

ERASMUS+ group talks to the accommodation director of Bluesun Hotels Mr Vinko Martinić



Vinko Martinić is a director of accommodation at the Bluesun Hotels (Elaphusa, Borak and Bonaca) and resorts located in Bol, island of Brač in Croatia. Having attended the University of Rijeka, he is an economist specialized in hotel management, with years of professional experience in a prestigious hotel business. He has been at the head of the hotel for already 10 years and has gained excellent leadership skills and advanced understanding of financial operating procedures. During the time of him being at the head of the hotel, it has received the award for the best wellness hotel in Croatia for 2017.

We talked to him about tourism, customers and sustainability in his hotels.

- **What does your job entail?**

So, my primary task is to ensure that everything goes without any problems. The thing is that each customer has their special needs which we need to fulfil and I can't do anything by myself. We have an entire team, we meet each day and we discuss about everything. That is what my job is, making sure everything goes as planned. Our owner has to be satisfied, we have to reach our goals and we have to satisfy our customers. These are the main things we do.

- **In the last two years, tourism market has suffered a lot due to the pandemic, how did you navigate that turbulent period, and have you developed some new skills thanks to that experience?**

Definitely. It was really hard, especially in this tourism business. What we did is we adapted. We listened to the professionals and we tried to create safe environment. This is what is the most important, to make our guests feel safe. What we learned is how hygiene can be brought to a really high level. What is interesting is that none of our guests were afraid. They



came to the hotel with 700 other people, they wore masks and followed the instructions, but their habits didn't change that much.

- **Referring to the previous question, what kind of services are a must for tourists now and are you able to meet their needs?**

You can't offer them just sun and sea, they are demanding additional activities. We are blessed that we have sea here and that we have a lot of water sports available and it is not a problem for us to give that. Besides, we have to be really careful about what the reactions of our guests are. We are always online, reading what they want. As I have already mentioned before, everyone has something different that they want, so we can't offer just one thing and let it be.

- **What is your position on the hotel market and what is the most effective way of promoting your hotels?**

Social media and OTA (online tourist agency). We also operate with tourist agencies because they guarantee you six or seven months of guests which is important for prolonging the season. Our goal is, when someone searches "vacation in Bol", Bluesun to be on at least first page. Because we are a hotel chain, we need to be visible.

- **What are your ways of entertaining people, forms of recreation services provided and how do they stand out from the others?**

We have a lot of additional activities. Other hotels don't, because we are a resort and we can offer a lot of things. We have junior activities, babysitting, a lot of outdoor sports like tennis, a lot of water sports. I do not know any sport that we are not working on. In terms of health, we have a wellness center. We were a wellness hotel of the year in Croatia in 2018 and this is what stands out. Our wellness center has 1000 sq meters, which makes it the largest in this part of Croatia. For three years in a row, we were in the top three wellness hotels in the country.

- **A lot of hotels nowadays are developing the concept of sustainable tourism. Are your hotels going towards that direction?**

This is also one thing that our guests want to see. Whatever we do, we always think about how that will affect our environment. But it's not only about that, it is about profiting. We have to be sustainable not only because of the environment, but because of energy consumption.

- **What do you do to develop the concept of sustainable tourism, give us some examples?**





We are really looking how to reuse all our resources that can be used. We also cooperate with local producers, especially here on the island. Everything that we sell is made here on Brač. Unfortunately, we don't hire many people from this island. It would be great, but it is just not possible. Sadly, not many young people nowadays work in this business and I hope this trend will change because this kind of workers are the best. If you bring a foreigner to work here, they will not know how to advise a customer when they ask them something about the island, because they are not from here. If a tourist asks where can they go and eat something that's traditional, those workers won't know how to tell them that. I understand that the young are seeking for bigger opportunities, but I hope they will someday start coming back to their island.

- **Do you take any inspiration or ideas for improvement from other hotels you have seen?**
That is always the way. Not just us but other hotels take inspiration from us. We are travelling, we are observing, and we are reading the comments of the guests to see what the trends are.

- **What hotels are the leading ones when it comes to the sustainability of tourism?**
Entire Valamar chain, they are really putting a lot of effort in this and to promote themselves in this. But we are also close, we are walking the same path.

- **How can you prevent hotels using sustainability as a marketing tool? As a customer, how can we trust they really are what they say they are?**
Because you cannot trick them. Maybe you can once, but they know what they see. For example, if we use non abrasive detergents for cleaning their rooms, they will smell it. It is not something you can cover up just like that. In tourism this is interesting, what you write down you need to provide. They are really sensitive about it, they are paying for it and if there is something missing they get really mad.

- **Are you satisfied with current level of sustainability and quality of your service?**
There is always place for improvement, but personally I am satisfied. We have our direction and we are going towards it, we develop and that is the most important thing.

