

Balkan Monumental Trail

Concept Summary

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Summary

One of the three primary thematic components of the Triple P Tourism Project is known as the WWII Monument Cultural Route, which for clarity is temporarily and tentatively referred to as the Balkan Monumental Trail, whose purpose is to create a pathway which highlights and explores the often forgotten and marginalised heritage of the **abstract and modernist** WWII monuments of the South East Europe (SEE) area which includes Western Balkans 6 economies (WB6) of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. The justification for this tourism route is that not only has this heritage, history and culture been little exposed to people outside this region, but also because numerous recent publications and artistic events have proven that there is great international (as well as domestic) interest in the topic of modernist monumental art and architecture across the WB6 region.

This document gives a brief overview of the selection criteria that were employed to select both the monument sites and the pathway which define the Balkan Monumental Trail. The central criteria applied to selecting the monument sites is choosing examples which are visually stunning, historically significant, easy to access for tourists while also exhibiting the region's many scenic splendours. In addition, the connecting pathway which joins these sites together was created in such a way that is simple for tourists to follow, reaches the areas within the WB6 that are underserved by tourism and that are accessible to a variety of complementary tourist sites and services. After applying the criteria, a network comprised of 40 monument sites spread across the WB6 economies was chosen, with 7 in Albania, 11 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4 in Kosovo*, 5 in Montenegro, 5 in the Republic of North Macedonia and 8 in Serbia. This list is subject to changes, substitutions and curation. The pathway which connects these sites is split into three sections: the **Primary Route** which stretches over roughly 2,000 km and 25 monument sites, a **NW BiH Loop** which traverses roughly 530 km and 6 monument sites and an **Albanian Spur** which covers approximately 335 km and 7 monument sites. This report provides a map graphic giving an overview of the location of the sites and the connecting pathway, as well as providing a link to an online interactive version of the map. In addition to monument sites, the online interactive map also provides information on the location of complementary tourism sites included along the Balkan Monumental Trail. Upon completion and implementation, this monumental route project will have created a unique and one-of-a-kind tourism package which brings increased tourism to the WB6 region, increased length of tourist stays, increased visitation within areas underserved by tourism, increased tourism cooperation between WB6 economies and establishment of a pathway towards global recognition of the WB6 economies as a premier tourism destination within Europe.

Introduction

Over the last ten years, tourist traffic to Europe has risen by nearly 35%. Of this increase, the region which experienced the greatest spike in tourism was the South East Europe (SEE), a region which has been underserved by tourism in the past. As such, a great opportunity presents itself for these SEE economies to formulate new tourism products to present to the excited and eager visitors. Of the potential cultural assets within the SEE region, one which has been vastly underutilised and neglected in the past tourism development projects is the body of abstract sculptural World War II memorial works scattered across WB6. This monumental heritage is a distinct and unique European resource in how it communicates the universal ideas of the region's fierce anti-fascist WWII history which is often little-known internationally. Most importantly, while these ambitious and architecturally/artistically sophisticated monuments are often marginalised as tourism resources within the region they reside in, interest in them has been exponentially increasing worldwide over the last decade. The international interest in and appeal of these monuments, often referred to as '*spomeniks*', reached a crescendo in recent months with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City hosting a wildly successful exhibition on Yugoslav architecture and memorial sculpture. In addition, an English language book about the monuments of the former Yugoslavia was published called "*Spomenik Monument Database*".

However, while international interest in these fascinating monuments increases, there is, as of yet, little infrastructure or domestic guidance in place to facilitate the enjoyment, exploration or interpretation of this resource for tourists visiting the region. In addition, current cooperation and coordination between regions, municipalities and tourism service providers in relation to the monument sites is minimal. As a result, the RCC's Triple P Tourism Project aims to create infrastructure (tourist route, signage, marketing tools) and a network of partnerships that will serve as conduit for tourists to effectively engage with these monuments. Furthermore, as many of these monuments are located in areas far-flung from usual tourist paths, the creation of a '*Balkan Monumental Trail*' will bring economic stimulation to areas currently underserved by tourist traffic and also keep tourists in the region for a greater period of time.

Selection Methodology

This section briefly summarises and explores the criteria used for the selection of both the monument sites and the pathway which connects them.

Monument Site Selection

The entire proposed route, as it currently stands, is comprised of 40 monument sites spread across the WB6 economies. The monument sites were chosen based on several key factors which primarily include the following integral concepts:

- Historical and/or cultural significance
- Visual impressiveness and architectural/artistic appeal
- Current condition and state of repair of the monument site
- Sites of great natural splendour and remarkable scenic beauty
- Sites which are not exclusively ideological in presentation

In addition to the primary monument sites which will comprise the core of the Balkan Monumental Trail, additional tourist attraction sites will be chosen to supplement the route using a similar selection criteria.

Pathway Selection

Connecting each of these monument sites (and supplementary tourist attractions) will be done through a pathway stretching thousands of kilometres across each of WB6 economies. Consideration taken when determining this pathway includes the following key factors:

- Proximity to areas underserved by tourism
- Proximity to tourist facilities (restaurants, lodging, fuel, retail services, etc.)
- Proximity to well-maintained roadways
- A route which is simple and straightforward to follow and drive
- A route which is accessible all year round

Using such a criteria, tourists hoping to travel the route will be able to do so in a manner that is not only tried and tested along an optimised pathway, but it will be such a route that can be utilised all year round and provide them with all needed amenities that such tourists might desire.

Tentatively Selected Monument Sites

At this point in the project, a tentative list has been assembled of monument sites within the WB6 economies that conform as closely as possible to the criteria laid out in the previous section. As of now, 40 monuments and memorial sites have been chosen: 7 in Albania, 11 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4 in Kosovo*, 5 in Montenegro, 5 in the Republic of North Macedonia and 8 in Serbia. Brief pictorial overview of some of the sites chosen for each area is provided in the following sections. Note that not all pictures of all sites are included in each listing. The area that each monument site is located near is indicated beneath each photo.

Albania



Tirana



Bërzhitë



Peze e Vogel



Kamëz



Pishkash



Shkoder



Elbasan

Image 1: Albania sites

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Tjentište



Mostar



Sanski Most



Zenica



Novi Travnik



Sarajevo



Kozara



Banja Luka



Vogošća



Jablanica



Jajce

Image 2: Bosnia and Herzegovina sites

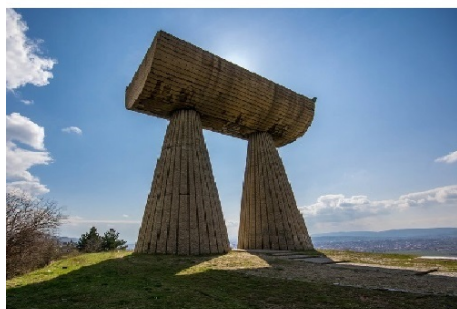
Kosovo*



Prishtinë/Priština



Brezovica/Brezovicë



**Mitrovica/Mitrovicë
North**



Velanija/Velanijë

Image 3: Kosovo* sites

Montenegro



Dola



Berane



Barutana



Kolašin



Nikšić

Image 4: Montenegro sites

Republic of North Macedonia



Veles



Kruševo



Kičevo



Prilep



Skopje

Image 5: Republic of North Macedonia sites

Serbia



Jajinci



Belgrade



Čačak



Kosmaj



Kadinjača



Leskovac



Kragujevac



Niš

Image 6: Serbia sites

Mapping of the Proposed Route

Having tentatively selected 40 monument sites for the proposed Balkan Monumental Trail across the WB6 economies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia, a pathway which connects all of these sites and a starting point for that pathway is to be determined. The following sections explore the tentative decisions made thus far regarding the route outline.

A Map of the Route

A tentative pathway to connect all monument sites is provided on **Map 1**. An interactive online version of this pathway can be viewed at:

https://www.scribblemaps.com/maps/view/RCC_Project_Route/PAkXzipF8f

Each monument site is indicated on the map with a numbered push-pin. On the interactive map, each push-pin can be clicked on for a photo of the site and clicked on for further information. This route is divided into three sections. First is the **Primary Route**, which is the central feature of the circular pathway that has its start in Belgrade and loops around in a counter-clockwise fashion, passing through the cities of Sarajevo, Prishtinë/Priština and Skopje, to then head back north up to the origin. The Primary Route is indicated in red on the map. Belgrade was chosen as a starting point because of it having greatest ease of access for international tourists. A second feature of the pathway is the **NW BiH Loop** which begins in Sarajevo and is marked on the map in blue. This loop provides access to the northwest region of Bosnia, an area which sees some of the lowest amounts of international tourists. A final feature of the map is the **Albanian Spur** which splits from the Primary Route in Podgorica. In Albania it begins in Shkodër and passes through Tirana; it connects back up to the Primary Route at Ohrid. The Albanian Spur is marked on the map in green. The reason for creation of the BiH Loop and the Albanian Spur was to increase the area served by the pathway without making the Primary Pathway too complicated or convoluted for visitors to follow.

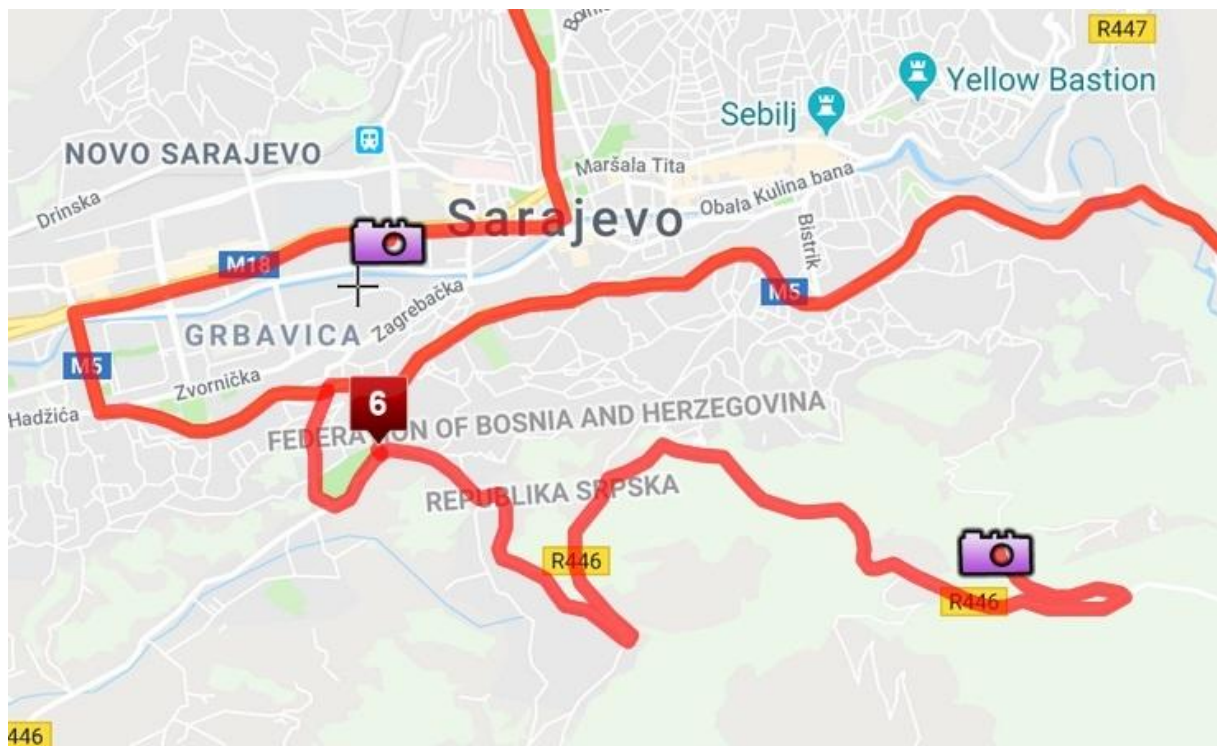
The **Primary Route** stretches over roughly 2,000 km and 25 monument sites, while the **NW BiH Loop** traverses roughly 530 km and 6 monument sites and the **Albanian Spur** covers approximately 335 km and 7 monument sites.



Map 1: A tentative map of the tourist route

Supplementary Tourist Attractions

In addition to the monument sites being marked on **Map 1**, an additional component to the map is the inclusion of supplementary tourist attractions along the pathway that enhance and add extra dimension to the tourist experience visitors can enjoy as they travel the route. These supplementary tourist sites are indicated on the map with small purple camera icons, with an example of what these icons look like visible on **Map 2**. Similar to the monument site icons, in the interactive map, each purple camera icon can be clicked on for a photo and more information, and then clicked on again to be taken to a separate website with more information about the site.



Map 2: A depiction of purple camera tourist sites

These supplementary tourist attractions range from sites of historical heritage, natural beauty/interest, architectural significance, cultural importance, to other such similar notability that will act to facilitate and enhance the route. While some locations are related to the theme of the route, some are simply general points of interest along the route that are of sufficient significance and notability.

Conclusion

As this Summary of the Balkan Monumental Trail has shown, much work has already been accomplished within this component of the Triple P Tourism Project of creating a basic and tentative framework and starting point for a tourist pathway centered around the abstract and modernist WWII monument heritage of the WB6 economies. As this report has illustrated, this route will greatly improve the accessibility and engagement of the growing numbers of international as well as domestic and regional tourists who are increasingly interested in the region's historical heritage. Furthermore, as the project focuses on highlighting sites within areas underserved by traditional forms of tourism, the route will also serve as an economic stimulator as well as a tool to extend the duration of stay of tourists and visitors already within the region. Meanwhile, with the inclusion of supplementary tourist attractions within the route, the amount and variety of businesses, vendors, and attractions economically stimulated and patronised will increase even further. As a result of these monument sites bringing in increased tourism to the region and benefits to area economies, local populations may potentially, as a result, recognise the cultural and historical heritage embodied within the monuments and take greater steps towards preserving and promoting them. Therefore, upon completion and implementation, this Balkan Monumental Trail project will have created a platform which works towards creating:

- Increased tourism to the WB6 economies
- Economic stimulation, especially in areas underserved by tourism
- Longer stays by visiting tourists to the region
- Greater appreciation, both domestic and foreign, of abstract WWII monuments
- Increased cooperation between WB6 economies as it relates to tourism
- Improved tourism services along the route
- Global recognition of the WB6 economies as a premier European tourism destination
- A new tourism service sector which can cater to this growing tourism market

List of abbreviations

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

MoMA – Museum of Modern Art in New York City, USA

NW – Northwest

RCC – Regional Cooperation Council

SEE – South East Europe

WB6 – Six Western Balkans economies

WWII – World War II