

# D5.3.1 Report on example of accessibility and promotion of Adriatic Natural and cultural heritage site

PP4/IST

Virtual museum and creative center House of  
Castel in Momjan

## INTRODUCTION

TAKE IT SLOW “Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow” is a strategic project within the INTERREG VA Italy-Croatia Cross-Border Collaboration Programme from 2014 to 2020 designed to manage and promote the Adriatic region as an innovative, green, sustainable, creative, accessible trans-border destination aimed at empowerment and promotion of the concept of slow and smart tourism. The project is worth a total of 3,764,695.71 euros, of which 85 per cent co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, and 15 per cent by partner organisations

Within the project, the Region of Istria will be opening the House of Castles Visitor Centre as a contemporary architectural marker of the object of traditional architecture whose interior design reinterprets the tower and the palas of the castle. It provides innovative and multimedia interpretation of the cultural route of all Istrian castles accessible to persons with sensory impairments, combining common heritage of Adriatic trans-border regions traditionally sharing firm historical ties with Istria, most evident through the ruling patrician families that lived in Istrian castles.

## MOMJAN DESTINATION

Momjan (Italian: Momiano), a community in the north of Istria near the Slovenian border and the tourist centres of Umag, Novigrad and Buje, is known for its exceptional natural and cultural heritage and excellent wines. Border position of one of the main entry points to Croatia, proximity of strong tourist centres, proximity of major roads, exceptional natural and cultural heritage inspired the Momjan area revitalisation project as a starting point for visit and exploration of all Istrian castles.

Hot summers with long, sunny days and mild winters are the main features of extremely pleasant Mediterranean climate in the Momjan area, favourable for high quality vine and olive oil production. In addition to Malvasia, the vineyards provide internationally recognized high quality Muscat created in superbly equipped wine cellars that surrounded by exceptional nature of vineyard hills present tourist attractions. Catering relies on traditional local cuisine, and there are great opportunities for rural tourism development. The area is developing as a tourist destination under the cluster of north-western Istria, which is especially focused on the development of outdoor tourism and gastronomic visits, offering an excellent combination of running, walking, trekking and sightseeing. The diversity of the landscape is enjoyed on excursions and walks through the Momjan region in the suggestive harmonic atmosphere of human creative activity and nature.

One of the most important cultural attractions is Castle in Momjan which dominates the Dragonja valley. Momjan was first mentioned in 1035 as a settlement belonging to the Monastery

of St. Mihael near Vižinada. With the deed from 1102 Momjan castle was donated to the Patriarch of Aquileia. The construction of the fort began in the first half of the 13th century when the Patriarch ceded it to the Counts of Devin. In the following decades castle was managed by the governors of Pietrapelosa and the Counts of Goričko (Momjan is mentioned in written sources in 1307 as a castle, castrum). In the middle of the 14th century, the fortress was largely destroyed by Venice, and later rebuilt by the Habsburgs. In 1548, the castle was bought by Simone Rota for 5,550 gold ducats. The Rota family is from Bergamo, but just before buying the castle they settled in Piran. Rota divided the castle into a trapezoidal shape with a square tower where he renovated the living areas, constructed the chapel of St. Stjepan and built a new stone bridge. Until their departure in 1835, the owners of the castle were the Rota family, so it was named the Rota castle.

These were the starting points for development of Momjan Branding Project as a top cultural and gastronomic destination and as a starting point for exploring the rich heritage of typical Istrian fortified middle age city cores in the newly renovated House of Castles.

The visual identity of Momjan and Momjan area identified by interconnected values relevant for achieving an attractive and long-term sustainable destination based on natural and historical-cultural resources, which tells a unique story. Authenticity, naturalness, originality and heritage, as well as connection, are emphasized as the basic values of the destination, indicating that Momjan area carefully preserves its values from the past, but also takes into account modernity through mutual interaction between residents and visitors. A special role in the visual-verbal identity is played by the Istro-Venetian dialect appearing in traditional local sayings, important for preserving from falling into oblivion and for providing younger generations with the opportunity to learn the language of their ancestors. The key slogan "Life is sweet" communicates the unique beauty and grace of life in Momjan, affirmatively related to the general products and services of the area, but also leaves room for further upgrading the unique brand of Momjan Muscat as a product bearing a protected designation of origin.

## **HOUSE OF CASTLES**

The Visitor Interpretation Centre House of Castles presents continuation of multi-year projects of revitalization of interior of Istria and networking of thematic cultural routes and visitor centres realized by local, national, Region of Veneto and EU funds. The House of Castles is financed from the regional and City of Buje funds and TAKE IT SLOW strategic project, approved within the INTERREG VA ITALY CROATIA 2014-2020 program. The project covers wider Adriatic area, uniting the heritage of northern Italian regions which traditionally share strong cultural links with Istria, among others and ruling patrician families such as Rota family.

The House of Castles is designed as attractive and modern architectural marker of traditional architecture which originally was post office and after that dairy in the centre of Momjan. House with its interior design reinterprets tower and palace of the castle, with preservation and presentation of all traditional elements, such as walls built in dry stone technique. House of Castles is created as focal point for multimedia presentation of cultural route of all Istrian castles in the context of the fortified old city cores surrounded by exceptional natural heritage and rich gastronomic offer of northern and central Istria. The space is divided into an information and multimedia space on the ground floor and staircase, artist and residence area for artist and different experts interested in heritage on the first floor and a gallery and conference area for different creative and tourist purposes on the second floor.

Envisaged multimedia solutions will promote natural and cultural, gastro and oenological heritage of the interior of Istria and Momjan area in an innovative way, with an emphasis on Istrian castles, noble patrician families, producers of local products and services and winemakers. The interactivity of the exhibition brings visitor engagement and presentation of content with innovative IT technology, such as virtual reality, 3D historical reconstruction of the castles, 360 VR video adapted to VR glasses, VR application that allows viewing historical 3D reconstruction of the castles on real locations throughout Istria, communication adapted to people with special needs through Braille letter and 3D printed objects.

The House of Castles is designed as full of life multimedia multifunctional centre for tourists, visitors and local inhabitants that has the power to revitalize Momjan by opening a centre where visitors can communicate their creative needs through experiencing authentic local identity as a dynamic concept that combines cultural and natural heritage and contemporary creative expressions.

Center will be managed together by the Region of Istria – founder with legal right of investment, City of Buje – owner of the centre, and Naval and historical museum of Istria – responsible for activities and management after project implementation. The director, Gracijano Kešac, historian is member of advisory board and he will appoint person responsible and reallocate funds for activity implementation. Naval and historical Museum of Istria is founded and financed by Region of Istria and will ensure scientific and educational expert support, mainly historians and art historians, providing the best solutions for future functioning. One important role will have tourist association of City of Buje, Istria tourist board and tourism cluster of north and central Istria that will all be included as members of Local community of practice or expert on different meetings.

## CROSS BORDER EFFECT

Numerous medieval castles which to this day adorn the landscape of Istria are testimonies to the times when the peninsula became a distinctive European region.

These medieval buildings tell the story when Istria made up part of the Holy Roman Empire, followed by the secular lordship of the Patriarchs of Aquileia and, most crucially, the Most Serene Republic of Saint Mark – Venice. Not only did each of these powers make a lasting effect on the castles it ruled, but it also exerted a decisive impact on the course of history of Istria which emerged from the Middle Ages as a region divided into two separate parts – Venetian and Austrian.

Istrian castles attracted various elite families, primarily those from the Apennine Peninsula, i.e., Italy. Thus, the Venetian patrician Contarini family purchased power over Završje, the Morosini and Grimani family, also Venetian, held Savičenta, the Rotta family from Bergamo purchased Momjan, whereas Pazin and the belonging county were relinquished in favour of the Marquises of Montecuccoli. The historic heritage of medieval castles has clearly left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Istria. Alongside other cultural and historical legacies, it is a mark which makes this peninsula a unique European region boasting a harmonious intertwining of German, Slavic and Italo-Roman influences.

These unique historical traces were starting point for creating multimedia solutions and exhibitions in House of Castles, as well as digital and printed promotion materials, such as thematic brochure Istrian Castles, Cookbook related to Venetian cuisine influences in Istria, Calendar with planner on House of Castles, original souvenir hand made printed silk scarf with House of Castles colours and logo. Locations with castles described in promotion materials are: Momjan, Pietrapilosa, Pazin, Svetvinčenat - Morosini Grimani, Dvigrad, Grožnjan, Kršan and Kožljak, Paz with Posert, Žminj, Završje, Turnina, Stari Rakalj, Rašpor, Lupoglav, Motovun.



**PHOTOGRAPHS:**





















