the region

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(educational activities, events and international conferences etc.). This example demonstrates the positive effects of geotourism in the regional development process (increase incomes, create new jobs, retain the population, attracting scientific interest).

The development of geotourism requires the creation of necessary infrastructure (information stands, marking routes, creating centers of environmental awareness-training, etc.) and production Geotouristic products (informative guides, souvenirs, etc.). To promote geotourism and the protection and promotion of specific areas with large geological and geomorphological interest, the European and Global Geoparks Network was established, which includes Greece and four Geoparks: Vikos Aouu, Psiloriti, Chelmata - Vouraikos, Lesvos (Petrified Forest).

X. Sports Tourism

Many authors define that the concept of sports tourism includes all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activities where participation is random or organized and carried on business or not provided with reasons to move away from the place of residence and work. It is obvious that sports tourism is a highly complex and wide phenomenon. For the development of sports tourism there is a need for the existence of high quality infrastructure support in various areas such as natural environment, services, entertainment, transport, the built environment, housing, cultural heritage organizations and special facilities .

Sports tourism has managed to attract a significant number of stakeholders acquiring the relevant economic, social and cultural importance. Meanwhile, the producers of the tourism industry who have always looked for new areas of expansion of their activities saw early on largely economic benefits of sports tourism and have seen significant investment. As a consequence, sports tourism is characterized by rapid growth, high potential development and the special interest it creates in everyone involved in the tourism industry, producers and consumers. (<http://www.sport-tourism.com/> Terzakis 2002)

This form of tourism combines sporting events and visiting a region on the occasion of the celebration of the Games (Olympic games, rally racing, World Cup soccer, etc.) or involves active participation in sports (kayaking, rafting, trekking, paragliding , climbing

etc) which can be defined as tourism and adventure.

Today sport and tourism are two major social institutions, which have in many cases direct interactions. These two institutions gigantic especially after 1960 and are currently two lucrative industries that generate huge profits. The resulting combination of tourist and sports activities and the identification of vacation time with the time of conclusion of the major sporting events were the root cause of sports tourism (*Terzakis 2002*).

As a consequence, sports tourism is characterized by rapid growth, high potential development and the special interest it creates in everyone involved.

XI. Mountain Tourism

Mountain tourism, despite showing some similarities with winter sports tourism, in any case cannot be identified with it. It has no time-constraint event and refers to all outdoor recreation and tourism activities that occur only in the mountainous regions of the host sites that wish to develop this form of tourism.

A prerequisite for the development of mountain tourism is the creation of tourist accommodation that blend with the natural environment and have the widest possible additional venues such as restaurants, bars, cafeterias, recreation rooms etc.

Greece is a predominantly mountainous country; there are more than 300 larger or smaller mountains. The most important mountainous axis of Greece - that is the area of interest of the current study - is the Pindos mountain range, which forms the "backbone" of the mainland and has a natural continuation of the mountains of the Peloponnese and Crete. The highest peak in Greece is Mount Olympus which reaches 2,917 meters (top Mytikas), while about 40 mountain ranges, throughout the country, at an altitude above 2,000 meters.

The Greek mountains are characterized by their diversity, rare landscapes and unique forests, some of which are among the oldest natural forests of Europe. Due to the unrivaled natural wealth (flora and fauna), many of them are protected as National Parks etc, while the last few decades, the infrastructure created are ideal destinations for those who enjoy winter activities and mountain tourism. (<http://www.gnto.gr>).

XII. Winter Tourism

Winter sports tourism is a dynamic form of tourism that is trying to develop the country hospitality in an effort to diversify the tourism product and in this way to utilize and exploit their dormant winter months and attract different types of tourists, especially high income level. Tourism covers winter sports activities taking place during the winter. It covers those activities that occur in a specific geographical area and the accuracy is usually in mountainous regions always combined with certain climatic conditions, such as for example low temperatures and prolonged snow cover the ground.

The development of winter sport tourism requires the creation of well organized ski centers, ice rinks, cross-country ski racing, tourist accommodations of all types, connectivity of tourist sites winter sports with urban centers and airports, ports and railway stations.

XIII. Adventure Tourism

It is a form of tourism with a strong element of danger, action, the unexpected and surprise.

The principal activities of adventure tourism are the following:

- ❖ Tourism exploration and access of unreachable areas: These explorations are carried out in forests, jungles, mountains etc.
- ❖ Tourism survival exercises and orientation: The objective is survival in adverse conditions and learning survival techniques.
- ❖ Hunting tourism and safari tourism. (Velissariou 2000)

It should be noted that adventure tourism is increasing worldwide and fills a need or desire of modern man of towns for relief from the stress caused by modern life and the boredom of routine.

Activities included in adventure tourism are:

- ❖ Trekking or hiking
- ❖ River Trekking
- ❖ Canyoning
- ❖ Kayak River
- ❖ Rafting

- ❖ Canoe-Kayak
- ❖ Climbing

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- ❖ Mountain bike
- ❖ Jeep safari
- ❖ Yachting
- ❖ Ski
- ❖ Mountain skiing

Riding

XIV. Rural Tourism activities

In this section we attempt to approach the specialized activities that take place in rural areas and are directly related to tourism. Clearly, most of these can also engage in other forms of alternative tourism, adventure tourism as mentioned above. However we need a comprehensive approach and thus bring all into a single section with a comprehensive description of each activity whether in recreation / sports or natural environment observation.

Mountain Leisure activities and sports

We distinguish three major groups of activities according to the space they take place, which are described below.

❖ *Ground Activities*

1. Climbing: The climbing on the climbing mountains with possible use of all mountain techniques. Conducted in varied terrain and substrate and usually has great difficulty. For these reasons, it requires excellent physical condition, specialized techniques, expertise and special equipment. Essential is the accompaniment of a mountain guide, especially when the participants do not have the required experience.

2. Mountain Hiking: It runs at medium or high altitude, considerable duration and difficulty, but do not require specialized techniques as with mountaineering or climbing. A good fitness and expertise Mountain (orientation etc) or accompaniment by qualified mountain guide.

3. Crossing the Great Route (trekking): It is many days of walking. Usually involves crossing one or more mountain assemblies. A good physical condition and a sufficient knowledge of mountain (Orientation, accident management, etc.) is required as well as the accompaniment by an experienced and qualified mountain guide.

4. Day Hiking: It runs short in low and medium altitudes. Requires basic knowledge of familiarity with the natural environment and should be done accompanied by an experienced mountain guide.
5. Climbing: Climbing rocks using technical systems and security. Requires excellent physical condition, special equipment and very good knowledge of specific techniques. It can be done both at low and at high altitudes. Climbing big slopes requires increased strength and abilities. Dealing with this sport requires proper training and recommended accompanied by an experienced mountain guide.
6. Canyoning: Usually using ropes and climbing equipment in general. A good physical condition, partial knowledge of technical climbing and escorted by experienced mountain guides or river instructor.
7. Skiing: Skiing in specially designated areas (slopes). The ascent to the starting points is done using special mechanical lifts. A good physical condition, specific technical knowledge and special equipment are necessary as well as - at least in the early stages - the guidance of qualified teachers-trainers.
8. Alpine skiing (cross country skiing): The most difficult form of skiing. Includes crossings massif in physical space outside prepared ski slopes. Requires excellent physical condition, excellent knowledge of special techniques, special equipment, good knowledge of climbing, orientation, first aid, treatment of specific accidents (avalanches) etc. It requires good initial knowledge ski slope and then proper training.
9. Cross Country Skiing: It is done in small forest roads with slopes or other landscaped areas. A much fitness knowledge of specific technical and escort experienced instructor.
10. Mountain Biking: This cycling on forest roads or trails with the use of appropriate hardy bicycle speeds. Includes either small bike trips or multi-day traverse one or more mountainous, upland or lowland areas. It requires a good to excellent physical condition, bike maintenance knowledge and first aid. It consists of an experienced escort.
11. Horse riding: It either intra-day riding recreation lands smoothly either several hours or even multi-day climbs and crossings of old paths (caravan type). Requires escort instructor.
12. Caving: This exploration of horizontal or vertical (potholes) caves. A good to excellent physical condition and knowledge of specific technical climbing, rappelling, cave diving etc. Recommended experienced escort.

❖ *Air Activities*

1. Paragliding (parapente): flight with special self-guided paragliding. It requires special equipment, good knowledge of meteorology and aerodynamics and training by experienced instructor.
2. Hang Gliding (Delta Plan): flight with specially designed "D" shaped kite. It requires special equipment, good knowledge of meteorology and aerodynamics, and excellent education for the knowledge of the appropriate techniques.

❖ *Inland Activities*

1. Kayak River: river descents with special closed, hard constructed boat and double paddle. A good physical condition and training by experienced river guide for the knowledge of the morphology and hydrodynamics of rivers, and specific techniques downhill, and rescue.
2. Canoe River: river descents with special one, two or three-seated open boat and paddle with passengers sitting on their knees. Usually takes place in easy rivers, but requires good physical condition and knowledge of specific technical and experienced river escort.
3. Rafting: river descents with special multiple inflatable boat. Essential is the presence of an experienced river guide who will steer the boat. A good physical condition and specific technical knowledge at least of the chief pilot of the boat, and full safety equipment and rescue.

Activities environmental

❖ *Observation of birds (bird watching)*

Includes observation, usually with binoculars or telescope, of bird species in their natural environment. Often includes the observation and recording of specific data, such as habitat characteristics, population size, geographical spread, risks, protection status etc. A good knowledge of all areas frequented by birds, field specific equipment (binoculars, telescopes, clothing, etc.) and use of books / guides identifying of wild birds in the field are required. Usually, the sport has members associated with environmental or ornithological NGO in Greece or abroad (Greek Ornithological Society, BirdLife International, RSPB etc).

❖ *Botanology*

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Includes search and observation of flora in their natural habitats. Demands the knowledge to identify species of flora and other knowledge or hiking and climbing, and often requires the involvement of marches in difficult mountainous and hilly areas. Essential is the use of appropriate books / guides to identify species of plants in the field and the necessary trekking equipment.

❖ *Remark nature*

Includes observing specific features / characteristics of the natural environment. It is a combination of those listed in the above activities and other additional special features. Thus, the observation of nature includes the observation of geological features, landscape and impressions of human presence in space, vegetation, flora and fauna in general; that is, apart from birds already mentioned, the observation of other animal groups, such as large mammals, amphibians, butterflies and others, displays interest. In some special cases, as in the case of large mammals, it is sufficient to observe traces of animals. Also the observation of nature, especially of an organism, is possibly accompanied by photographing, so the activity becomes more complex and more attractive. The observation of nature somehow could be classified as a layman research field and could be separated into numerous subcategories. Particular care should be taken to avoid causing nuisance or damage to local species populations subject to these activities, eg nuisance to accommodation spaces, nesting, wintering dormancy etc. Usually the sport has members of environmental NGOs.

❖ *Environmental education*

Includes special training programs for acquiring knowledge and familiarity with the natural environment. Often these programs are aimed at young people with a range of activities and games, through which the knowledge and familiarity with the new structure and functioning of the natural environment. The basic requirement is the existence of instructor / trainers with relevant knowledge. There are special agencies that specialize in these activities, and are recognized by the state as Environmental Education Centers, such as the Centre for Environmental Education Konitsas.

XV. Special tourism categories

1. Gastronomic tourism

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The term “gastronomy” is Greek and comes from the composition of words “*gastir*”(= belly) and “*nomos*” (= knowledge) and this means the art of making good and tasty food (SETE 2010). “Delicious food” is not only offered in very good restaurants but can also be offered in each eating area, from an average tavern up to a luxury hotel restaurant. In practice, gastronomy involves combining good food with good wine or other beverages and is not limited solely to cooking but extends to a range of products and services.

Our country has 2,500 years of culinary history. We are the first country that created gastronomy in the western world. Roman Cuisine and Byzantine followed.

Food is part of the cultural identity of a place. The gastronomy is the occasion for tourism. Alternative forms of tourism promote gastronomy through individual activities. For example, “wellness tourism” makes use of edible materials to revitalize and agritourism is based on fresh local ingredients without this necessarily meaning abundance in variety. Therefore, gastronomy is addressed in two ways in the definition of tourism (SETE 2010):

- ❖ It enhances the travel experience for every tourist.
- ❖ It attracts wealthy, special interest tourists, the gastrotourists.
- ❖ Revitalizes an area, possibly located in the countryside.

The reputation of a destination with good food attracts many visitors, whether tourists or excursionists. The popular culinary destinations include specially for tourists “a mixture” of goods, services and activities that highlight the typical products and dishes of a place, the talent and creativity of those who manufacture and the uniqueness and tradition of the place so as to offer the visitors a comprehensive and memorable travel-dining experience.

The factors that help in the development of Gastrotourism and are an important “portfolio” with the conditions of development are (SETE 2010 & Palisidis, 2009):

- ❖ Highlighting local elements with emphasis on specificity, uniqueness.
- ❖ Promotion of the variety of products.
- ❖ Focus on the possibilities of the site before providing something new to think about the visitor.
- ❖ Connecting cuisine with tradition and cultural heritage.
- ❖ Connecting the tourism production base.
- ❖ Inform the local population about the benefits of tourism and how to protect the area.
- ❖ Emphasis on friendliness and safety of the destination.
- ❖ Pursuing collaborations between businesses.

- ❖ Educating staff (caterers, cooks, waiters, managers of state services).

The systematic approach and connection of gastronomy tourism and integration of the overall tourism planning, particularly in the field of marketing, it helps to become more known and accessible good Greek cuisine to visitors of our country, bringing immediate and important benefits.

However, the development of culinary tourism in Greece 'stumbles' on a lack of infrastructure, networking, education and adequate promotion. For this reason it is essential that the Regions in conjunction with Local Authorities to focus on local cuisines with different dietary patterns and work on this project, developing mature actions and relationships between local businesses.

In this way, the taste differences and contrasts between areas are highlighted, so that the gastronomic wealth of the country can be brought out more intensely and to motivate the visitor to try all the variations.

ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΗΣ

A developed alternative tourism destination indicated within the prefecture of Corinth which includes Mt. Zireia or Kyllene and altitude 2,374 m, is the highest mountain in Corinth , Lake fame, the plain of Velo , the wetlands of Lake Stymfalias and finally the plateau and Lake Dasiou. The mountain Zireia west, makes a first high peak, totaling 2,080 meters, Little Zireia then formed a horseshoe on the other side of which lies the Great Zireia . Between Small and Large Zireia displayed the highest peak (2.374m) , which is cut from the gorge Flavouritsa , which crosses the river Sythas . Also , there are seven caves in the cave " Mercury ," the cave " Lady of the Rock ," the cave " of English ," the unnamed gulch Upper Tarsus , sinks Feneou the precipice "Hole " Velo and cave lake Stymfalias . Below are traditional settlements identified in the Zaholis , Feneou and Trikala Corinth. It also has a remarkable number of monasteries, situated at an altitude of over 700 meters, as features are: Zaraka Stymfalia Monastery , the Monastery of St. George Feneou , Prathi Monastery , the Monastery of St. Vasilios and Prophet Elias Monastery . In the center are free riding and sporting ski Zireia. Finally, in Zireia are signposted mountain trails totaling 55 km in length.

A kind of alternative tourism growing is sports tourism, which includes any passive or active participation of a person in a sporting activity formal or informal, organized or not, for work or recreation, necessitating the transport of people outside the place of residence or labor. Category of sports tourism is adventure tourism, which aims to attract the visitor to explore the natural beauty of the area and participate in activities that combine both personal pleasure, through physical activity, and interaction with the local population. The adventure tourism diversifies the tourism product of the usual standards developed since the 60s at international level (mass tourism). Aimed at a targeted audience that is environmentally conscious, which is more than the number of tourists and is a market that slowly spreads because of the publicity that has taken the environmental movement in recent years. The promotion of the tourism "product" in this particular segment would reach the ears of a few, quality tourists.

As part of adventure tourism forms a large number of activities with many variations, the most important of which are summarized as follows:

- Mountaineering, Trekking, Crossing canyons and Orientation
- Climbing-Rappelling
- Canoeing
- Mountain Biking
- Riding

- Shooting sports outdoors (shooting, archery)

Also, there is the possibility of visitors to participate along with the adventure sports in some extreme sports such as:

- Bungy Jumping
- Hang gliding (paragliding, parachuting, eagle gliding)
- Caving

Hiking in the mountainous Corinthia

Hiking is a simple walk through the nature of the conditions Zireia within or outside passable road, usually following the mapped and marked trails that exist on the mountain, no special technical difficulties and at a time when the weather is relatively stable without extreme weather events.

During the hike, the visitor may pass archaeological sites, monasteries, churches and traditional settlements in the region. The proposed routes are:

- From the Goura one peak of Mount Zireia (Ntourntouvana). On this route is the church of St. Nicholas and the lake Doxa.
- From Feneo there is a path leading to St. George of the plain (probably 1760).
- The route Headboard-Lake Dasiou follows the forest road through Trikala - Lake of Dasiou - plateau.

Multi-day hiking (trekking) in Zireia

This activity requires a lot of nights on the mountain, which is usually done in a tent carried in the backpack or in shelters, while generally tests the ability of participants to independent living in the wild for several days.

Crossing conditions

The crossing conditions is a hike that starts from a point and passes through a mountainous group to come up with another point from the start. In Zireia are many and widespread differences in altitude and the mountain crossing can last from one day to several days.

Mountaineering in Zireia.

In Zireia can make someone climbing selecting mapped and signposted paths or not leading to sharp peaks of small Zireia (alt. 2,080 m) or the highest peak of 2,374 meters

Mountain Biking

Is it possible to make the visitor bike trails located in plateau Feneou and the coastal zone of lakes of the county.

Caving

The area includes seven (7) caves, which visitors can explore and sightsee.

Paragliding

Great Zireia is appropriate for paragliding, because of the high altitude.

Creation of a theme park

The theme park can include area both for shooting sports and riding. Additionally, the visitor is informed of the fauna and flora of the region, as well as for existing hiking trails. A suitable location for the siting of the park is in the area of small Zireia. A center for riding is already operating in Rethi - Trikala Corinth.

Activities in lakes Dasiou , Stymfalias, Doxas

These lakes are able to offer guests the opportunity for recreation and adventure tourism activities, such as kayaking, as well as conducting numerous other sports, such as mountain biking in the area around the lake.

3.2. Case studies of saturated alternative tourism destinations

The area of the Estuaries of Acheron is one case of a saturated alternative tourism destination. The area administratively belongs to the prefecture of Preveza and Thesprotia.

Acheron River springs from Soulioti Mountains and flows into the Ionian Sea. The sources are located at an altitude of 1.600 m, a length of about 52 km, passing through the prefectures of Thesprotia and Preveza.

The total area of the basin amounts to 693 km², the average annual rainfall reaches 1.700 mm, the average annual volume of precipitation is estimated at 1.297 x 10⁶ m³, and the total annual runoff is estimated at 740 x 10⁶ m³ of water (ECODONET, 2008).

Its waters reach the sea passing through the canyon of Acheron. The river and the estuary are a link in the chain of wetlands of western Greece and have joined the "Natura 2000 network ". By the waters, 85,000 acres are irrigated, of which 28,000 are in Thesprotia and the rest in Preveza.

The characteristics that make it an attractive tourist destination

The specificity and the natural beauty of the study area and the wider region in general are well known. In the last decades, the area is in a large tourist development. Particularly those features that can greatly influence the tourists are: the Natural Wealth, majestic landscapes,

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rich biodiversity, the beautiful beaches and seas, the remarkable landscape with places with a strong presence of the liquid component and rotations vegetation and diverse natural landscape with mountains, rivers, lakes, canyons, etc., which can provide a variety of alternative tourism activities.

- ◆ The area has a sizable historical, cultural and environmental interest. It includes a number of historical monuments.
- ◆ Protected green areas with many kinds of rare flora and fauna (NATURA 2000).
- ◆ Cultivated agricultural land of high productivity gives the typical image of rural landscape.
- ◆ Recreational opportunities especially water sports, various alternative tourism activities, such as browsing, observing flora and fauna, sports, cultural events, etc., but also education and scientific research.
- ◆ Large number of tourist accommodation and catering accommodation that meet the quality standards of conscious ecotourists and meet some demand, with a view to creating a more serious and more comprehensive tourism infrastructure.
- ◆ Good promotion of the tourism product, but there is room for great improvement.

On the other hand, there are some features which contribute to the intensity of the small tourist area.

- ◆ Water pollution from fertilizers and pesticides but also from urban waste water, pose a problem to the Natura 2000 protected area but also on the quality of bathing waters.
- ◆ The delay in the operation of organized management of solid and liquid waste.
- ◆ Shortage of qualified and skilled operators and supervisory management mechanisms, protection and conservation of the environment and especially of sensitive areas.
- ◆ Lack of environmental awareness among residents.
- ◆ Problems with roads and lighting.
- ◆ The lack of cooperation and activity among local actors and lack of economic, social and cultural design.

Admission to the **Sources of Acheron** is located about 2 km from the main road to Gliki. It is evident, however, that the settlement has been extended until there, as on the riverside there are facilities for accommodation and dining options, including rooms, restaurants and bars. These facilities operate only in summer. Admission to the Sources of Acheron is through a paved road alongside the river. Approximately 2 km, guests leave the car and follow the path through the trees. At some point the path is aquatic and moves into the waters of the river. In the

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summer, when the water is shallower, one can easily identify that rapids gush from a cave on the left bank of the river. This source is called “Cave of the Sprite”. The water coming out of the cave is very cold, affecting the overall temperature of the waters of Acheron. In the village, are the ruins of the Byzantine church of St. Donatos. St. Donatos was the bishop during the 4th century in the region of Acheron, which then was called Evroia, and built the church, ruins of which are preserved until today.

During the journey, the landscape becomes more and more impressive. Verdant slopes that descend to the river alternate with gray rocks and form the image of the canyon. The wild landscape picture persuaded the ancients to believe that the gates of Hades were at this point. The route which easily follows the visitor during the summer months, reaches to the Bridge of Dala. In other months, guests can enjoy views of the Sources of Acheron from the Ladder of Tzavelena.

Along the river, on this route, there are many restaurants and cafes where visitors can enjoy a pleasant lunch by the river.

Carrying capacity and visitor management

From the assessment and recording of the current situation, it is obvious that in the area of the Straits of Acheron rapid ecotourism development is observed. The uncontrolled exercise of tourist activities in specific areas around the river can cause problems and lead to exceeding the carrying capacity of ecosystems with severe degradation and extinction of native plants and animals.

The use of riparian forests in the Straits as parking pallets is extremely dangerous for the conservation of biodiversity. For this reason, the state should arrange and organize specific areas for this function.

Also the tourist use of the river for many types of activities associated with the water element (rafting, kayak, etc.) should be governed by rules.

How the situation will evolve in the future, the management is that has to judge through research of the acceptable level of use, ie to that point which is the carrying capacity.