

# From Two Swimming Pools to 156, is Imotski Becoming the Croatian Tuscany?

By Daniela Rogulj, 31 Jul 2017, 09:21 AM [Travel](#)

**KAKO JE IMOTSKA KRAJINA POSTALA NOVA HRVATSKA TOSKANA** Vlasniku prvog bazena u gradu govorili su daje lud. Danas ih ima 156

Braco Ćosic

30.07.2017. u 23:06



**In 2007, there were five or six holiday homes and two swimming pools in the Imotski region. Today, there are 156 holiday homes and swimming pools.**

In the mid-90s, Imotski construction entrepreneur Sime Medvidovic would look at his deserted, abandoned, and neglected hometown on the northwestern edge of the town of Imotski. After

setting focus on a native stone house that was covered in brambles and blackberry, an idea would spark that would transform Imotski 20 years later, reports Jutarnji List on July 30, 2017.

Not only did Medvidovic thoroughly renovate the house and garden in Imotski, but he also built a swimming pool, right there, in the middle of the karst, in a village that was abandoned and had no water. Though his neighbors, friends, and tourists thought his plan was completely absurd, Medvidovic was determined to explain, at least to those that wanted to listen, the many advantages of these old abandoned villages.

"You will see that one-day Imotski and Inland Dalmatia will flourish and that rural tourism will be the primary driver of the development of the Imotski region. This is the place for guests looking for peace, clean air, healthy food, relaxation, walking, cycling and hiking trails. After all, in these old stone houses, it is necessary to set up all the facilities that people from western countries are accustomed to. Therefore, there will be Jacuzzis, wine cellars, gyms, and, of course, swimming pools. This is the most important object," Sime said.

More than 20 years after the construction of the first swimming pool, Imotski, from Biorina in the west to Slivna in the east, was invaded by blue rectangles -swimming pools. Many old houses have been renovated and many new holiday homes have been built. Specifically, more than 160 of them, in rural areas, in the town of Imotski. And, as expected, almost all of these facilities have pools. The people of Imotski took out loans, dug into their family safes, borrowed money, and some even used state support for construction.

In 2007, there were five or six holiday homes and two swimming pools in the Imotski region, with only 2,600 overnights achieved that year. Last year, there were 47,100 overnight stays and 130 holiday homes and 124 swimming pools built.

This year, there are 156 holiday homes, with approximately just as many swimming pools. Forecasts firmly suggest that this year, the number of overnight stays in the area could exceed 70,000, and by 2018 the number should reach 100,000, with the addition of some twenty new pools next to renovated or newly built homes.

"The expansion of swimming pool construction is something new in Imotski, but it is certainly worth it," said the director of the Tourist Board of Imotski, Luka Kolovrat. People realized that by building the tunnel of Sv. Ilija through Biokovo, guests from any corner of Imotski could reach the sea at the Makarska Riviera in less than twenty minutes - and that's when tourism finally happened.

"You know, I was building a pool next to my house, advertised it through an agency, and then something incredible happened," said Marko Mendes, a renter from Imotski. "Foreign guests, especially those from Western European countries, were delighted. They simply have no interest in going to the sea and that 20 minutes of driving. They enjoy the peace that is guaranteed here, the beautiful nature. They walk around the surrounding hills all day, bathe in the pool and they are happy. Although it's not in the description of their stay program, we serve them domestic meals. They are delighted. This year I will be full for a dozen weeks and I will earn enough to properly repay the home renovation loan and build a pool, settle down, and still have something left. I think that Imotski and Inland Dalmatia, in general, has an incredible chance in this tourist offer."

Most holiday renters have had similar experiences. "My guests were from Poland and when they rated the quality, cleanliness, comfort, location, amenities, staff, value for their money, and pool, my holiday home got all 10/10," said Ivana Bikic from the village of Bikic in the municipality of Zagvozd.

Imotski is experiencing a tourist boom. This is not only visible from the number of overnight stays and reservations for the following season, but from the reactions of the holiday guests.

"This is my first time in Croatia. We chose Imotski because we went through the details of what it was like, we looked at the house for rent, and we decided to come," explains a French tourist who was with six other family members on vacation in Cista Veiika.

"My whole family is fascinated by what we have experienced. Listen, we come from Lyon, from central France, and we know what the interior is like. But here you have everything that characterizes the space away from the sea, and yet everything is so close. What is particularly delightful about it is the nature and peace, the silence to rest your eyes and soul. We swim in the pool and walk for hours. If there were more restaurants to try, that would make it even better. We can't even spend the money we had planned for the vacation," they added.

In Imotski, tourism simply happened - it did not grow organically. Apart from fantastic facilities, pools, gymnasiums, trails, and good food, the off-season offer is at zero. There are no domestic and small taverns; there are no restaurants, diners, souvenir shops, and no cultural and sporting events. Guests who actually want to spend money have no place to do it.

Apart from excellent results in the summer season and announcements for even better years to come, the hospitality industry remains stagnant. Homes and pools, however many, will have to support the enogastronomic offer. While this is an ideal opportunity to connect with small family OPGs that produce healthy and fresh food, what are the other plans, if any, to make the most out of the tourism offer?

What will happen next? Only time will tell.