

A modern net of paths for every type of hiking: new possibilities in order to discover and to promote a protected area

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The recreational and protected areas are increasingly undertaking a social uncton toward becoming a real destination for holidays and travel equal to famous tourist locations. In Italy this type of “green ecotourism” is spreading as an alternative type of tourism enabling it to repopulate the countryside and to exploit the history and culture of rural territories. To demonstrate how hiking in general can be a way to discover and to promote a protected rural area from the perspective of a tourist point of view, one of the most beautiful Italian areas, has been examined, the Casentino Valley in Tuscany.

The work has been developed in its first phase on a topographic map, taking into consideration the points of interest for tourists (castles, churches, etc.), every kind of accommodation structure (bed and breakfast, holiday farm, hotels, etc.) present in the area and then the location of the better path that can connect these tourist places with the different types of lodgings. In the second phase every interesting point has been individualized and registered by G.P.S. directly on the field. In conclusion to have a good hiking net, all data have been elaborated on the computer with the G.I.S. software. It's very important to locate the best path that at the same time is adapted to being covered by horse, trekking, mountain-bikes and when the path is flat also skis. To realize a rational net of tracks and paths, some infrastructures must be put in place to support the different needs of excursionists. The project has foreseen the restoration of disused rural buildings present on the paths like rest places, An important final research, is the net of paths (500 km) that are composed by one big ring surrounding the ridge of the mountain, another little one on the flat , and many connections that form other small rings of one day travel. Projected also are historical or nature itineraries in particular important places such as old villages and beautiful nature sites. This net included 90 percent of the lodging structures and interesting places for the tourist, which can be the base to create a plane of tourism and hospitality for the entire Casentino valley. Thanks to the possibility to discover a territory in so many different ways (trekking, horse, mountain-bike and sky) and to create an efficient connection of the several tourist beauties, and attractions in the territory, it's also possible to have tourist presences in every season and to lengthen the time of the visiting tourist who arrives in this part of Tuscany.

Key-words: hiking-tracks, rural tourism, protected area, economic development.