Nature and Tourism

Neverending Story?

Jakub Kašpar, The Krkonose Mts. National Park, CZ

Tourism in National Parks – threat and opportunity

Tourism in National Parks – threat and opportunity in the same time

We need tourists/visitors. Why? Tourists are our clients and also our donors (directly or indirectly). Visitors can become our ambassadors among other citizens. They can help us to explain why we need to protect nature and its diversity.

BUT

in the same time – **visitors** (especially when they are too many) **can be critical threat** to what we are trying to protect.

Solution - appropriate tourism infrastructure
        - communication
        - cooperation

Visitorship is changing

Tourism in National Parks is changing. Nowadays we really do not attract backpackers only…
- New groups of users are emerging
  – bikers (MTB, fat bikes)
  - skiers (cross-country, downhill, freeride, skitouring)
  - cars in nature
  - „adventure" infrastructure like monkey parks, etc.

What does it mean – tourism infrastructure?

Definition: Fundamental facilities and systems serving tourists in Protected Areas – and Protected Areas managers within their work with visitors – to provide them with a possibility to visit and experience the Protected Area and with an access to it.

We need both – **hard and soft** – types of infrastructure.

Examples of *hard* infrastructure: Roads, tourist trails, biking routes, resting points, camping sites, information points, visitor centres, etc.

Examples of *soft* infrastructure: Knowledge, skilled staff (educators, rangers…), well prepared and focused communication tools, educational programs, websites, media coverage…

Visitors are coming!

Protected Areas worldwide **attract 8 billion visitors a year!**

**It brings** estimated income to local economies at the level of **600 billion US$!**

But it can also endanger what Protected Areas are designed for – nature!

This is a reason why we need tourist infrastructure – to regulate numbers and „streamline" visitors, to inform them, to educate them, to make them behave in an appropriate way, to raise their awareness towards natural heritage
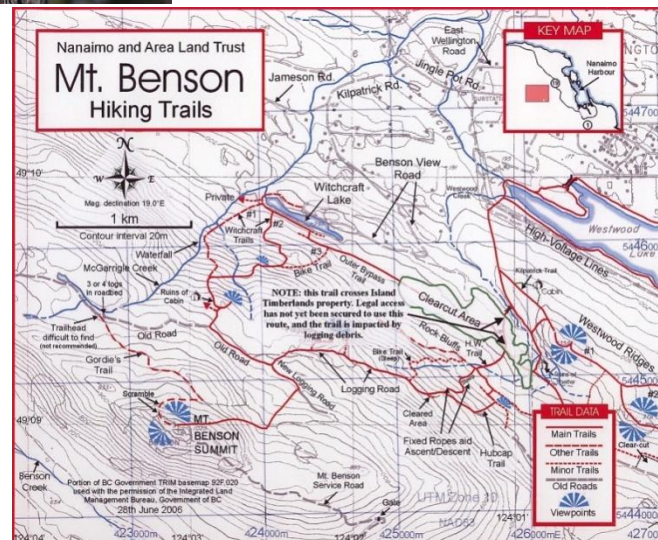
Planning tourist trails

Before you open, construct or reconstruct any kind of a tourist trail, think about the whole picture… Good planning is essential!
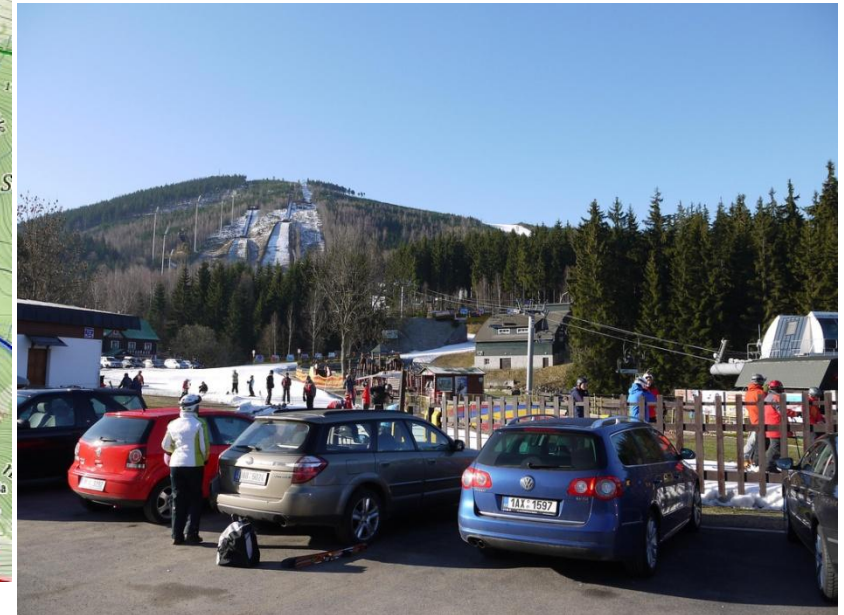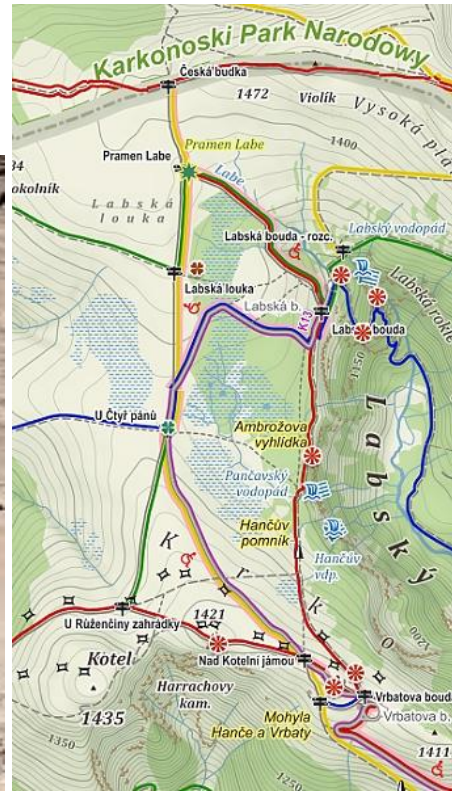
Tourist marking system

Clear, understandable and well maintained tourist marking system is essential part of any visitors management aiming at being successful.

Hard infrastructure – roads, routes and trails

Well managed trails mean also well protected nature around them

Example 1: Tourist trail in the area of Ben Nevis, Scotland
Erosion around reconstructed trail clearly visible

It is not always absolutely necessary to make trails so „smart". But it becomes of utmost importance in case of:
a) steep slopes
b) high numbers of visitors
c) in cases when the trail goes through sensitive biotops

Hard infrastructure – roads, routes and trails

Well managed trails mean also well protected nature around them

Example 2: Tourist trail in Nature Reserve Torfowisko pod Zieleńcem (Zieleniec Peatbog), Poland
Wooden construction above the peatbog surface

In case of wetland areas, such as peatbogs it is absolutely necessary – because of biotope protection as well as the safety of tourists and hydrological stability on the spot

Hard infrastructure – roads, routes and trails

Well managed trails mean also well protected nature around – but do not be TOO PERFECT!

Example 3: Sometimes it can be also helpful to use tarmac (or such kind of very durable surface) – e.g. close to towns or villages or nearby car roads.

BUT! Do not do it, if possible, in nature. Tarmac road means also barrier for water, soil, insects and soil fauna… Frequently inappropriate material is used for road basement…

Hard infrastructure – do not forget to design it well!

Do not forget that infrastructure in field should respect the shapes of nature.
Picture from Kosciuszko NP, New South Wales, Australia

Hard infrastructure – information and education in field

Information points or educational routes are your chance how to tell visitors why and what are you doing and how to participate and help you.

Pictures from Czech Protected Landscape Areas

Hard infrastructure –people can also go on-line

Modern technologies, i.e. internet and smartphone apps, can also help you to deliver your information, messages and education without putting too much infrastructure in nature.
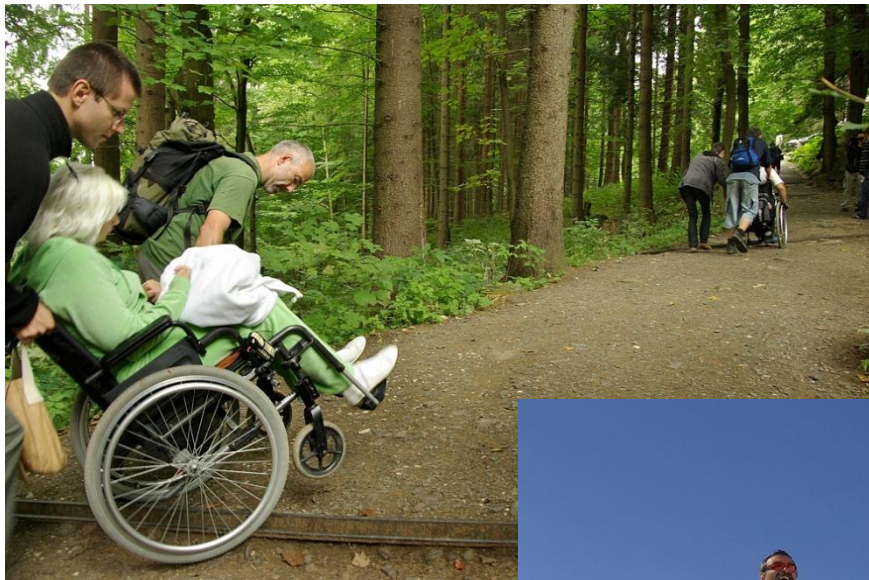
-QR codes
-Questing
-Geocaching…

It can help you solve problem of different languages (there is enough space on the net).
It allows to keep nature almost untouched.

BUT it depends on accessibility of internet connection, availability of those technologies to the significant serious proportion of visitors.

Hard infrastructure – special kinds of trails

There are always some people with special needs or wishes. We should not forget of them – either because of them or because of our aims and targets.

Pictures from Krkonose Mts. NP and Zelezne Hory PLA, Czech Rep.

Hard infrastructure – Visitor and Information Centres

Soft infrastructure – skilled staff

Rangers and educators are your ambassadors – keep them educated, trained, skilled – and satisfied.

# Soft infrastructure – efficient delivery of your message

If you want **to deliver your message**, you have to **choose a right medium** and **use an appropriate content**. Think also about **method** you want to apply.

General guidlines:
➤ Simple is often better
➤ Focus on your real target
➤ Think about your real audience
➤ Engage people as much as possible
➤ Let people touch reality

"It's more efficient to spend two days in our mountains than two months in a lung sanatorium." (Andrzej Raj, Karkonosze NP, PL)

Soft infrastructure – on-line media
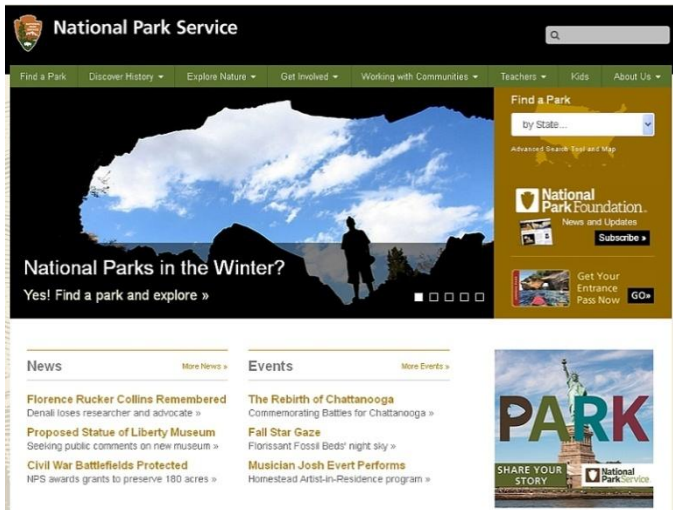
Electronic media, as well as electronic devices (especially smartphones and tablets) are more and more important part of our soft tourist infrastructure.

It is almost impossible to ignore this fact any more. Information should be appropriate for selected purpose – different for mobile app, different for social media (FB, Twitter, G+…), different for website.
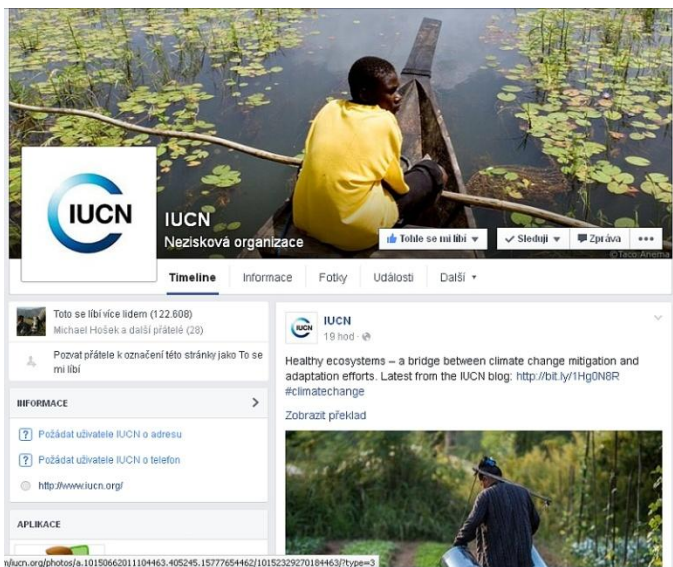
Use pictures, brief but frank and true information, try to engage people and to attract them to go from e-reality to real nature.

Communicate ♥, not ☠

Thanks for your attention!
Danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!

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