



# TOURISM FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ZUBIN POTOK AND PEĆ/PEJA MUNICIPALITIES



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**February 2020**



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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, tourism has been an important industry, and one of the fastest growing industries in the world. However, tourism development is conditioned by the quality of the environment, its natural and cultural values and other characteristics. Above all, the degree of conservation and attractiveness of the environment is directly reflected in the opportunities for tourism development in a particular area. Therefore, in addition to the responsibility for economic, social and cultural environment, tourism also carries significant responsibility for the natural environment.

Tourism development based on establishing a friendly relationship between the natural environment and its transformation into an attractive destination is considered responsible. In addition, tourism development is required to achieve a balance where meeting the current needs of tourists will not jeopardize the needs of future generations, thereby achieving sustainable and responsible development in order to preserve all significant values in the environment.

In order to prevent the degradation of tourist destinations due to the development of tourism, it is necessary to identify and constantly monitor the changes leading to degradation, and at the same time to lay the foundations for the development of tourism with its environmental impact constantly monitored. In this sense, for tourism to be sustainable, such development should involve all actors, from the local community through tourists, the construction sector in charge of the construction and reconstruction of tourist facilities, to tour operators and agencies bringing tourists.

Having in mind that tourism is rapidly developing in the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Pec/Peja, the goal of this analysis is to clarify the concept of sustainable and responsible tourism and its importance for sustainable development. In addition to clarifying the concept, this analysis will also cover the presentation of existing tourism potentials and products, local and regional tourism development policies, as well as the impact of tourism development on these municipalities.

The analysis was prepared within the project “Sustainable Tourism in the Function of Sustainable Development”, implemented by InTER in cooperation with NGO Marimangat and media partners “*Crno beli svet*” and *TELEGRAFI*. The project is financially supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) and it is implemented between 1 July and 15 February 2020. The views and conclusions in this article are the sole responsibility of the author and do not in any way reflect the views of KFOS.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### The concept of sustainable development

Even though there is no universally accepted definition of sustainable development, the most commonly used one is from the “Our Common Future” report, developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, upon invitation from the United Nations: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup>

Sustainable development is one of the most popular phenomena today, especially in the context of UN activities, i.e. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses on balancing numerous economic, environmental and social development goals as well as the importance of the institutional component. The UN General Assembly declared 2017 the **Year of Sustainable Tourism Development**, with the intention of supporting changes in tourism development policy, in order to contribute to the achievement of the global sustainable development goals.

The targets of sustainable tourism development were agreed and adopted at the RIO+20 conference in 2012, and formally entered into force at a UN session at the end of 2015. The implementation of these goals officially began globally on 1 January 2016. The defined global sustainable development goals are:

- No poverty – the goal is to destroy all types of poverty throughout the world until 2030;
- Zero hunger – clearly defined removal of all types of hunger and insufficient nutrient intake throughout the world;
- Good health and well-being –this goal seeks to provide good health and well-being to every inhabitant of the planet at every age;
- Quality education – calling for quality education at all levels of the educational process;
- Gender equality – even though gender equality has increased significantly in recent decades, there is still plenty of room for improvement;
- Clean water and sanitation – this objective is considered to be at the core of sustainable development. It is estimated that 91% of the world's population has access to clean drinking water, which is an improvement of 9% since 2000;
- Affordable and clean energy – a key element of every sustainable development goal and calls for the promotion and use of renewable and “clean” energy sources worldwide;

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<sup>1</sup> Our Common Future, Brundtland Report, 1987, available at <https://bit.ly/2uANL6b>

- Decent work and economic growth – calls for sustainable inclusive economic growth, which is very important for sustainable development;
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure – it provides the material basis for sustainable development, that is, calls for the advancement of industry and infrastructure through innovation;
- Reduce inequalities – the goal is to reduce all forms of inequality in a society;
- Sustainable cities and communities – The assumption is that by 2030, 6 out of 10 people will live in cities and should therefore strive for sustainable cities and communities;
- Responsible consumption and production – this objective is directly linked to economic growth, which is crucial for sustainable development;
- Climate action – calls for fight against climate change, i.e. the reduction and elimination of the causes leading to it;
- Life under water – refers to ocean, marine and coastal resources, their exploitation and protection;
- Life on land – refers to the preservation of diverse life forms on land and their protection, predominantly from anthropogenic influence;
- Peace, justice and strong institutions – falls under the social part of sustainable development and is considered to be its core;
- Partnership for the goals – promotes global partnerships for the purpose of sustainable development goals.

The concept of sustainable development includes balanced economic, social and cultural development without endangering the environment, which would enable future generations to develop at the same or higher level. The concept of sustainable development gained full recognition at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where it was clearly emphasized that environmental protection must be an integral part of overall human development. According to this, every activity (including tourism) must, when planning and making decisions, take the environmental requirements fully into account in order to make its development sustainable, otherwise it can lead to degradation and even to complete self-destruction.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of sustainable development should not be understood as a strict definition, but rather as a process of change in the relations established between social, economic and natural systems and processes, bearing in mind that the concept of sustainable development is precisely based on these three key components:

- environmental sustainability, which ensures that development is compatible with vital environmental processes, biodiversity and biological resources;
- social and cultural diversity, ensuring that development is compatible with the cultural and traditional values of human communities and that it contributes to strengthening their integrity;

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<sup>2</sup> Turizam i životna sredina, Jovičić, D., 2000 Beograd, Zadužbina Andrejević

- economic sustainability, which ensures that development is cost effective with the open possibility for future generations to use resources.<sup>3</sup>

This process can only be gradually achieved, as the demands placed on human society are also very complex. This refers, first of all, to the formation of new environmental awareness, an increase in the responsibility of the state administration, a proper revision of the existing economic and legal order and greater involvement of experts in solving current environmental problems.<sup>4</sup>

## Sustainable tourism

*“Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system.”*

World Tourism Organization

According to the World Tourism Organization and the UN Environment Program, “**sustainable tourism**” means the tourism development which takes into account and meets the needs of tourists as those making the demand, and tourism regions as those providing the offer, without jeopardizing the possibility that economic, social and environmental goals are achieved on the same or higher level in the future. In other words, the concept of sustainable development should be the basic guide for tourism management, which will ensure the achievement of economic, social and aesthetic goals, while at the same time protecting cultural values, social integrity, essential ecological processes and biological diversity.<sup>5</sup>

The main objective of sustainable tourism is to enable tourists to enjoy and acquire knowledge about the natural, historical and cultural features of the environment, while preserving the integrity of the destination and fostering economic development and the well-being of the local community. Sustainable development must not stop the development of tourism, but allow its development so that tourists can see and experience what they want, but not destroy what attracted them. At the same time, the social and cultural environment in tourist destinations must not be destroyed or endangered.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The three dimensions of sustainable development: environment, economy and society, grupa autora, 2018, Univerzitet u Nišu, available at <https://bit.ly/310VHJM>

<sup>4</sup> Turizam i životna sredina, Jovičić, D., Beograd, 2000, Zadužbina Andrejević

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ekološka odgovornost turizma, Nevena Beljanski, 2018 Fakultet za sport i turizam, Novi Sad, available at <https://bit.ly/2uIjgLj>

Sustainable tourism development is mostly related to the construction and development of so-called ecotourism, with the aim of protecting and conserving flora and fauna. First of all, active participation of local population in destinations in environmental protection activities is necessary. The application of this concept should ensure an increase in the quality of tourism products based on the protection of natural and cultural assets, and in practice its implementation requires resource management that will direct economic activities within environmental parameters. Tourism development should be based on the harmonization of economic and environmental goals. Sustainable tourism requires the efforts of all stakeholders in tourism development, but it is a guarantee for preservation of economic, ecological and cultural values, and, as it is often emphasized, it ensures stable economic development and equal distribution of life opportunities.

In order for the concept of sustainable tourism to be put into practice, it is necessary to set up such a development model that will maximize the positive relations between the mentioned categories of goals (economic, environmental and social), and minimize the negative impact for each of them. The goals pursued at the same time are preconditions for their achievement. It should be emphasized that, contrary to the previous practice, the new approach to tourism development should emphasize the importance of environmental protection, while economic dimension loses importance in relative terms. The fact is that one-sided profit-oriented tourism can bring good economic results in the short term and satisfy many tourism needs, but, on the other hand, it can produce negative impact on the environment and local population.<sup>7</sup>

If tourism is not planned and managed properly, it can cause permanent damage to the ecological, social, cultural and economic environment of a tourist destination. For this reason, the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peć/Peja, which are the subject of this analysis, are developing their strategic documents in a way to contribute to a new way of tourism development, emphasizing environmental protection as a horizontal priority.

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<sup>7</sup> Održivi razvoj turizma na primeru Vlasinske površi, Vidoje Stefanović i Nedžad Azemović, 2012 Škola biznisa, available at <https://bit.ly/2Rxg9yQ>

## REGIONAL AND LOCAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Tourism is a multispectral and inter-sectoral industry, precisely because of the impact many sectors have on it. The need for a coherent policy and a long-term strategic approach is protected not only by easily changeable strategies, but also by the legislative and legal framework. There is no overarching tourism development strategy in Kosovo, but activities undertaken in this sector are subject to a legislative framework that includes three general laws: the Law on Tourism, the Law on Foreign Investment, and the Law on Cultural Heritage. These laws promote the efficient management of tourist destinations, as well as policies to bridge sectoral gaps.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the lack of an overarching strategy for tourism development, tourism development planning is part of the Local Economic Development Strategy 2019-2023, where tourism is recognized as one of four strategic goals in local development.<sup>9</sup> The Strategy is a document based on an action plan aimed at developing and coordinating local economic development policies in all municipalities in Kosovo. The strategy defines the ways in which efficient management, better education, better environmental protection, better business environment, etc. can be achieved at the local level in order to contribute to better living conditions.

In this strategic document, tourism is identified as a very important sector for economic development, as tourism can attract foreign investment and new investors, more tourists through providing access to natural resources and natural beauties, services, cultural heritage and other tourism values. Bearing in mind the importance of tourism sector development, this document emphasizes that local self-governments should develop and promote tourism more, focusing on the development of ecotourism as an increasingly popular form of tourism globally. In addition, the challenges also include the problem of identifying potential tourist areas, the construction of supporting infrastructure in areas with significant tourist potential, as well as the promotion of tourism, where the lack of local tourist info centres is particularly emphasized.

### Municipality of Zubin Potok

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<sup>8</sup> Development of Tourism Through Effective Policies and Legislations, Democracy for Development, 2017 Prishtina, available at <https://bit.ly/3aOWC4J>

<sup>9</sup> Strategy for Local Economic Development 2019-2023, Ministry of Local Government Administration, 2018 Prishtina, available at <https://bit.ly/2tO1w1n>

The basic strategic document of the Zubin Potok municipality related to a systematic approach to tourism development is the **Tourism Development Strategy adopted for the period 2015-2020**. The strategic plan includes the definition of the main development goals, as well as the priorities and measures of development in the observed period of time. In this regard, the goal is to make Ibarski Kolasin<sup>10</sup> an internationally recognized active tourism location that offers attractive facilities attracting tourists from all over the world by focusing on developing the potential for active tourism on the Ibar River, Gazivode Lake and Mokra Gora Mountain. The combination of mountains, lakes and rivers provides a unique opportunity to develop diversified tourism products that will be unique in the Balkan tourism market. When defining the strategic goals in this document, attention was paid to ensure that activities were designed in a manner that was aligned with horizontal priorities, such as environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

In addition to the development strategy, in mid-2015 the Municipal Assembly of Zubin Potok adopted a declaration declaring the municipality an “environmentally friendly environment”. This declaration was accompanied by the Decision on the Protection of the Mokra Gora Mountain in the territory of Zubin Potok municipality, which was adopted with the aim of achieving sustainable development and having a responsible attitude towards natural resources and the environment. For a period of two years, the decision prohibits unauthorized logging, illegal hunting, improper harvesting of forest fruits, medicinal herbs and mushrooms, livestock grazing in a protected zone, unauthorized construction of facilities, improper waste disposal, as well as the exploitation of mineral resources in the Mokra Gora Mountain area.

By making such a decision, the local self-government made an effort to establish a responsible attitude towards nature in order to preserve the environment, and indicated that preventing the threat to the natural identity of the area becomes their urgent job. This contributes to the fulfillment of one of the basic conditions for the sustainability of tourism, which is to have a minimum impact on environmental degradation.

### **Municipality of Peje/Peć**

The most important document which serves as a strategy that guides the development processes in the municipality of Peć/Peje is the **Municipal Development Plan 2006-2025**.<sup>11</sup> In this plan, the tourism sector and agriculture are set as two main pillars for development, so the infrastructure development projects are oriented towards the development of sustainable tourism and agriculture which serves the development of agri-tourism. Also, in 2013 the municipality has drafted the “Strategy for Economic Development 2013-2017, where the objectives of this strategy are oriented in directions that affect sustainable development affecting the welfare of local residents, the growth of local economy and employment and the

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<sup>10</sup> “Ibarski Kolašin“ is a traditional and historical name of the municipality of Zubin Potok

<sup>11</sup> Municipal Development Plan Peje/Peć 2006-2025, 2006 Novembar, available at <https://bit.ly/2GtG9oL>

focus on preservation of the environment. For this the municipality has been proclaimed as “Model municipality of the European Green Belt”.<sup>12</sup> Also, the other strategic document in tourism development is the “Local Development Strategy 2014-2020”.<sup>13</sup>

Recognizing that tourism is increasingly seeking to expand its destination, a "Regional Tourism Development Strategy" and a "Regional Tourism Strategy Implementation Plan" have been drafted in western Kosovo.<sup>14</sup> This strategy guides the development plans of the 6 municipalities by creating a synergy between them to come up with a unique and attractive joint offer. The strategy and the plan have been developed by the Western Regional Development Agency, which is a part of the Association of Regional Development Agencies in Kosovo (ARDA), established with the purpose of coordinating and promoting regional and rural development in five economic regions (northern, southern, eastern, western and central region).<sup>15</sup>

Also, in cooperation with the EU, the “Regional Heritage Plan 2012-2015”<sup>16</sup> was developed, with a focus on raising awareness, education, training and proposing activities related to cultural and natural heritage. This document covers issues related to site conservation, restoration, heritage information and site security, but also promotes a partnership and collaboration process involving all central, local, cultural and tourism entities, as well as relevant actors in the region. Although envisaged for a shorter period of time, this plan still serves the municipalities in their strategic planning at the regional level. Some of the existing plans and strategies, as well as researches in the municipality of Peć/Peja, have been developed with the organization Swiss Contact which played an important role in the development of sustainable tourism in this municipality. They include: “Western Kosovo Tourism - Market Strategy Report”, “Tourism Product Development”, etc.

Regarding cross-border cooperation, the Municipality of Peć/Peja has a memorandum of cooperation between the municipalities of Plav and Shkoder in the joint development of the project “Peaks of the Balkans”. It should also be mentioned that Peć/Peja was ranked first by the World Travel and Tourism Council as the destination of the future of tourism in 2013, in the competition “Best Destination Stewardship - Tourism for Tomorrow”. The promotion made by WTTC internationally has played a very important role for the destination of Peć/Peja.

### **Cooperation between the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peć/Peja**

As part of the regional project “Mokra Gora - Undiscovered Pearl on Via Dinarica Trail”, implemented in 2019 by InTER, in cooperation with Tutin Municipality, Sandzak Regional

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<sup>12</sup> *Model municipality of the European Green Belt* at European green belt, available at <https://bit.ly/36xukbu>

<sup>13</sup> Strategija lokalnog razvoja 2014-2020, Opština Peć i GLV Agro-Turizmi, 2014 Peć, available at <https://bit.ly/2O0t3Dx>

<sup>14</sup> Regionalna strategija za turizam 2016-2020, ARDA, available at <https://bit.ly/2uHZAAm>

<sup>15</sup> Association of Regional Development Agencies (ARDA), available at <https://bit.ly/2tOuE8G>

<sup>16</sup> Regional Heritage Plan for Kosovo\* West (2012-2015), 2012 Septembar, available at <https://bit.ly/2Rw2yrA>



Development Agency (SEDA), NGO Marimangat from Peć/Peja and Mountaineering Club "Ahmica" from Rozaje, cooperation was established on the development of sustainable tourism between the municipalities of Zubin Potok, Peć/Peja, Istok, Tutin and Rozaje. Among other things, cooperation between these municipalities was formalized through the Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the mayors of all mentioned municipalities.

In addition to establishing cooperation at the level of local self-governments, the cooperation of other entities from these municipalities in the field of tourism development had started before this regional project. Since 2015, InTER and the NGO Marimangat from Peć/Peja have been successfully cooperating on the realization of various tourism activities. For example, in 2016, a joint summer climbing camp was organized at Berim and in the Rugova Canyon, and in January 2017, a joint training program was organized for guides on the Via Ferrata Trail and the rescue teams. In addition, a tourist package has been developed that includes a visit to Via Ferrata Berim in Zubin Potok and Via Ferrata Mat/Ari in the Rugova Canyon, which is a unique case of guest exchange between the majority Serb and Albanian communities in Kosovo. InTER and the NGO Marimangat are also jointly implementing the project "Sustainable Tourism for Sustainable Development", within which this analysis was made, also confirming the continuity and good cooperation between the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peć/Peja regarding the contribution to tourism development.

## TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ZUBIN POTOK

### **Basic geographical features**

Zubin Potok municipality, also known as Ibarski Kolasin, is located in northwestern part of Kosovo and covers an area of approximately 333 km<sup>2</sup>. The municipality consists of 63 villages and settlements, and according to the available information, the total population is estimated at 15,200.

Geographic location, relief, climate, hydrography, flora and fauna are the most valuable natural resources of Zubin Potok municipality, which are ideal conditions for tourism development.

### ***Geographic position***

The boundaries of Zubin Potok municipality are mostly natural, geomorphological formations. Zubin Potok stretches through the valley of the Ibar River, now largely submerged by the artificial Gazivode Lake, from Ribarić in the northwest to the village Zupče in the southeast. It is administratively bordered with the municipalities of Tutin in the west, Novi Pazar in the north, Zvečan and Kosovska Mitrovica in the east and the municipalities of Srbica and Istok in the south.

The municipality is characterized by a favorable geographical position on the main road E-65 Pristina - Kosovska Mitrovica - Podgorica / Novi Pazar. Zubin Potok is 60 km far from Pristina, 20 km from Kosovska Mitrovica and 55 km from Novi Pazar. As for other roads, the regional road Zubin Potok – Istok is also significant for tourism development.

### ***Relief***

The relief of Zubin Potok is made up of three united parts, which make the basic physiognomy of the area: the hilly and mountainous reliefs are built by Rogozna and Mokra Gora mountains, with the valley of the Ibar River between them, formed under the strong influence of the erosive power of the Ibar and its tributaries.

Earlier tectonic movements determined the direction of valley formation. The erosive power of the Ibar and its tributaries - in the south Kovacki Potok, Oklacka, Brnjacka, Cecevska and Crna Rivers, and in the north Lucka and Jagnjenicka Rivers – formed erosive extensions, especially in places where Ibar receives tributaries from both sides. Most streams and rivers established communications between mountain villages at higher altitudes, as well as with urban settlements in neighboring areas: Novi Pazar, Tutin, Istok, Peja and Srbica.

Fast mountain streams and mountain rivers have made deep valleys, split lower areas, and made smaller alluvial plains at the confluence. Between the valleys, there are slopes with plateaus and smaller or bigger slopes, as a consequence of a jagged terrain.

### *Climate*

The municipality of Zubin Potok does not have a station for regular monitoring of climate changes, and this can be partly compensated by careful observation in the field. Climate diversity in some parts of this municipality is noticeable. The difference is caused by a significant difference in altitude, exposure, incline of the topographic surface, coverage from wind and other factors.

In general, the climate in Zubin Potok is moderately continental. The seasons are fairly evenly distributed. The warmest months are July and August, and the coldest January, which is very favorable for tourism development, bearing in mind that the main natural tourist potentials are Lake Gazivode and Mokra Gora Mountain.

### *Hydrography*

The hydrological backbone of Zubin Potok municipality is the Ibar River with its tributaries. Ibar originates from a strong limestone spring, below Hajla Mountain, at an altitude of 1360m, between the Dramodol peak and Smiljenica hill. Total length of the Ibar River is 272.25 km, with a catchment area of 8059 km<sup>2</sup> and an average annual water level of 755 mm. It passes through Zubin Potok with a length of 43 km, of which 24 km is the artificial Gazivode Lake, and 2 km the balancing lake Pridvorica.

The Ibar River was tamed by the construction of the Gazivode Dam in 1979. The height of the dam is 107.5m and the length is 520m. Gazivode Lake is located in the deep gorge of the Ibar River, twenty kilometers away in the center of Zubin Potok. The entire gorge is covered in forests, which makes the sanitation zones acceptable because they consist of a forest belt. In the upper part of the lake there is a smaller area of bare land, i.e. meadows and pastures, which are part of the alluvial terraces. This part is accessible, with shallow water, which makes it suitable for the use of water for recreational purposes. The lake's bioindicators show that the water is clean and unpolluted. A large fish biomass is present in the lake. Its beauty does not leave anyone indifferent, which is why it is the main tourist destination during the summer and a place visited by a large number of people from the area and the whole region.

### *Flora and fauna*

The mild, moderately continental climate, passing at higher altitudes into local continental, i.e. mountainous climate, richness of river streams and springs, considerable forests, vast pastures, clean and healthy environment have all made this area filled with diverse flora and fauna.

Forests, although significantly thinned in recent years due to illegal logging, cover up to two thirds of the total territory of Zubin Potok municipality. Forests are often intertwined with pastures and fields, but there are also parts where the forests are almost continuous, such as the foot of Mokra Gora mountain. Oak and beech are the most widespread species, but oak and beech forests also have maple, field maple, ash, birch and jasper. At altitudes above 1500m there are conifer species, spruce and pine. The variety of forest vegetation is enriched by numerous species of medicinal plants and forest flowers. This area is particularly proud of the endemic flowering plant *Srpska ramonda*, which grows on Mokra Gora, in the canyon of Crna Rijeka River.

Mokra Gora is characterized by rich biodiversity. Almost all game species typical of the wider Balkan region are represented. Most commonly encountered birds are various types of wading birds: wild duck, gray heron, common coot, barbel, grebe, cormorant, and in recent years a flock of white swans. Of the eagle order, there are hawks, eastern imperial eagle, hawk, buzzard; other predators are European eagle-owl and great owls; galliformes include quails, partridges, woodpeckers and a special pride of this area, a large tetrao that represents the largest bird in the Balkans. Mammals are represented by furbearers: squirrel, edible dormouse, weasel, ferret, European pine marten and beech marten, wild cat and fox. Rabbit is the most prominent of small game, and large game is represented by roe deer, wild boar, wolf and bear. Considering that the bear population in our country and in Europe has decreased significantly in recent decades, it is important to point out that brown bear can be found in the Mokra Gora Mountain area. Brown bear is the largest European species of beasts and also one of the largest predators on earth. It reaches a height of 100 - 120 cm, length 200 -250 cm and weight 180 - 300 kg.

### **Initiative for tourism development in Zubin Potok - Outdoor In**

Despite the fact that tourism was an integral part of the strategic documents of Zubin Potok municipality, there was no significant work on its development until 2013. With the financial support of the European Union in Kosovo, InTER launched the ***Outdoor In - Tourism Development in Zubin Potok*** project in 2013 with the goal to use the natural potential of this area for tourism development. Emphasis was placed on improving the conditions of tourism infrastructure, increasing the capacity of service providers and promoting tourism potential to initiate tourism-generating activities. The project was implemented in cooperation with the municipality of Zubin Potok. In February 2015, after the completion of the project, Outdoor In continued to operate as an umbrella initiative for a large number of projects and activities aimed at promoting and developing Zubin Potok as a tourist destination.

While the overall objective of the initiative was to develop tourism infrastructure, concrete results have led to a real impact on the environment, especially in the area of fulfilling the social component of sustainable development. For example, a beach and playground for

children were constructed on Gazivode Lake, as well as an artificial wall for free climbing activities, while numerous hiking and biking trails are now marked and include rest areas. Today, these attractions can be enjoyed by the locals and visitors of the area, and in this context, developed tourism products contribute to greater interaction within the community as well as interaction of the local community with visitors. This is supported by the fact that, as part of this initiative, the municipality of Zubin Potok also hosted two international summer camps and regional competitions in extreme sports and nature walks in 2013 and 2014. In this way, apart from involving young people and the local community in tourism development, the opportunity was taken to promote the north of Kosovo as an attractive adventure tourism destination.

Compared to the period before the Outdoor In initiative, there is now a tourism development strategy in Zubin Potok Municipality and a network of tourism providers is in place to build on the original support and contribute to sustainable tourism development in the area. In addition, the years since its inception, Outdoor In has continued to actively promote the region through its website and social networks as a destination for active tourism.

By meeting local needs in northern Kosovo, this initiative has increased opportunities for young people to engage in outdoor activities and stimulate inter-ethnic communication between people living in the area, which creates a more positive image of Zubin Potok. In doing so, it supports local economic development and also contributes to environmental protection, further encouraging the implementation of various projects in tourism development.

### **Tourism potentials and products**

The landscape of Mokra Gora mountain - the beauty of the Balkans, as the famous geographer Jovan Cvijic once called it, with its distinctive tourist values and features, as well as the hydro accumulation of Gazivode Lake, which was created by the partition of the Ibar River, are the most important and recognizable motifs - tourism decorations and the image of Zubin municipality.

Particularly valuable recreational and tourism feature of this area is the peaceful landscape and aesthetically pleasing environment, with a rich representation of rare flora and fauna. Therefore, during the summer, these areas are very suitable for recreational walks, short trips and hiking, and during the winter for bolder hikers and hunters.

In accordance with the established recreational and climate values and characteristics of basic tourist motives and the development of tourism so far, the forms, or types of tourism, which could be in demand on the tourist market, depending on the existence of adequate material and organizational and business opportunities and conditions can be determined in Zubin

Potok municipality. There are already active tourism facilities on the Mokra Gora Mountain and Gazivode Lake, as well as on the Ibar River.

Active tourism includes hiking, biking and mountain biking, kayaking, paragliding, hunting and fishing, as well as the attractive tourist product Via Ferrata Berim.

### ***Via Ferrata Berim***

Via Ferrata Berim is the most advanced and attractive tourist product in Zubin Potok. The name “Via Ferrata” comes from Italian language and translates as “steel road”. Via Ferrata is located on the rocks of Berim on Mokra Gora Mountain. It is 25km far from Zubin Potok. The road to Via Ferrata takes you across the Gazivode Dam, then through the village of Kovace, and along the macadam road to Previja and to the very foot of Berim.

This tourist attraction is made so that seemingly inaccessible rocks can be accessed by all interested tourists, not just experienced climbers. A bit of good will, an adventurous spirit and minimal fitness are enough to cross the 4-kilometer trail on the Berim rocks. Horizontal and vertical climbs, a cave, a 24-meter long suspension bridge, followed by a 9-meter steel cable - are the attractions that make this Via Ferrata special. Via Ferrata Berim is one of the longest in the world, and certainly the longest in this part of Europe.

Via Ferrata starts with a hiking trail from the camp, passing below the Berim Rocks, and branching off a narrow path to the first vertical section. The first vertical section is about 80 meters long and leads to a cave with a bench set on the edge, with a beautiful view of the surrounding landscape. The Via Ferrata continues its vertical ascent through the cave and continues to the first peak of Berim at an altitude of about 160m from the starting point. This point is the first exit to the logistics camp. Via Ferrata continues to the second peak of Berim with the next vertical section. This part of Via Ferrata includes a horizontal section that provides a completely different experience than climbing the previous vertical sections. The second peak is at an altitude of 1520 m or at about 300 m from the starting point. There is a viewpoint there suitable for photographing the beautiful scenery of Ibarski Kolasin, Rogozna and Kopaonik, and you can see a small part of Gazivode Lake. This is where the second exit from Via Ferrata is, where the trail continues down the steep slope to the logistic camp.

Via Ferrata continues to the third and fourth, the last peak of Berim where this tourist attraction ends. From the second peak, climbing further continues vertically, but with a smaller number of artificial stairs, so the climbing itself is more technically demanding, and it requires focused attention of the climber and activates all the senses. In this part of via ferrata it is necessary to use natural stairs and grips, that is, the rock, more than in the first two parts of via ferrata. As the climb continues, the climbers reach new viewpoints and their view reaches as far as Prokletije and Kopaonik mountains, and Gazivode Lake is revealed more and more with every meter with its enchanting color captured from the heights of Berim. The end of this section is a walk along the ridge that leads to the third peak, with a beautiful view of the two suspension bridges above the abyss, which are a real attraction of this steel road,

waiting for climbers to continue climbing to the summit of Berim and the end of via ferrata. The first bridge is 27 meters long and has 56 treads over which it is necessary to “step” in order to reach the second bridge, which represents “walking on a wire” 9 meters long. After these challenges, Via Ferrata follows the ridge to the last vertical section after which this tourist attraction ends. In the end, one can enjoy the fantastic view from the top of Berim, at an altitude of 1733 m. The descent is a marked forest path.

Due to great efforts in promoting Via Ferrata Berim, it has become one of the most recognizable tourism products in the Balkans. The well-known world magazine *Lonely Planet* has described Via Ferrata Berim as one of the most significant in Europe, and in the latest Western Balkans Travel Guide, Zubin Potok is one of ten “lesser-known destinations”. Also, other media from around the world wrote about Ibarski Kolasin as an attractive must-see destination. Over the past four years, about 1,200 tourists from the region and around the world have visited Via Ferrata Berim, which further speaks about its attractiveness.

### ***Hiking***

There are over 100km of marked hiking trails on the part of Mokra Gora Mountain that belong to Zubin Potok municipality. The trails are of different categories, and they are adapted to different types of hikers. The most attractive peak is Berim (1731 m altitude) on Mokra Gora.

In 2019, a section of the trans-Balkan hiking trail “Via Dinarica” was traced, totaling 105km, going from Boge in the Rugova Canyon above Peja/Peć to Zubin Potok. With this hiking trail, Zubin Potok becomes a significant part of the most important initiative for the development of commercial and recreational hiking in the Balkans.

### ***Biking and mountain biking***

Gazivode Lake and the surrounding mountains are a true paradise for mountain biking. Ibarski Kolašin offers everything from easy trails around the lake and surrounding villages, to very demanding trails on the hills of Mokra Gora Mountain, which is known for its many springs and mountain lakes as well as landscapes with long meadows and evergreen forests. The beauty of Ibarski Kolasin can be experienced through more than 120 km of cycling trails of varying difficulty levels, and cyclists can combine them in a way that best suits the ride to their skills and desires.

### ***Kayaking***

Zubin Potok is home to the bigger part of Gazivode Lake, one of the largest and deepest artificial lakes in the Balkans. The lake offers excellent conditions for kayaking that can be

organized on the open lake or one of a number of canals at the beginning or end of the lake. Kayaking can be combined with other activities, such as swimming in the summer, or fishing throughout the year. Currently, the tourist offer includes 4 kayaks that can be rented throughout the year.

### ***Hunting and fishing***

Today, hunting represents recreation, attraction, passion. Hunters used to hunt for survival and food, and today they do it for leisure. Mokra Gora Mountain with its slopes is the main place for game, and for hunters to gather for a good catch. As noted earlier in the paper, there are rare animal species such as bear and wood grouse on the territory of Mokra Gora.

With these natural conditions, hunting tourism could become a promising and very cost-effective economic and tourism activity if measures to protect and restore the game population improve the capacity of the hunting grounds and prepare the breeding of certain game species in fenced hunting areas. Under these conditions, hunting could gain the characteristics of foreign hunting tourism. And as it is widely known that hunting is one of the most expensive sports and that people from all over the world are happy to visit attractive destinations, this fact could be an opportunity to invest more in the development of hunting tourism. Currently, hunting in this area is only allowed under clearly defined rules and regulations and only in certain months. The Hunting Association Berim - Zubin Potok, one of the oldest associations in this region, is in charge of monitoring the hunting activity.

One of the most suitable destinations for fishermen is certainly Gazivode Lake, rich in fish, calm and large enough to accommodate all interested fishermen, both professional and recreational. Throughout the year, the lake is visited by fishermen, and the catch is often so large that it can barely be lifted - 25 kg carp, perch, chub, bream. The Ibar River is not less rich in fish, and there is a year-round pond that is located close to the dam on Gazivode Lake and is easily reached by the main road.

### **Monitoring trends and tourist needs**

Starting in 2015, once in two years InTER conducts a survey of the trends and needs of tourists visiting Ibarski Kolasin. Trends are monitored by completing an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is intended for visitors and potential tourists of this region, who get the opportunity to express their preferences for different types of tourist activities. These questionnaires seek to determine the profile of tourists who recognize Ibarski Kolasin as an attractive tourist destination, their motivation for visiting this area, the activities they would like to participate in during their stay, as well as the funds they plan to spend during the stay. The results are processed and presented in the form of a report that serves to define new and develop existing tourist packages.



Based on the data obtained through the survey conducted in 2019 and their comparison with the data from previous years, it is possible to identify certain changes in the attitude of tourists towards this destination and their needs.

Visitors and potential tourists who participated in the survey have expressed great interest in visiting Ibarski Kolasin, and their interest is constant every year. When it comes to the profile of potential visitors, it is noticeable that the focus of age groups has changed, and there has been an increase in the interest in the tourist offer of Ibarski Kolasin among the population aged 30 - 39.

Although the analyses of the data collected from previous years show that visitors come to this area for various reasons, recent data indicate that tourism is the most common reason for visiting. Tourism as a purpose of the visit has grown from 50 to 70 percent, which is a significant indicator of the quality and attractiveness of the existing tourist offer.

Bearing in mind the natural resources that are in the function of tourism development, spring and summer are the seasons when tourists most often choose to stay in Ibarski Kolasin. As they come from different parts of the country and the region, they most often choose their own transport, but in the last year a significant increase of interest in organized transport has been identified. This trend goes in line with the fact that the largest number of visitors are coming in a group with friends.

Most interested visitors are those who would stay overnight in natural surroundings, such as bungalows and cottages on the lake shores. Although this trend has been stable since the needs of tourists are monitored, there is still a problem of lack of accommodation capacities of this type. This problem is further emphasized with the fact that every year there is a noticeable increase in the amount of planned funds that tourists would spend for desired accommodation. By comparison, during 2017-2018, only 19% of visitors were willing to spend 6-10 EUR for accommodation in Ibarski Kolasin, while data from the last year show that this percentage has increased to 41%.

Via Ferrata Berim, hiking and mountain biking, kayaking and paragliding, camping, rafting on the IbarRiver were the most attractive activities in the tourist offer, but there is also great interest in visits to cultural and historical heritage and religious places. Considering that the tourist offer has been improved, the number of visitors who are willing to spend more money for a certain tourist product or the whole tourist package is increasing. This is where an opportunity should be recognised for future tourism development, which could at the same time contribute to the economic empowerment of the area.

When collecting data through questionnaires, visitors and potential tourists often had constructive suggestions regarding further work on tourism development in Ibarski Kolasin. They include recommendations regarding the adaptation of the accommodation capacities to the needs and the number of tourists, as well as the improvement of the service in the catering industry. This could be understood as the need for stronger development of the private sector

in tourism, where, among other things, new catering businesses would be built and the old ones renovated. When it comes to providing services, based on the suggestions of visitors, it could be concluded that there is also a need to work on improving human resources for work in tourism, which means that the local community needs additional education for more successful work in tourism. In addition, the need for upgrading the road infrastructure has been identified, given that the most attractive tourist products are away from the centre of Zubin Potok and that the road network to those places is underdeveloped. As for the content of the tourist offer, the data analysis showed that, given the existing sports infrastructure, it would be very interesting for the visitors of this area to organize additional sports and cultural events. The importance of environmental protection for tourism development in the area is recognized as a “horizontal” suggestion, and it equally refers to the need for additional efforts in this direction by both local self-government and local population and all visitors.

Despite noticing some shortcomings and deficiencies, with their suggestions, visitors help to direct the work on tourism development, but also by sharing their positive experiences, they contribute to breaking the prejudices about this area, which have been created from the media image. In the years to come, we definitely need to continue our activities on building a positive brand and promoting Ibarski Kolasin as an attractive destination for the development of active tourism.

## TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PEĆ/PEJA

Tourism development in the municipality of Peć/Peja has a long tradition. The focus is mostly on mountain tourism because of the great natural potential. Hiking that has developed in this area provided an incentive to attract tourists. It was in the municipality of Peć/Peja that the first mountaineering society was established in Kosovo in 1928. There are also other types of tourism in Peć/Peja, such as pilgrimage and religious tourism due to the presence of the Patriarchate of Peć and other religious buildings of different confessions, health tourism developing on the potentials of the Peć/Peja Spa, as well as transit tourism due to its geographical location and good connection between the Western and Eastern Europe. In recent years, active tourism has also been developing rapidly, offering its visitors a variety of unique attractions, such as 3 Via Ferratas, Zip Line and the Adventure Park.

### Tourism potentials and products

Based on the existing tourism potentials, the municipality of Peć/Peja is divided into 4 tourist zones: Rugova Tourist Zone, Beli Drim Tourist Zone (Radavci), Peć/Peja City Zone and Education, Sport and Tourism Zone (EST). They are special because none of these zones can function without being connected to the others. It is also important that tourism in the municipality of Peć/Peja is based on sustainable development where all the zones are interconnected and coordinated in such a way to provide mutual support, with the involvement of the local population.

Some of the areas that have the highest potential for tourism development are the Rugova Mountain Zone and the Radavci Zone (Beli Drim), which differ in terms of natural potential and opportunities for the development of different types of tourism. The City Zone offers opportunities for the development of cultural tourism which is one of the first points that tourists will encounter, so this potential is very important for the municipality of Peć/Peja in integrating the tourist offer, while the EST Zone is also an important area, especially since the project Borea Ski Center is planned, which will include the education and sports sectors. Each of these zones has different tourism potentials and different tourism products have been developed in them, as described below.

**The Rugova Tourist Zone** is located northwest of Peć/Peja and represents the area with the largest natural potential for tourism development in Peć/Peja. The natural beauties in this area are located on the territory of 32,500 hectares which is part of the national park “*Prokletije/Bjeshket e Nemuna*” and at the same time it is the largest and most beautiful area of this national park.

What makes this area even more attractive is the proximity of the centre of Peć/Peja, where the protected area of the Rugova Canyon can be accessed at only one kilometre from the centre. Therefore, the main attraction in this area is the Rugova Canyon, which stands out as a unique natural monument not only in Kosovo but beyond, and with an area of 4301 hectares it has been protected by law since 1988.

The length of the canyon is 13 km and the river Peć Bistrica flows through it, which originates from the other watercourses in different parts of Rugova. The huge cliffs rising up along the canyon reach a height of 1000m and waterfalls, caves and rich flora can be seen there. One of the most attractive recreational areas known as “Bubavci” is located at the entrance to the canyon. The area is also protected by law as a botanical area and is characterized by an endemic and relict species of flowers - the Balkan Forsythia (*Forsythia Europea*). The mountain tourism potential of Peć/Peja is located in the area of 13 villages of Rugova, which extend at altitudes of 1000 to 1800m. The tourist potentials that are distinguished in this tourist area are 2 lakes at an altitude of 1860m, mountain peaks such as Hajle (2403m) and Zuti kamen (2522m), numerous caves, of which the specially explored cave “Great Canyon” 13km long. The area is characterized by a diversity of flora with over 1500 identified species and rich fauna of which the most characteristic species can be mentioned, such as lynx, brown bear, deer, goat, mountain eagle and western capercaillie, making this area one with the most tourist attractions in the area.<sup>17</sup>

**The Beli Drim tourist zone (Radavci)** is also an attractive area with great potential for tourism development in the municipality of Peć/Peja. Considering the natural values of this area, the plan is that ecological and rural tourism will be developed in this area as two types of tourism that will influence the development of sustainable tourism in the municipality of Peć/Peja. The focus in this area is on the Beli Drim waterfall, which is 30 meters long and represents a unique waterfall in Kosovo that attracts a great deal of local and foreign tourists. This area is home to the Beli Drim river source, which creates one of the largest rivers in Kosovo. The Radavac Cave, also known as the Sleeping Beauty, is also in this area and it is open for tourist visits. The entire area, or the zone, covers the surface of 89.94 hectares, and it has been protected by law since 1983.<sup>18</sup>

A feature of this area is the Radavac Canyon created by the Beli Drim River. Along this canyon, locals have opened restaurants that offer excellent service and the specialty is trout. The natural values of this area relate not only to the municipality of Peć/Peja, but also to the municipality of Rozaje in Montenegro, and the connection of these natural resources affects the development of tourism, not only locally but also regionally. Tourist products in the surrounding area include hiking, mountain biking, paragliding, rural tourism and cultural heritage.

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<sup>17</sup> Vrednosti prirodne baštine Kosova, Ministarstvo za zaštitu životne sredine i prostorno planiranje, 2005  
Priština, available at <https://bit.ly/316VJjt>

<sup>18</sup> <https://bit.ly/2tLnD8B>

**The city area of Peć/Peja** offers a tourist cultural trail that includes a rich history of the development of Peć/Peja from Illyrian times to the present. There is a significant cultural and historical heritage here, from the archaeological heritage of the Illyrian period that can be visited in the Peć/Peja Museum, the architectural heritage as well as the characteristic old houses and towers, the historic complex of the Haji Zeka's Mill, through churches, mosques and tekki, to hamams, etc. Ethnological heritage, such as crafts, traditional clothing, folklore, traditional Rugova dance, traditional food and customs, are on display at the Museum of Peć/Peja. This area stands out with the cultural potential offered as part of the tourist offer.

**The EST (Education, Sport and Tourism) Zone** is an area that brings together all three different sectors - education, sports and tourism. The area is planned to be developed in the southern part of Peć/Peja, on the road to Decani. The main potential lies in the possibility of developing a Borea Ski Resort, which will be a tourist centre during the winter and it will contain ski lifts and ski trails, while in the summer it will be used for the development of hiking products, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, paragliding, horseback riding, cycling and more. Haji Zeka Public University is now integrated in this area and recognized as a great potential that will enable student participation in the development of this centre. In addition, the plan is also to build stadiums, a sports hall, tennis courts, etc, which, beside students, can also be used by tourists for recreation and sports activities.

Therefore, the mountain potential, proximity of the city, integration of other sectors such as education, sports, cultural heritage and connecting with other areas make this area very attractive, which also affects the attractiveness on the market in the region and throughout Europe.

As already mentioned, the municipality of Peć/Peja has a rich tourist offer, which tourism products in the field of active tourism stand out. They include hiking, free climbing, snowshoeing, skiing, as well as attractive tourist products Via Ferrata and Zip Line.

### ***Via Ferratas Ari, Mat and Marimangat***

Ari and Mat are the first two Via Ferratas built in Kosovo. Via ferrata Mat runs parallel to the river, and Ari is vertical.

Via Ferrata Ari is the most advanced adventure product in Peć/Peja. Although this activity is filled with adrenaline, no prior training is required for climbing. About 90 percent of climbers who climbed Via Ferrata Ari were first timers. For this via ferrata, climbers say that the heart beats fast as you climb vertically up the metal steps, high above the Rugova Canyon. When climbing, it offers fantastic views of the surrounding mountains.

Via Ferrata Mat is a newer trail built after the Via Ferrata Ari, which has an easier horizontal path parallel to the river and offers beautiful views of the canyon. The climbing weight of both ferratas is the same, but each has its own unique charm.

Via Ferrata Marimangat is the largest Via Ferrata in Peć/Peja and it has a suspension, so-called Tibetan bridge, 40 meters long and 60 meters high. The ferrata starts with that bridge and the climb lasts between 3 and 4 hours. This via ferrata, apart from great enthusiasm, requires physical strength, since it is much longer than the other two ferratas. Via Ferrata Marimangat was opened in the fall of 2019.

It is important to note that no via ferrata in Peć/Peja requires prior climbing experience. Before starting, climbers receive all technical and safety information. The company that offers via ferrata climbing services provides equipment made in the European Union, and certified by EU standards. The kit includes a helmet, safety belt and a climbing set for via ferrata. If the climber has such requirements, the equipment can also include gloves.

### ***Zip Line Marimangat***

Tyrollean bridge or Zip Line was built under the supervision of international experts and after that certified by an international consultant. The Zip Line goes parallel to the river and the canyon, providing a bird eye view to the canyon

Zip line in Peć/Peja is the longest in the region. The length of 700 meters is crossed in less than a minute. This experience will give you the best view of the Rugova Canyon. The zip line uses US-made equipment and it is operated by professionally trained staff. A zip lane can be reached from the city by car or on foot by simply walking through areas designated as the "health trail".

### ***Free climbing***

Rugova Canyon has very attractive and suitable rocks for free climbing, where local as well as foreign climbers have several routes of different weights. In the past years, these routes were also made close to local roads, so that for this type of activity climbers do not have to go deep into the mountain. Most routes start from the canyon, which is located five kilometres from the town of Peć/Peja, while others are near the villages of Drelja and Alagina Reka. Climbing equipment can be rented from local tour operators, while local climbing clubs also provide the service of a partner or climbing guide.

### ***Hiking***

There are many hiking opportunities in the Peć/Peja region. The city is surrounded by mountains and they can be reached directly from the city in case of easier tours, while more serious tours require a car ride of 20 to 40 minutes. Hiking can be done alone or with a guide. From Peć/Peja you can connect to the hiking routes Peaks of the Balkans and Via Dinarica. The hiking route from Peć/Peja is also connected to the Rugova Canyon as a part of the Prokletije Mountains. This canyon is a part of Prokletije and encompasses the region around the bed of the Peć Bistrica River. These peaks, cliffs and valleys, home to 13 villages, are

mostly inhabited only during the summer. The most interesting hiking on Rugova is the summit of Hajla, 2403m high. This peak also marks the border with Montenegro. This is a rocky mountain ridge surrounded by forest and fields. It is rich in flora and fauna. Also, in certain months of the year it is used as pasture.

### ***Snowshoeing***

Snowshoeing is one of the more attractive tourist offers in the Peć/Peja region, given that nature has provided trails suitable for this activity. The most suitable terrains are located near the villages of Boge and Kosutan. When there is snow in this area, a large number of tour operators include this activity in their offer. It is usually a one-day tour that can be combined with winter ascent to the peaks of Prokletije Mountains. However, such tours can take several days. For this activity, tourist operators provide adequate equipment including snowshoes and hiking sticks, and other necessary equipment.

### ***Downhill skiing***

There is a smaller ski resort in the region, mainly serving local visitors as well as foreign guests. However, in the area of Peć/Peja there is great potential for the development of winter sports. Several companies have trained guides and offer ski touring products that connect with Montenegro, either towards Rozaje or Plav. The most attractive destinations are located in Hajla, in the area of the villages of Boge, Lumbardi and Miliševci. Free skiing is offered on Mount Đeravica where services are offered by an international company that offers exclusive tours with helicopter descent to the top of this mountain.

### ***Adventure Park***

Adventure Park in Peć/Peja is the first adventure park in Kosovo, opened in May 2017. The adventure park is located at an altitude of 780 meters and it is the first outdoor amusement park of its kind. Visitors can enjoy a variety of air platforms, different levels of difficulty, rope ladders, a large swing 17 meters high, as well as horseback riding. With its contents, the adventure park significantly enriches the tourist offer of Peć/Peja.

### ***Caves and speleology***

Peć/Peja offers the opportunity to explore two caves: Sleeping Beauty and the Grand Canyon Cave. The Grand Canyon is one of the largest and most interesting caves in the Balkans. Visiting this cave is a special experience and it requires special equipment provided by local operators. The groups are small, with a maximum of 5 people per guide, and the visit requires some climbing. The required equipment includes lamps, boots and helmets. The cave is not

open for independent tourist visits. This tourist product is a unique experience for adventure and speleology.

Sleeping Beauty is another cave that tourists can visit. Following the latest explorations in May 2017, this cave was found to be about 3650 m long. It is suitable for all ages and no special equipment is required. During the visit, you walk through the stairs and paths in the cave. This is a brief but interesting visit.

A local speleological tourist operator also offers additional services when visiting this cave. For all those who want recreation and peaceful and quiet relaxation, walks through the caves are an ideal solution. What is special about cave visits is that they are organized for smaller groups and run through parts of caves that are not open to mass visits. A visit to the caves requires a guide, as well as basic equipment: helmet, lamps, boots and gloves. Visits are suitable for couples, groups of friends, work colleagues and school children, so these walks, as an activity through which people can explore and share experiences together, are a journey through the underworld and a true pleasure.



## THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE DESTINATION

Sustainable tourism features are to minimize the negative economic, environmental and social impacts and generate greater economic profits for the local society, thus increasing the well-being of the population and employment and ensuring the possibility of involving the local population in tourism. Local population should be involved in decision-making, which influences daily life and quality of life, contributes to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, provides a lasting and unforgettable experience for tourists in contact with locals, and links built between tourists and locals strengthen the population's identity and trust towards tourists arriving in their area.

Economically positive impacts of tourism development are new jobs, increase in income of the population, development of local economy, stimulation of production of goods at the local level, increase of income from taxes at the local level, and consequently the increase of living standards. Positive impacts that tourism can have on the quality of life are promoting the well-being of the local community, supporting education and encouraging the further development of culture, crafts and arts, as well as raising the level of knowledge and education, which is certainly very desirable and necessary when it comes to the development of tourism in the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peja/Peć.

However, it should be noted that during the tourism development process, negative consequences can occur that would have a negative impact on the development of the destination. For example, inadequate planning, lack of strategy, lack of infrastructure and high market demands can have negative consequences on the impact of sustainable development of a destination. Also, rapid development has a negative impact on the environment, creating problems in its pollution, destruction of landscapes, impacts on wildlife, etc.

Therefore, the development of tourism can sometimes have a negative impact on space in terms of its destruction, so it can be heard that tourism is sometimes referred to as a "space destroyer". This in fact points to the danger that the uncontrolled development of tourism can lead to environmental degradation and, on the other hand, such a disturbed environment will negatively affect the development of tourism. This confirms what was said at the beginning of the paper, that the prerequisite for tourism development is above all a quality and preserved environment, or a healthy environment, which both municipalities can be proud of at the moment.

Flora and fauna as characteristic components of a tourist destination are of great importance for tourism. As great emphasis is placed in these areas on the development of active tourism, all activities that take place in nature can affect flora and fauna. Therefore, it is very

important, apart from the existence of legal regulations, to work on raising awareness, both of the tourism industry and tourists themselves, that when consuming certain tourism products, they must take care of minimizing the impact on biodiversity. Some of the activities that can affect biodiversity in these areas are: hunting tourism, water sports, free climbing, as well as other seasonal sports.

Therefore, the main task of local authorities in promoting tourism should be to create an environment that supports trend patterns in tourism needs in order to maximize the benefits, on the one hand, and reduce negative impacts that tourism can have on the environment, or on cultural heritage, on the other.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism is a model of development that, in brief, involves responsible behaviour when it comes to the environment and the use of natural resources. Although there are many definitions in theory, the common aspect is that sustainable development of tourism primarily aims to preserve the environmental value that is part of the tourism product itself. On the other hand, the need to establish a balance in which meeting the present needs of tourists will not jeopardize the needs of future generations is also emphasized. Based on this, it can be concluded that the effects of sustainable tourism are long-term.

In addition to exceptional natural resources, sustainability in the long run and raising the quality of service are the key to successful development of tourism in the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peja/Peć. What is also very important to point out is that the new concept of tourism development, which focuses on sustainability, is equally acceptable, both from the point of view of the interests of tourism suppliers and those in the tourism demand.

For successful implementation of sustainable tourism in practice, it is very important for the local community to recognize the benefits they will receive and to establish some kind of partnership between the private sector and the local community. One of the important differences between the current situation in these municipalities and the new concept of tourism development is in the fact that the stakeholders are currently poorly interconnected, while the modern concept of development implies partnership and connections between all stakeholders (local authorities, representatives of the tourism industry, local population and tourists). Although there have been tourism initiatives in these municipalities in the past, which have encouraged cooperation between different actors, such as the mentioned regional project “Mokra Gora - an Undiscovered Pearl on the Via Dinarica Trail”, it is still necessary to continue working in this direction.

It is of great importance that tourism planning is integral and strategic, above all responsible and in line with sustainable development and environmental protection. If much of the content of the existing strategic documents is realized, the municipalities of Zubin Potok and Peja/Peć could become more competitive in the tourist market throughout the year, not just seasonally. With strategic approach, the tourist offer of these municipalities can be rounded up and put into function of the best possible satisfaction of tourist demand, with sustainable use of all natural resources of these areas.

As this approach to tourism management is relatively new, the focus it places on environmental protection contributes to a better acceptance of sustainable development of tourism as such. While sustainability in tourism as an ultimate goal can never be fully achieved in practice, it is certainly something that must be pursued in every aspect in the future.



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