

Editorial

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Today, bathing in the sea, sunbathing and enjoying various activities at the coast attract millions of people of all classes and ages and represent the most frequent form of spending summer holidays. Seaside promenades, hotels with sea views, restaurants and bars offering local or international food, amusement parks, entertainment centres, casinos and shops can be found at every seaside town that has recognised tourism as an opportunity for its growth and development.

The collection of articles on historic perspective on seaside tourism focuses on specific problems encountered during its development. Papers tackle issues such as the rivalry between tourism and traditional industries, impact of social and/or political factors on its development and the impact of its development on the transformation of the waterfront areas.

Compared to traditional seaside activities such as fishing, shipping or shipbuilding, seaside tourism has not a long tradition. Sea bathing was a new form of the use of the sea introduced about two centuries ago. First seaside resorts emerged in small English coastal towns in early 18th century. In his article on leisure and commerce in those first seaside resorts, Brodie discusses seaside tourism development in towns that were already established fishing or commercial ports. With increasing popularity of sea-bathing, it became necessary to build adequate infrastructure to satisfy the needs of growing number of visitors. This caused the rivalry between tourism and traditional trades for the use of the waterfront. The outcome of this dispute was not uniform; sometimes the development of commercial port pushed tourism to the outskirts of the town while in other instances tourism took over the abandoned infrastructure of cessed commercial activities.

By the 19th century, sea-bathing popularity expanded to the southern coasts of Europe. New resorts were emerging along the coasts of France, Spain, Italy and other countries. On the Adriatic, the first sea-baths were built during the first half of the 19th century in Trieste and Venice, where they invented floating bathing establishments, anchored in the sea, close to the centre of the town. The two towns were in constant competition for the prestigious title of having the finest baths and were constantly enlarging existing and adding new baths. The competition ended by the end of the century with the development of numerous seaside resorts on both shores of the Adriatic. The paper from Uroševič discusses the development of tourism on Brijuni Islands in the proximity of Pula, the major naval port of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Brijuni have developed from malaria-infested islands into an elite resort in less than two decades. Further development was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War that has put to rest many other investments along the east coast of the Adriatic as reported in Kranjčevič's paper. During the last decades of the 19th and pre-ww1 years of the 20th century, tourism experienced fast development and many investors saw their opportunity in emerging seaside resorts. Investing on the waterfront was very profitable and every year new hotels, restaurants and entertainment establishments as well as private villas were available to visitors. To gain a better understanding of the scale of tourism investments during that period, projects that were halted and/or abandoned due to the outbreak of the war should also be taken into account. These projects also demonstrate how external political factors impact on tourism development.

Tourism in Greece has followed a similar development path. After some initial developments during 19th century when visitors in Greece discovered seaside bathing, the pre-war period brought significant changes in terms of scale of investments, structure of visitors and volume of tourism business. In her paper, Kostidi presents insights into development of some early Greek spa and seaside resorts and their transformation from domestic into international destinations. The paper also focuses on changes of social structure of their visitors and discusses some governmental measures that were crucial for tourism development.

Teodosio's article discusses the process of regeneration of the waterfront within a wider geographical context and describes practices introduced in Spain and Italy. The development of urban areas around the commercial port has often set the limit to further expansion of commercial activities. Their development was thus possible only by moving commercial activity to a new location, abandoning the infrastructure close to or within the city centre. Reuse of abandoned and degraded industrial waterfront areas became a key area of urban planning. In many cities, these areas have been transformed into an attractive environment for locals and tourists alike.

Centuries ago, bringing tourism to the shores of the sea was a challenging venture. The sea was unattractive for visitors and uncompetitive to established inland thermal and spa centres. However, when seaside environment was recognised as being beneficial for health, the coast soon became a fashionable place. The aim of this set of articles is to contribute to better understanding of this early development phase of seaside tourism destinations. Learning from past experiences does provide useful knowledge needed for development of new destinations and for solving contemporary seaside tourism issues.



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