

***ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXCHANGE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY
SMEs IN THE BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN REGION***

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: Montenegro Eco Adventures (MEA)



Source: <http://montenegro-eco.com/en/>

Country/region of operation: Montenegro

Sustainability dimension: environmental, economic, social

Description of the enterprise/initiative: MEA is a tourist company offering adventure holidays in Montenegro and at the same time striving to protect and preserve one of the last wilderness areas of Europe.

Social/ community impact sought: Ecotourism involves some form of activity in the natural environment such as hiking, biking, scuba diving, kayaking, etc. which are all forms of physical interaction with nature. Unfortunately, by definition “interaction” means “impact”. Increased interaction also means (the risk of) negative impact. If hundreds of visitors used the trails or mountain hikes daily, measures to limit the environmental impact would have to be stepped up and special paths would have to be constructed. If we were to consistently visit the same rural community over and over, then the social and economic impact would quickly change the “unspoiled” characteristic that made it special in the first place.

MEA believes in managing the volume of tourism to provide individually unique nature experiences that allow interaction while safeguarding the environmental and cultural heritage within Montenegro for the benefit of current and future generations.

Stakeholders: people on holiday who want to contribute to nature preservation

Approach applied: The company organizes group and individual tours, tailor-made excursions and trips but also implements projects for environmental protection and conservation. In September 2017, MEA organized the largest joint international coastal clean-up ever organized in Montenegro: 7 organizations responded to the call and together they have cleaned up 5 beaches (Kotor, Bar, Sutomore, Ulcinj and Tivat) and several trails along the Montenegrin coast. All together 136 volunteers have picked up more than 60 cubic meters of garbage on the beach and in the sea.

Innovation applied: The company is specialized in individual tailor-made tours, as well as in environmental protection and wildlife monitoring

Social impact and business results achieved: Both community involvement and, to a lesser extent, interaction with people are aspects of ecotourism often considered essential or at least important. Research shows, many hikers say they like hiking on their own, without a guide but by the end of a hike, comments are usually just the opposite. At MEA, the guides are not just about giving directions but provide detail on the geographical, social, historic, and cultural aspects of an area. They foster a deeper appreciation of the land and show clients things they would not have discovered by themselves. Most importantly, the guides give visitors a chance to get to know a hospitable, rural Montenegro. As a result the tourists' feedback is extremely positive, as well as the appreciation to the company's work.

Financial situation / sustainability of the business model: MEA believes that ecotourism, if conducted correctly, can encourage greater environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and respect (for both residents and guests).

A key role of the tour organisers is to understand the environmental impact of the activities and the steps they can take to minimise it. They favour accommodation that has a small ecological footprint, utilise local "green" transport where possible and encourage the reduction and/or recycling of waste. The offerings, created by locals (with input from community groups), aim to rotate small groups through different regions thus maximising the experience of the guests while sharing benefits between the communities. The owners and staff regularly volunteer for environmental and community initiatives. Further to this, they contribute 5 % of their profit to the environmental projects they actively support. For them, as they say, it's more about addressing the current issues and building a long term sustainable business than chasing quick profits.

Together with other organizations, MEA is involved in developing awareness of environmentally friendly rural management for farmers, sustainable resource use (fishing and timber) and programmes set up to motivate/remind people to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle etc.

They seek to ensure that the eco-tourism activities produce a continuous flow of income to keep their operations running and to continue environmental and sustainable development programmes. To be a truly sustainable eco-tourism business, they must also operate like any company in maximising profits and minimising costs.

Key success factors: Commitment, partnerships, collaboration with businesses, constant development, added value to tourist attractions

Challenges and problems: For MEA, becoming economically sustainable will mean that they must focus on marketing and promotion. This is likely to be their biggest overhead as they try to break into new markets but without it they will not ensure enough clientele to cover operational costs.

Year when the enterprise was created: 2014

References (web-site, intent links, video, etc.):

<http://montenegro-eco.com/en/>

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/montenegro.eco.adventures/about/?ref=page internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/montenegro.eco.adventures/about/?ref=page_internal)