



## GOOD TO KNOW – SPECIAL MARCH 2019



### **1<sup>st</sup> F.I.C.C. WORLD CONGRESS IN LISBON /PORTUGAL ON 22 and 23 NOVEMBER 2018**

A total of around 110 participants from Europe and Asia attended the first World Congress organised by the F.I.C.C. on the topic of “The Future of Tourism and Camping is NOW”. There were two days of interesting contributions and intensive exchanges of ideas from representatives of the ECF (European Caravan Federation), EFCO-HPA (European Federation of Camping Owners), WTO-UN Ethics Commission, Orbitur (P), CIVD (Caravaning Industrie Verband Deutschland), OITS (Organisation Internationale du Tourisme Social), Campercontact (NKC-NL) Thetford (NL), Tonko (NL), speakers from Slovenia and Spain, as well as representatives of the F.I.C.C. clubs: FFCC(F), SF Caravan(FIN), Caravan Club of Sweden (S) and The Camping and Caravanning Club of Great Britain and Ireland (GB).

The presentation of awards for the best campsites took place on Friday afternoon.

A gala dinner with classic music, Fado and the Estudantina Universitária de Lisboa (Lisbon University Students Group), including singing, dancing and entertainment to conclude the evening was very much enjoyed by everyone, with the musical contributions helping to create a very friendly atmosphere among the guests and participants.

The climax of the social programme for this congress was a short sightseeing tour of Lisbon on the Friday afternoon and a well-organised excursion to Sintra on 24 November, taking in the Palace of Pena and Palace of Queluz.

## **Conclusions**

At the end of this successful event, F.I.C.C. President Joao Alves Pereira expressed his gratitude to all of those attending and to the Organising Committee, Mr. Stan Stolwerk from NKC and Mrs. Silvia Brohl from the F.I.C.C. Secretariat, who actively supported him from the very beginning.



He also thanked Mr. Jerko Sladoljev from Croatia, President of Top Camping d.o.o., who was unfortunately unable to attend the Congress for health reasons, but who had been very enthusiastic about the idea of bringing representatives from industry, consumers and campsite operators together.

The President mentioned that Mr. Sladoljev did a fantastic job promoting the Congress, resulting in many participants coming from Croatia.

He stated the big challenge for F.I.C.C., i.e. to bring together so many important and responsible people involved in camping tourism, and lauded the number of interesting presentations held during the one and a half days.

One of the important conclusions the President pointed out was the fact that open-air tourism is a reality and does not harm nature. Camping is green and campers protect the environment, love the freedom it brings and would have absolutely no intention of destroying those places where they feel comfortable and where they spend their free time. It's their lifestyle.

Mr. Pereira stated especially that everybody has to stick to the rules and legislation, because national and local rules are important in our everyday lives, and therefore also in tourism and camping.

The President talked about wild camping that is forbidden and pointed out that parking a motorhome somewhere does not mean that person is really camping. It might be wonderful to be on a beach with the motor caravan and enjoy the sunset, but this is not correct and mostly against the rules, unless you just park and afterwards move to an officially recognized campsite or authorized camping area.

He talked about the importance of campsites adapting to the needs of the growing numbers of campers and the necessary infrastructure that has to be in line with different needs of various types of campers.

He also commented on today's fast-paced world, the quick changes and the necessity for people to calm down and relax.

In the past, changes were very time-consuming, sometimes taking years for them to be carried out. But today we live in a fast-moving world and changes only take weeks, days or even hours to be implemented. Social networks immediately create problems or solutions. We have to adapt to constant changes, but we have to understand and know how to be active, but also how to calm down. Be flexible because we are humans and not machines.

It is necessary to turn off the computer and the telephone and to say to yourself, « now it is time to relax », and go CAMPING! Being in nature, absorbing its energy, enjoying this free time together with friends and families - that is real camping, that is the reason why it has become so popular, especially in the last few years.

The President also referred to the economic aspect of camping, the changes in economic growth, responsibility and political weight.



There were a lot of worries about the different crises over the last few years, though many campsite operators among the audience confirmed that their business is doing well and even growing.

Camping is not a minority economic activity - it is a very important tourism activity for millions of people around the world and is growing because it is a way for all kinds of people to be involved in tourism. And, due to our fast way of life, always moving and busy, we need to relax and rest and therefore need more and more contact with nature to boost our energy.

He pointed out that campers represent millions of voters and that politicians need to keep an eye on them, because they are responsible consumers. It is not a small group; campers contribute to the global and local economic growth in every conceivable way. When campers travel, they spend their money not only at the campsite, they also go to restaurants, visit museums, go sightseeing and shopping like any other tourist.

The camping market is growing and young people, young families and special groups like scouts or traditional campers really love camping with a tent. Caravanning may be on the wane for the moment but, in contrast, motorcaravanning is growing. Nowadays, newcomers start directly with motorcaravanning or stay in mobile homes on campsites. Another topic the President approached was the change in vacation planning and the flexibility with regard to when people take their holidays. In Europe, everyone wants to go on holiday in the high season, July – August, but long holidays of 2 to 3 weeks - as it used to be - are less and less popular. During these two months, the infrastructure of the resorts is completely overloaded, prices are correspondingly high, congestion on motorways is a fact and queuing up at airports and train stations are a reality.

Why do we concentrate on these months? More and more young people tend to take a short vacation to escape the unpleasantness of the high season or enjoy a city break throughout the year. Extended weekends are an option to get away for 4 days or so and they do this more often during the year.

The President concluded by referring to cooperation with members and other organisations, i.e. E.C.F. being close to the EU. When presenting or defending a document to the European Commission, E.C.F. and F.I.C.C. get in touch with each other, analyse it and then F.I.C.C. decides whether to support it or not. It is really important to cooperate, regardless of who does the lobbying in the European Commission, it is important that things are done.

This is good for the consumer when industry standards for safer caravans and motor caravans or lower emissions are imposed. We, consumer-defending organisations, feel and we are responsible for safety, so good products for sustainable tourism are very welcome.

Teamwork with O.T.I.S. and in the very near future also with United Nation World Tourism Organization is therefore so important. Twenty years ago, F.I.C.C. was an active associate member of this institution. If we look at the listed members, there is no organisation that





represents camping. Cooperation enables us to have a voice and input into this international world organization. F.I.C.C. represents responsible, sustainable and ethical tourism for all campers worldwide.

Clubs and Federations need to adapt to this modern way of tourism, to the changes concerning the perception of holidays, of club gatherings/meets, club life and what they offers for their members. More and more people are camping, and they are usually not focused on the traditional values of associations and clubs. They expect modern, interesting and dynamic proposals, a new type of club membership, such travel arrangements, family entertainment, and interesting offers for young people, and so many other possibilities.

Some clubs have successfully implemented digital membership or different kinds of membership and more “community thinking” instead of “individual member thinking”. There are probably consumers who are only interested in certain parts of the product and not in the membership package as a whole. Adjustments and changes inspired by F.I.C.C. members are necessary to face a bright future.

If a person is going camping for the first time, he/she knows immediately - or at least very soon - whether they like it or not, there is no “in between” but in any case, it will be an experience that will remain in everybody’s memory, preferably in a good way.

The President ended his conclusions by underlining the most important point of this Congress, which was the good and interesting input and support from all the participants.

The ideas shared over the last one and a half days will likely guide everyone and also F.I.C.C. to adapt for the future challenges. F.I.C.C. wishes to remain open-minded and continue to develop in the coming years into an even more modern organisation in order to represent its members all over the world and deal and cooperate with all other organisations in the camping movement so as to create a healthy, stable, sustainable and better world for future camping generations.

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