



Culture, Tourism and Well-being:

From Heritage to Healing

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**Culture, Tourism and Well-being:
From Heritage to Healing**

*October 22–23, 2026
Croatian Natural History Museum,
Zagreb, Croatia*

DAY 1 _ Thursday, 22 October 2026

DESIGNING FOR WELL-BEING IN CULTURAL TOURISM EXPERIENCES

09:00–09:30 REGISTRATION

09:30–10:05 OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome Address

Marta Šveb Dragija, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia
Conference Chair

Opening Remarks

Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

Maria Manuela Martins Guerreiro, PhD

CinTurs – Research Centre for Tourism, Sustainability and Well-being, Portugal

Iva Mihoci, PhD

President of the Governing Board, Croatian Natural History Museum

Matija Dronjić

ICOM Croatia

Official Opening

Dražena Vrselja

State Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia

10:05–10:45 OPENING KEYNOTE

Designing Cultural Experiences for Well-being: From Psychological Evidence to Practice

Marta Šveb Dragija, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

Keynote speaker introduced by Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, PhD, IRMO.

10:45–11:05 COFFEE & TEA BREAK

11:05–12:20 PANEL 1

Designing Cultural Experiences for Well-being

Exploring how cultural spaces, narratives, technologies and experience design can create meaningful, emotional and transformative encounters.

Chair: Iva Mihoci, PhD

Croatian Natural History Museum, Zagreb, Croatia

11:05–11:20

Melinda Šefčić, PhD

Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Croatian Centre for Creative Health and Neuroaesthetics, Croatian Brain House, Zagreb, Croatia

Emotional and Sensory Engagement Through Public Art in a Modernist Heritage Space: The Case of Quarter in Color (2024–2025)

11:20–11:35

Josip Zelić, PhD¹ & Damir Demonja, PhD²

¹ Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

² Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

Opera Festivals as Platforms for Cultural Tourism and Well-being: Experiences of the Arena di Verona Festival

11:35–11:50

Iva Hraste-Sočo, PhD & Mario Gigović, MBA

Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, Croatia

From Repertory Stage to a Cultural Destination: Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb as an Emerging Driver of Cultural Tourism

11:50–12:05

Anja Mlakar, PhD

Faculty of Tourism, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Archaeological and Non-Institutional Heritage Sites in Narratives of Well-being

12:05–12:20 DISCUSSION

12:20–12:30 SHORT BREAK

12:30–14:00 PANEL 2

Culture, Well-being and Inclusive Participation

Exploring how cultural participation can support well-being, inclusion, connection and quality of life across different groups and stages of life.

Chair: Matija Dronjić

ICOM Croatia

12:30–12:45

Mario Kovač, PhD¹, Svjetlana Kopčinović, MA², Branko Banković³ & Damir Demonja, PhD⁴

¹ Independent Practitioner, Croatia

² Croatian Red Cross – Zagreb City Red Cross Society, Croatia

³ Independent Artist, Croatia

⁴ Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

Drama and Dance Exercises in Educational-Rehabilitation Support and the Empowerment of Self-Advocacy of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

12:45–13:00

Magdalena Čondić¹ & Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, PhD²

¹ Independent Researcher, Zagreb, Croatia

² Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

The Museum as a Space of Inclusive Support for People with Dementia: Cultural Participation, Dignity and Community Support

13:00–13:15

Tatjana Pivac, PhD¹, Sanja Kovačić, PhD¹ & Damir Demonja, PhD²

¹ Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

² Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Museums for Designing Content for Children: Case Studies of Croatia and Serbia

13:15–13:30

Jesenska Ricl, MA

Museum of Slavonia; Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

Learning Through Feeling: How Emotional and Sensory Engagement Shapes Museum Experiences for Older Visitors

13:30–13:45

Jasenska Kranjčević, PhD¹ & Amir Muzur, PhD²

¹ Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, Croatia

² Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Health Studies, University of Rijeka, Croatia

Cultural Tourism and University: What Can They Do for Each Other?

13:45–14:00 DISCUSSION

14:15–15:15 LUNCH BREAK & KLAPA FIGURIN

Traditional Croatian Female Klapa Performance

During the lunch break, participants will have the opportunity to experience traditional Croatian female klapa singing, an important element of Croatian intangible cultural heritage.

15:15–16:15 EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMME

Guided Tour of the Croatian Natural History Museum

Exploring how museum spaces, narratives and sensory engagement contribute to visitor well-being.

A guided museum experience followed by a short reflection on the elements of the museum visit that may contribute to visitor well-being.

DAY 2__ Friday, 23 October 2026

FROM HERITAGE AND COMMUNITIES TO EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE

09:30–10:50 PANEL 3

Heritage, Place and Community Well-being

Exploring how heritage and cultural tourism can contribute to individual and community well-being while supporting sustainable places and communities.

Chair: Marta Šveb Dragija, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

09:30–09:45

Patty Janes, PhD

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Grand Valley State University, USA

Enhancing Well-being While Preserving Cultural Tourism Sites (Volunteering)

09:45–09:55 PRE-RECORDED PRESENTATION

Rui Carvalho, PhD & José Maria Carvalho, PhD

CARE – Research Centre on Health and Social Sciences, Polytechnic University of Portalegre, Portugal

Heritage, Creativity and Tourism Development: Exploring the Potential of Cork and Tapestry Experiences for Community Well-being in Portalegre

09:55–10:10

Aleksandra Błotnicka, MSc & Wojciech Maciejowski, PhD, DSc

University of Physical Culture in Krakow, Poland

Immersive Environments and the Future of Health Tourism: The Case of QC Terme Milano

10:10–10:20 PRE-RECORDED PRESENTATION

José Maria Carvalho, PhD, Rui Carvalho, PhD, Mário Santos, António Calha & Maria Rosália Guerra

CARE – Research Centre on Health and Social Sciences, Polytechnic University of Portalegre, Portugal

Memory as Community Care: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Well-being and Ageing in a Low-Density Rural Territory

10:20–10:35

Ema Bašić, PhD & Anita Bušljeta Tonković, PhD

Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, Regional Centre Gospić, Croatia

Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Tourism for Sustainable Local Development: The Case Study of Croatia's Rural Region of Lika

10:35–10:50 DISCUSSION

10:50–11:30 COFFEE & TEA BREAK

11:30–12:25 PANEL 4

From Cultural Participation to Well-being: Evidence, Measurement and Practice

Understanding, demonstrating and translating the well-being impacts of cultural participation.

Chair: Barbara Lovrinić Higgins, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

11:30–11:45

Edita Bilaver, MA

Film in Hospital / Kids Meet Art – Djeca susreću umjetnost, Croatia

From Isolation to Socialization: Restorative Cultural Participation and Mediated Audiovisual Engagement in European Healthcare Settings

11:45–12:00

Iva Fattorini, MD, MSc

University of Oxford, United Kingdom / Artocene

Arts, Culture, Health and Social Prescribing: A New Paradigm of Care

12:00–12:15

Marta Šveb Dragija, PhD¹, Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, PhD¹ & Ana Havelka Meštrović, PhD²

¹ Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

² Algebra Bernays University, Zagreb, Croatia

Beyond Attendance Scores: Measuring Well-being in Cultural Participation

12:15–12:25 DISCUSSION

12:25–13:30 PRACTITIONERS' PANEL

From Research to Reality: Can Culture and Tourism Be Designed for Well-being?

This panel will be held in Croatian.

Moderator

Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, PhD

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

Panelists

Pia Sopta

Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia

Marinko Artuković, PhD

Croatian Institute of Public Health (HZJZ)

Katarina Miličević, PhD

Tourism Lab / thinktourism

Dragana Lucija Ratković Aydemir

MUZE

Hrvoje Handl, MD

Sveti Ivan Psychiatry Clinic, Zagreb, Croatia

Moderated discussion followed by audience Q&A.

13:30–13:40 CLOSING REMARKS

Conference organizers

13:40–14:30 CLOSING NETWORKING RECEPTION

Conference Organizers

IRMO

Institut za razvoj i međunarodne odnose
Institute for Development and International Relations

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