



Discover Galicica National Park: a proposal for launching a marketable environmental education program for ecotourism in Galicica National Park

Introduction

In October 2002 the *Alliance for Lake Cooperation in Ohrid and Prespa* (ALLCOOP) in partnership with six non-governmental organizations from Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro (Serbia) launched the project “*Establishing Financial Mechanisms for Conserving Biodiversity in the Balkan Region: Sustainable development through eco tourism and environmental education in protected areas*”. The project is financed by a grant of GTZ through the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). The overall objective of the project is to contribute to sustainable development of communities living in the vicinity of protected areas and the sustainability of parks, future Natura 2000 sites, in the Balkan region. The approach is to develop mechanism for sustainable public awareness raising activities on biodiversity and protected areas through incorporating environmental education (EE) in marketable ecotourism products for protected areas.

In accordance to the original plan of activities for the first phase of the project, by August 2003 ALLCOOP was expected to develop at least four environmental education products and test and assess their economic viability in the local setting. The deliverables were projected using a set of assumptions identified in the preparation phase of the project. Nevertheless, in the course of the implementation of the first phase of the project, a number of the propositions proved to be either inapplicable in the real-life setting or the expectations about the mobilization of the key stakeholders were too high. The following set of findings is indicative of the widening gap between the expected project deliverables and the actual situation in the pilot area in Macedonia:

- There is very limited number of traditional craftsmen left in the area, important for diversity of eco-tourism packages, especially for the tourists wishful to spend more than one day;
- The villages in the vicinity of national parks are losing their traditional outlook and the way of life for decades now, becoming modern, urban-looking settlements, without farms or other elements of the traditional rural landscape in this region. They are becoming more and more compatible with the demands of the mainstream tourism, and less and less appropriate for eco-tourism and other forms of alternative tourism;
- There is very limited promotion material on the natural and cultural values of the national parks both in Macedonian and Albanian and in the major foreign languages;
- The managers of the schools demonstrated modest interest for their personnel to be directly included in the implementation of the project activities;
- The large hotels and the travel agencies with their bureaus in the region were more reserved on the possibilities to include eco-tourism in their offers on packages, without additional information (e.g. presentation of the resources and infrastructure of the National Parks, foreign experience, video materials from the Bulgarian practice, etc).

Therefore, following the suggestions from the project supervisor from REC, it was agreed that it is necessary to undertake a thorough revision of the original schedule and propose changes in the plan of actions for the second phase of the project that would ensure delivery of a single, but viable EE program fulfilling, as close as possible, the originally planned expectations.

Following these directions, the project team at ALLCOOP has developed a proposal for a marketable environmental education product (EEP) that would be both, deliverable in a wider ecotourist packages expected to be developed in the near future and viable as an independent ecotourist product to be officially approved and supported by the authorities of the GNP in Macedonia.

This proposal is divided in three parts. In the first part we summarize the analysis and revision of the principle factors determining the prospects of designing an economically viable EEP aided by working theoretical framework for ecotourism and EE. In the second part we present the draft of the Discover Galicica National Park EEP. In the final section we describe the pricing methodology and the marketing strategy applied.

Background analysis

This analysis identifies opportunities and viable strategies for implementation of the second phase of the project “*Establishing Financial Mechanisms for Conserving Biodiversity in the Balkan Region: Sustainable development through eco tourism and environmental education in protected areas*” in Macedonia. The analysis departs from the original project document and builds upon the outcomes and lessons learned of the first phase of project.

The conceptual framework of this analysis

The project builds upon the understanding that marketable EEPs in national parks are directly related to ecotourism in the parks. This reflects the well-established understanding among the professionals and academics that educational component is one of the central tenets of ecotourism. On the other hand, the concepts of both environmental education and ecotourism in the literature are often loose and even obscure. Therefore, before we proceed with the analysis, it is appropriate to adopt a working theoretical framework and a set of organizing concepts to be used in the analysis.

Ecotourism in this paper means tourism that is:

- Nature-based;
- Environmentally (and culturally) educative;
- Sustainably managed;
- Involves small-scale, personalized experiences.

Thus, EE is one of the main pillars of the concept of ecotourism. However, it must be emphasized that EE alone is a much broader concept that includes both, formal education and non-formal education, and more recently has been determined by a clear orientation to ecological sustainability:

“a process of reflection and consciousness of environmental problems, leading the participation and the recovery of citizenship in decision-making, aiming at intervention through autonomous methodologies in the use of development strategies and a consequent improvement in quality of life” (Weaver 2001).

Both, EE and ecotourism can be seen as tools for protecting the environment and can be combined through:

- Development of specialized ecotourism products;
- Activities aimed at raising the awareness of visitors, improving environmental management and contributing to economic development;
- Measures in the tourist sector at the organizational level to reduce environmental impact;
- Development of tourist guides and establishment of norms of conduct directed at tourists.

This conceptualization of ecotourism, however, has limited utility in operational terms, for example the analysis of ecotourism market. Embarking on the above concept of ecotourism, any visitor to land managed along sustainable ecotourism principles can be labeled as an ecotourist, regardless of the activity the person pursued. On the other hand, it is often emphasized that visiting an ecotourist site (e.g. national park) does not make one a prospective commercial ecotourism client. Most of the visitors of ecotourist sites can consume an ecotourism experience without the need to purchase a product from a commercial operator. Thus, the existence of a market would certainly depend on availability of such ecotourism products that would offer something of added value that the visitors could not otherwise get.

These considerations bring us to the problem of planning and development of ecotourist programs or designing ecotourist products. In fact, the concepts of planning and programming together provide the necessary ingredients for the development of well-conceived ecotourism experience. There is widespread acknowledgement that planning is essential, especially in terms of developing sustainable tourism. Tourism planning has undergone significant transformation from a perspective which was decidedly economic in focus, to one which at present appears to be more holistic. The latter takes the form of comprehensive, systems planning or strategic planning. For the purpose of this analysis we adhere to the concept of strategic planning that can be characterized by the following principles:

- Develop an agreed portfolio of critical stakeholder values;
- Use critical values to articulate a broad vision for the future;
- Establish generic tool which will contribute realization of vision;
- Adopt an exhaustive evaluation of current status as a basis for future action;
- Establish specific objectives to bridge the gap between current status and generic goals;
- Assign priorities, responsibility and control systems to monitor implementation effectiveness.

The planning effort can occur at different levels, starting from international, through national, regional and sub-regional to development area land use planning, facility site planning and facility design.

Programming is a process which is concerned with generating positive experiences for tourists through an array of services which cater directly to the tourist's needs. Applied to ecotourism, this means that to be an effective service provider, the operator will increase the chances for success by: (i) tapping into anticipation stage through effective advertising; (ii) ensuring that the travel to the site is comfortable and enjoyable; (iii) exceeding the ecotourist's expectation on site through a variety of educationally based experiences; (iv) that the trip home is safe and enjoyable, with perhaps some follow-up literature on the attractions of the trip; and (v) that the reflections

are so meaningful that the tourist will either want to return to the site, continue traveling as an ecotourist to other sites, or highly recommend the site to friends and associates.

At the program planning stage, ecotourism programming should address the following themes:

- Program areas (such as nature walks, nature games, nature crafts, wildlife viewing, outdoor photography, etc);
- Program format (birding, natural history society, outdoor show, class in animal behavior, etc);
- Program setting (setting is only one criterion from which to plan and develop ecotourism program);
- Program mobility (on-site transportation, that explain various types of ecotourism experiences, such as foot travel, mountain bikes, etc);
- Program lodging.

Ecotourism in the Galicica National Park

In this section we use the conceptual framework outlined above to analyze variables of the local setting relevant to ecotourism. Also, in this section we evaluate the past experience of GNP related to EE and how does it relate to the specific objectives of this project.

The Galicica National Park occupies a vast part (227km²) of the Galicica Mountain, situated between the great natural lakes of the Balkans: Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes. These lakes and the surrounding mountains, including Galicica, comprise a distinct natural, cultural and socio-economical unit referred to as the Region of Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes. The region is divided between Albania, Greece and Macedonia. The Macedonian part of the mountain was declared a national park by the Parliament of People's Republic of Macedonia in 1958, on the grounds of its unique natural beauties, landscapes and aesthetical values as well as extraordinary reach and endemic flora and fauna.

Currently there are around 200.000 people living in the region, some 130.000 of which live on the Macedonian side. There are 14 villages laying within the park boundaries with some 4.000 citizens. Other 3 villages, laying within 1km outside the park boundaries, comprise approximately 3.000 people. About 10km eastwards is situated the city of Resen - the administrative center of the municipality of Resen with approximately 10.000 citizens, while on the north-western border lays the city of Ohrid, with approximately 50.000 citizens. The region as a whole, but particularly the city of Ohrid and its vicinity, is one of the most famous tourist destination in Macedonia. Based on the data from 1995, the number of beds for tourists in the Ohrid area was 10.000, offered by the hotels, some 7.000 in the camps and nearly 20.000 by the private accommodation. The number of overnight lodgings in 1995 was almost 400.000 in hotels, somewhat more than 250.000 in the camps and more than 700.000 in the private accommodation. These impressive numbers indicate the potential for development of tourism in the vicinity of the GNP, but also the type of tourism currently being preferred – the mass tourism.

Other economic activities based on the park's natural resources include forestry (firewood production only), livestock breeding (e.g. some 2000 sheep) and gathering of medicinal plants and plant products. Despite the existence of various economic activities relying on park's natural resources, forestry is the sole source of income for the park authorities. This is regardless of the fact that some of the most popular tourist facilities in the Ohrid area lay within the park boundaries and that, though there are no official data, the number of visitors is probably very high. However, the park authorities neither have any effective control over those activities nor may generate revenues (e.g. from taxes, renting land or facilities).

A detailed analysis of the current situation would go well beyond of the scope and focus of this paper, however, the following facts are highly indicative and suggestive for the task at hand:

- There is a lack of legal and financial means, but also political will at national level that would create enabling environment for a transition towards sustainable management of national parks in Republic of Macedonia;
- There is no management plan or any comprehensive feasibility study, defining a strategy, indicators for sustainable use of natural resources in the GNP and the like.

With regard to the first claim, it should be added that the current Law on national parks in Macedonia is being revised in the frame of the project Strengthening of the Capacity of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning financed by the European Commission. The main objective of this project is to integrate the standards of the environmental aquis of the European Union in the national laws.

As to the second aspect, until this precondition is met, any planning and programming of ecotourism activities in the GNP would be partial and unsatisfactory. The Feasibility Study for the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP) is the first document to provide some analysis of the management practices at the GNP. With respect to the tourist activities in the park, the Feasibility Study has identified a number of flaws in the management of the GNP:

- Unsuitable presentation of the natural values and tradition to the local population
- Non-organized stay of the tourists
- Absence of complete control over their activities
- Absence of financial effects from the visits of the tourists
- Low level of public consciousness of the local population and tourists and
- Insufficient education of the local population and tourists

Despite the fairly limited analysis with regard to the GNP, the Feasibility Study was instrumental in changing the attitudes of the park's authorities, other institutions of the central and the local government, NGOs and the general public about how the natural resources in the park should be managed. As a matter of fact, it was not until the start of the LOCP in 1998 that concrete steps were undertaken to improve the management of the park towards a sustainable use of natural resources. The LOCP is implemented by the environmental ministries of Albania and Macedonia and the World Bank as an implementing agency for the Global Environment Facility which provided US\$ 4.4. millions. In the frame of this project, the GNP received 30.000 USD grant for implementation of the pilot project Marking of recreational-educational trail in the Galicica National Park. Parallel to this, the authorities of the GNP worked on project development and fund rising for establishment of a visiting center in the park and development of tourist infrastructure in Korita – a popular picnic destination, located at an altitude of 1430m a.s.l. Though the experience gained since then is fairly modest and the results are still to come, these project can be seen as a landmark in the recognition of the need for a paradigmatic shift in how the GNP is management and the adoption of the principles of sustainable development.

The project Marking of recreational-educational trail in the Galicica National Park is to be completed by the end of July 2003 and therefore constitutes the most tangible starting point for analysis of programming alternatives in accordance to our project objectives. Thus, in the proceeding of this analysis we will shortly describe this project and particularly the expected

deliverables that will lay down the necessary physical and organizational preconditions for development of viable marketable environmental education product for the GNP area.

The new opportunities: marking educational-recreational trail in Galicica National Park:

The overall goals and objectives of this project can be summarized as follows:

- Introduction and promotion of ecologically sustainable tourism in the Galicica National Park;
- Suitable presentation of the natural values of the Galicica National Park;
- Introduction of alternative ways of generating incomes for protection and promotion of the nature in the Galicica National Park;
- Enhancement of the awareness of the local population, visitors and general public of the natural values of the Galicica National Park and the need for their protection and conservation.

A part of the park will be prepared and arranged for educational and recreational purposes with this project. The area dealt within this project is situated in the central plateau of the GNP, rich in natural values, easily accessible and very attractive to tourists and visitors in the region. Within the borders of the suggested area one can meet ground and underground geomorphologic phenomena, which are characteristic for this karstic area, then forest and grass communities which are extremely rich with different kinds of plants, viewing points from which one can see the huge landscape and aesthetic values of the park and the traditional way of sheep breeding and manufacture of dairy products.

The starting point of the trail is at 1.500m a.s.l. and can be reached through an asphalt road. From there the trail is going slightly downhill through the karst valley Suvo Pole, then across the karstic valley Asan Gura. Both valleys are covered by dense meadows comprising a tremendous amount of plant species, including relicts, such as *Stipa mayeri* and the relict mountain tea (*Sideritis rezeri*). This part of the trail is 4,6km long and leads to the forest house of the national park. The forest house will offer the visitors a place to rest, refresh, dine or overnight for several days.

From the forest house, the trail splits into two separate trails. The trail Asan Gura – Goga – Asan Gura has educational and recreational character. The total length of the trail is 4km, the relative height difference is 266m and the time needed is 1 hour and 30 minutes. In the beginning it crosses a beach forest, where the basic elements of a forest eco system and interaction between them can be seen. It continues through a high mountain meadow rich in medical and aromatic herbs. The meadow is surrounded by a beach forest. After the meadow the trail goes alongside the ridge towards the peak Goga (1735m). The peak has central position in the park, and is one of the best view points even though it is not the highest. From the peak both lakes and the surrounding mountains of the region of Lake Ohrid and The Prespa Lakes can be seen.

The second branch of the trail is named Asan Gura – Samatska Dupka – Asan Gura. This trail is 4km long, having relative height difference of 150m and the total time needed is 2 hours. From the start the trail goes across the karst field Asan Gura. From there it continues through beach forest, spots Sekula Jama and Tegobuka. This forest is very similar to the forest that grows under the peak Goga. Then the trail continues along the ridge Grebenine all the way to the entrance of the cave Samatska dupka. The cave Samatska dupka has been created by an underground river. It is 224m long, 6m wide and between 2 and 6m high. In the cave there are cave ornaments ('salvoes', 'draperies') On the cave floor there are very rare 'cave pearls'. The size of the cave is large enough for comfortable movements inside and with the right lighting the impressions will

be unforgettable. The entrance to the cave is closed with a gate and visits are possible with a guide from, or authorized by the park only.

In the frame of the project, a number of guides, including the park's staff, students of the faculty of Tourism and Catering in Ohrid and NGOs (ALLCOOP) will be trained in guiding organized tourists and excursions. The training will be conducted by high profile and internationally renowned trainers hired through the project Strengthening of the Capacity of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning financed by the European Commission.

The project pays a special attention to the promotion of the track and its commercial presentation to the travel agencies. To this end a package of promotion materials is being prepared by a specialized firm specialized in that kind of activities in close cooperation with the GNP authorities. These materials will include:

- A bilingual (Macedonian and English) brochure containing information about the trail and the GNP, a map (1:25.000 scale) on which the trail and the places of interest will be marked, illustrated by quality color photographs. The brochure will be printed in 1.000 copies.
- A flyer (leaflet) will contain information about the possibilities of organizing guided tourist excursions. It will be printed in 10.000 copies in color.

The presentation of the trail will be done through the following steps:

- Presentation of the trail in the local TV, Radio, and newspapers
- Distribution of leaflets through the tourist agencies
- Organized visit to the trail for the tour operators from Ohrid, Struga, Resen, representatives of the hotels of the region, journalists, students and members of the biology and geography clubs from the primary and high schools of the region and members of the NGO's in the region.

The experiences learned and prospects for ecotourism in the Galicica National Park

Taking into consideration the fact that until very recently there has hardly been any organized way of presentation of the nature and the culture of the park (e.g. hiking trails, signs and information boards, information and visiting centers or any type of brochure, leaflet e.t.c.) it would be difficult to identify an ecotourist in the park, despite of the probably enormous number of tourists and visitors in the park and its vicinity.

On the other hand, in the past the park authorities have been engaged in a number of environmental education activities that can be labeled as 'Galicica National Park as a classroom' ('park as a classroom'). Most of them were one day-excursions regularly organized by the schools, independently or with limited involvement of the park's staff. The primary schools in Macedonia are obliged to organize outdoor classes for their students several times a year; these excursions are obligatory to all students. In the course of the last year GNP authorities took over the initiative and offered a number of schools programs tailored to their demands, expectations or financial capabilities. As we learned from the GNP authorities, despite of the campaigning and improved organization, the response from the schools was rather limited. In the view of the authorities the main reason for the limited interest was the poor economic situation in Macedonia. In many instances a large number of the parents were not able to pay for such type of excursions (app. 7 EUR) and the schools usually lack funds to subsidize the participation of their students or at least of some of them.

Most of the findings from first phase of implementation of this project coincide, confirm or supplement the results from the preceding part of this analysis. In conclusion, there are a number

of obstacles to development of ecotourism in the GNP that in turn limits the possibilities for developing marketable EEPs. Some of these obstacles operate at higher levels (national laws, poor economic performance of the country and region as a whole, low influx of foreign tourists due to the decade-long conflicts and political instability in the region, etc.). Some of them originate directly from the established management practices in the GNP that resist the deep paradigmatic shift in understanding the nature conservation and the notion of sustainable development. On the other hand, the very concept of ecotourism is relatively recent and there are still serious differences among the practitioners and academics over the basic concepts of ecotourism. In Macedonia this is exacerbated by the absence of national strategy for tourism development in general and for ecotourism in particular, as well as by the inexistence of management plan for the GNP.

While this project lacks the means to influence the high levels, certain actions are feasible even without having a strategic plan or sufficient knowledge of the different factors determining the success or a failure of our action. The approach we propose is to adhere to the principles of adaptive management and the precautionary principle. The approach allows learning as we act, and gradually improve the performance of our incremental actions. In practical terms, we should not strive to bring as much tourist as possible before we know, for example, the carrying capacity of the park or identify the ecosystem components most sensitive to tourism activities, or before there is agreement between the stakeholders over the conservation strategy. Furthermore, in developing ecotourism we need to have proper social impact assessment or before we invest our scarce financial resources we provide a market analysis to build upon. In the case of the GNP most of these preconditions are not fulfilled or they are only partially addressed. The strategy adopted here entails sustained commitment over a long period and helps avoid irreversible damages and flaws. This strategy has build-in monitoring and evaluation strategy based on tangible and measurable indicators. Finally, it takes into account the identified constraints but also builds upon the experience gained in the area (in the past or in the course of this project) as well as on the experience of the other NGO partner organizations of this project and the published experiences elsewhere.

The main pillars of the strategy are in concordance with the stated preferences of the GNP authorities perceived to be the crucial stakeholder at this stage. Given the current situation in the pilot area providing for a wider participation of stakeholders appeared to be too ambitious plan at the moment. The environmental education package presented in the next section is directly related to that strategy. It has provisional character and was designed to evolve over time as we gather experience or there is a more enabling environment at different levels. In the course of this project, through a repeated testing and enhancement of the product more of the stakeholders will be involved at incremental rate. Among the first to be involved are tourist agencies, tour operators and the large hotels in the region of Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lake.

Product Description

The environmental education program Discover Galicica National Park offers a study tour to the central plateau of the Galicica Mounting massif, along the recreational-educational trail of the GNP. The program will be delivered by trained and certified guides knowledgeable of the natural and cultural values of the Galicica Mountain and the places along the trails. The program is suitable for schoolchildren from the age of 9 to 12 forming a group of 14. When purchasing the product, the customers will be able to choose between the two groups (maximum 7 visitors each) and visit one of the two optional trails: the Goga Peak hiking trail and the Samatska Dupka Cave hiking trail.

The visitors choosing the Goga Peak trail will be able to climb the Goga peak (1735m a.s.l.) and have marvelous view over the entire region of Lake Ohrid and the Prespa Lakes. On the way to the peak and back the visitors will be able to recognize different ecosystems (forest, high mountain meadows) and understand the relationships among the organism and between the organisms and the non-living environment.

During the trip, the visitors choosing the Samatska Dupka Cave trail will learn how to recognize geological features and understand the use of maps and compasses that help them in travel safely in a mountain. The visitors will be also able to visit the Samatska Dupka Cave – the only cave in the region adapted for visitation – and understand how the different ornaments (salvoes, draperies, cave pearls) were formed.

The program includes comfortable transportation to the site and back from the city of Ohrid, Struga and Resen, in Macedonia or the city of Pogradec and the Visiting Center of the Prespa National Park (in Mala Gorica) in Albania. The total duration of the trip is 7 hours; three hours are needed for the travel to the spot and back and 4 hours to hike the trail. The visitors are advised to bring food and drinks and wear suitable clothes (a hat, long pants, and hiking boots). The program is delivered from May throughout the end of October.

The program is supported by an information package that includes the following items:

1. Discover Galicica Mountain information leaflet
2. Discover Galicica Mountain Guidebook
3. Galicica National Park Information Package
4. Visitor's Evaluation Form
5. Guides' Checklist

The Discover Galicica Mountain information leaflet

The "Discover Galicica Mountain" information leaflet is the central marketing tool of the product. The leaflet will be printed in two versions: Macedonian (600) and English (200). It contains three types of information (for details see Attachment I):

- Description of the setting, duration of the trip, the means of transportation to the site, and recommendations to the visitors;
- Overview of the program activities (two sub-programs);
- Contact Information (GNP and ALLCOOP).

The leaflet will be mainly distributed to tourist agencies for wider distribution. A smaller number of copies of the leaflet will be distributed directly by the GNP and ALLCOOP.

The Discover Galicica Mountain Guidebook

The Discover Galicica National Park Guidebook contains the details of all aspects related to the field trip, including the themes to be taught to the visitors, description of activities, etc. It is mainly designed to aid the guides in delivering the program. Also, it will help the GNP, ALLCOOP, tour operators or tourist agents in the presentation and marketing of the program. It is envisaged that the Guidebook will be particularly useful for marketing the product before the schools (teachers).

The Guidebook contains the following information (see Attachment II):

- Program Level
- Program Objectives

- Curriculum Tie-ins
- Program Setting Brief
- Getting Prepared for the Study
- Field Study: Activity Guide

In addition, the Guidebook will be a useful to teachers, NGOs, other organizations and businesses in organizing field studies on their own or adapting the program to other settings.

The Galicica National Park Information Package

The Galicica National Park Information Package comprises publications (leaflets, brochures, books, maps, etc.) issued by the park authorities. Currently the Info-package will include the publications prepared under the Marking of Recreational-educational Trail in Galicica National Park project (see above).

The Visitor's Evaluation Form

The Visitor's Evaluation Form is specifically designed to find out if the program is meeting the expectations of the visitors (students), detect organizational weaknesses and identify opportunities to continuous improvement and enhancement of the program.

The Guide's Checklist

The Guide's Checklist (see Attachment IV) is prepared to aid the guides in the preparation of the field study with respect to the materials used in the course of the trip (e.g. hand lenses, papers, pens, maps, the number of each of the items, etc.).

Product's Marketing Strategy

Pricing

At the heart of the pricing rests the need to price accordingly to the ecotourist's ability or willingness to pay. Other factors that should be taken into consideration when determining price are the demand for the program, an understanding of what competitors are charging, etc. While some destinations are simply out of the financial range of some people, more reasonably priced ecotours may become even more reasonable through a system of variable pricing in order to access as many potential buyers as possible. What this means is that a number of programs may be offered in the same setting and focused on the same activity but which differentiate on the basis of time, conveniences, and specific guarantees.

The Discover the National Park Galicica program was designed in a way to allow certain variable pricing and therefore widen the range of potential buyers. The minimal variant of the program (14 visitors) and the related pricing is shown in Table 1. The target group for this variant is limited to tourists that can reach the forest house Asan Gjura on their own. The transportation to the site is quite a delicate issues because of the unpaved and difficult road across the Suvo Pole karstic field long 4.6. km. Thus it is expected that this will be the smallest portion of the market. On the other hand it opens an opportunities for tour operators to arrange the transportation on their own and gives a way to market competition.

The next (customized) version of the package (see Table 2) is expected to be the most favorable to most of the potential buyers. It differs from the minimal version in the provision of transportation to and from the place of departure (the wider area of the region) to the site.

The optimal variant of the program includes on-site provision of food and drinks for the visitors. The services provided in this variant of the product and the related pricing are shown in Table 3.

The original program consist of two optional and independent sub-programs that are put together in order to reduce the operational costs related to transportation services. Thus it is easily to adapt it for smaller groups of customers willing to pay a higher price. The services and the related pricing for this 'specialized' variant of the product are shown in Table 4.

Table 1. Services and related pricing provided by the minimal version of the of the Discover Galicica National Park ecotourist package

Service	N ^o of Units	Unit Cost (MKD)	Cost (MKD)
Guides	2	1200	2.400
Tax to the GNP	1	1000	1000
Transportation (4WD vehicle provided by the GNP)	1	700	700
Consumables	variable	200	200
Total			4.300 (70,5 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14)			300 (5 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14) including provision for the tourist agent (700 MKD)			360 (6 EUR)

Table 2. Services and related pricing provided by the customized version of the Discover Galicica National Park ecotourist package

Service	No of Units	Unit Cost (MKD)	Cost (MKD)
Guides	2	1200	2.400
Tax to the GNP	1	1000	1000
Transportation (4WD vehicle provided by the GNP)	1	700	700
Consumables	variable	200	200
Transportation (minivan)	1	3.500	3.500
Total			7.800 (127 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14)			560 (9 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14) including provision for the tourist agent (700 MKD)			600 (10 EUR)

Table 3. Services and related pricing provided by the optimal version of the Discover Galicica National Park ecotourist package

Service	No of Units	Unit Cost (MKD)	Cost (MKD)
Guides	2	1200	2.400
Tax to the GNP	1	1000	1000
Transportation (4WD vehicle provided by the GNP)	1	700	700
Consumables	variable	200	200
Food and drink	1	200	2800
Transportation (minivan)	1	3.500	3.500
Total			10.600 (173 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14)			760 (12,4 EUR)
Cost per visitor (14) including provision for the tourist agent (700 MKD)			800 (13,2 EUR)

Table 4. Services and related pricing provided by the 'specialized' version of the Discover Galicica National Park ecotourist package

Service	No of Units	Unit Cost (MKD)	Cost (MKD)
Guides	1	1200	1.200
Tax to the GNP	1	1000	1000
Consumables	variable	200	200
Food and drink	1	200	1400
Transportation (minivan)	1	3.500	3.500
Total			7.300 (120 EUR)
Cost per visitor (7)			1.040 (17 EUR)
Cost per visitor (7) including provision for the tourist agent (700 MKD)			1140 (19 EUR)

Marketing and Implementation

Respective of the constraints outlined in the previous sections, but also due to the limited experience hold by the experts in ALLCOOP and the GNP authorities, the implementation and marketing strategy for the product will involve successive rounds of testing and data analysis, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Major steps in the development cycle of the Discover Galicica National Park program

1. Preliminary field-testing. The program will be delivered to a group of 14 visitors from the target population with interview, observation and survey data collected and analysis.
2. Main program revision. Based on results of preliminary field test.
3. Main filed testing. The product will be delivered to three groups. Pre-and post-program quantitative data will be collected; the results will be examined with respect to the program objectives.
4. Operational revision of the program. This will be conducted on the basis of the main field test.
5. Operational field-testing. The program will be delivered to about twice as many clients as in Step 3. Interviews, observation and survey data will be collected and analyzed.
6. Final revision of the program. Based on the results of the operational field test.
7. Dissemination and implementation. Program shared with others and implemented.

The process will be combined with a gradually increasing involvement of stakeholders other than the GNP authorities. Initially the product will be offered by the GNP authorities and ALLCOOP to the local tourist agencies, schools and NGOs. Potential visitors will be also able contact directly the GNP authorities and/or ALLCOOP to obtain further information and/or make reservations. In addition, ALLCOOP will launch a limited media campaign on the local electronic media to advertise this product. During the testing period most of costs will be covered by the project budget and the in-kind contribution of ALLCOOP and the GNP authorities and the product will be delivered to the visitors free-of-charge.

The official promotion of the educational-recreational trail by the GNP authorities to be organized in August 2003 will be used as a springboard for the program developed under our project. The subsequent media campaign under this project will be also coordinated with the GNP in order to sensitize as large population of customers as possible by the end of the project. The final step of the program-planning schedule will occur during the last month of the season for the product (October) and there will be no real opportunity to assess the response from the market. Moreover, we believe that it would be necessary to subsidize the marketing of the project over an extended period (throughout 2004) before a sufficient level of confidence is build and the product is established on the market.