

**доц. д-р ГЕОРГИ ГЕОРГИЕВ**  
ЮЗУ “НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ”, БЛАГОЕВГРАД

**докторант МАРИЯ ВАСИЛЕВА**  
ЮЗУ “НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ”, БЛАГОЕВГРАД

**ОБЕКТИТЕ ОТ СВЕТОВНОТО ПРИРОДНО И КУЛТУРНО НАСЛЕДСТВО В  
СТРАНИТЕ ОТ БАЛКАНСКИЯ РЕГИОН И РАЗВИТИЕТО НА ТУРИЗМА**

**WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE SITES IN THE COUNTRIES OF  
THE BALKAN REGION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

**Associate Prof. Dr. GEORGI GEORGIEV**  
*SOUTH WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI”, Blagoevgrad*

**PhD Student MARIA VASILEVA**  
*SOUTH WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI”, Blagoevgrad*

**Abstract:** The World Heritage Sites are properties which bear testimony to outstanding values in terms of their cultural and natural significance for the people all over the world. They represent a living relation with the past and will be the testament of the mankind for the future generations. Their promotion and popularization by means of sustainable tourism can result in positive effects in two ways – on the one hand it will enhance tourism development and profitability while on the other hand it will ensure site conservation at the very same time.

The aim of this paper is to emphasize on the opportunities for the countries within the Balkan region to integrate the world heritage they possess into their overall tourism vision. By means of cross-border coordination and cohesive efforts in sustainable tourism policy and management, the Balkan countries could turn into attractive destination thanks to their cultural and natural authenticity and uniqueness.

**Key words:** World Heritage Convention, World Heritage List, World Heritage area, World Heritage itinerary.

The most important document which integrates and synthesizes within a common frame the concept and implementation methodology of the World Heritage initiative is called **World Heritage Convention**<sup>1</sup>. It was signed at the XVII

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<sup>1</sup> In retrospective plan the idea for conservation and protection of world cultural and natural heritage dates back in 1959, when UNESCO initiated a campaign with the aim to preserve the temple of Aby Simbel in the Nile valley. At that time, the first project of the World Heritage Convention was prepared. In 1962 UNESCO launched Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites. This document comprises of protection guidelines for cultural and natural sites. In 1965 at a conference, taking place in the White House an idea was given for the foundation of a World Heritage Trust which to preserve natural areas and historical monuments. In 1966 UNESCO initiated a campaign with the purpose to save Venice after the devastating

Session of the General Assembly of UNESCO on 16 November 1972 in Paris, France. The Convention implementation was initiated on 07<sup>th</sup> of December 1973 when it was ratified by the USA and other nineteen countries among which is Bulgaria. On behalf of Bulgaria it was adopted with Decree No 13 of the Council of Ministers on 04. February 1974 and entered into force on 17 September 1975. The document was promulgated in State

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floods in the city. In 1968 the World Conservation Union (IUCN) joined the initiative. All propositions were collected together and formed the World Heritage Convention in 1972. It was done after the United Nations conference on the Human Environment, taking place in Stockholm, Sweden and thanks to the support and expert advice on behalf of the working groups from IUCN, ICOMOS and UNESCO.

Gazette No 44 on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2005. The national coordinator for this significant international initiative was the National Commission of the Republic of Bulgaria for UNESCO at the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Ministry of culture and Ministry of Environment and Water. The coordinating directorate was the National Nature Protection Service at the Ministry of Environment and Water. In terms of the Bulgarian legislation, the most significant documents, transposing the World Heritage Convention are The Protected Areas Act, The Biodiversity Act as well as the Environmental Protection Act.

The Convention was prepared by the **World Heritage Committee**<sup>1</sup>. The first

<sup>1</sup> The intergovernmental World Heritage Committee consists of 21 members, elected for up to 6 years which represent the states-signatories of the Convention. They participate in the General Assembly of state parties, meeting once every two years during the regular sessions of the General Conference of UNESCO. At its regular sessions once a year the Committee decides on the inscription of nominated

committee members were elected in November 1976. At their first session, which took place in June 1977 they accepted the committee principles and working methodology. In the following year (1978), the first twenty sites were endorsed by the Committee. In April 2009 the total number of the enlisted sites comes to 878, out of which 679 are cultural and 174 natural sites located on the territory of 145 countries. The remaining 25 properties are of mixed character (such as Tikal National Park in Guatemala, Mount Taishan in China and other properties, representing cultural and natural landmarks.<sup>2</sup>

Their distribution by regions may be presented at chart 1:

sites on the World Heritage List. It can also require further information on the properties from the State Parties. The Committee examines reports on the state of conservations of sites, inscribed as world heritage and can take any other decisions needed for the Convention implementation.

<sup>2</sup> Information published by World Heritage Centre, whc.unesco.org/en/list

Distribution of World Heritage Sites

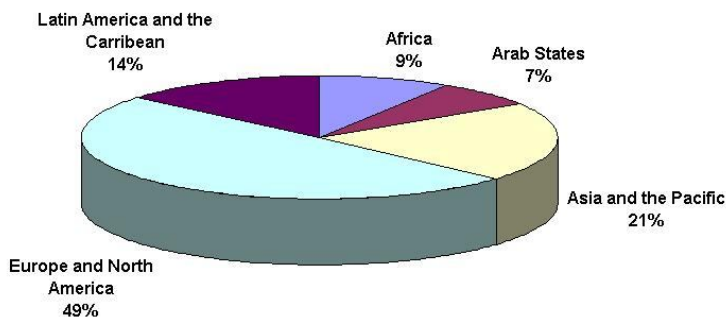


Chart 1

It is not a surprise that the half of all sites enlisted by UNESCO are located on the territory of Europe and North America. And what is more 86 % of them are cultural sites (372), while the remaining 14 % are

distributed between natural (54 sites) and mixed (9) properties. The great majority of sites, acknowledged as world heritage are located on the territory of Italy – 43, followed by Spain – 40, China – 37,

Germany and France 33 per country, India – 27 etc. Until 2009 186 state parties have ratified the World Heritage Convention.

Except for the World Heritage List there is also a list of endangered properties called **World Heritage in Danger**<sup>1</sup>.

All properties inscribed on the lists are subject to annual inspection by the committee members. In case of an infringement, instituted by the monitoring body, any property can be deleted from the World Heritage List, which in turn is a serious disadvantage for the international vision of the country which could not prevent its deletion.

During site selection process, the World Heritage Committee assists the countries in regard with any technical provisions and site conservation matters. In some cases the World Heritage Committee, in particular its Secretariat, uses consultation services by different international organizations, two of which are non-governmental. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and The World Conservation Union (IUCN) give their professional advice on the cultural and natural properties, nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. The third advisory body is The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), an intergovernmental body, which provides expert advice in regard with cultural site

<sup>1</sup> The list of World Heritage in Danger represents an effective instrument for conservation of the inscribed properties. It aims to pay the attention of the international community at sites, endangered by bad natural conditions or anthropogenic activity. These can be all armed conflicts and wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollutions, poaching, thefts or even unscrupulous overbuilding and urbanization. The enlisted properties mobilize the potential of the international community in the purpose of undertaking urgent conservation activities. Some of the endangered properties on the list are: the city of Bam in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan, Walled City of Baku in Azerbaijan, Historic town of Zabid in Yemen, the National Parks of Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega, Salonga, Virunga and the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

conservation, employee training and other important matters.

A very fruitful collaboration is established between the Committee and The International Council of Museums (ICOM), founded in 1946; the Nordic World Heritage Foundation (NWHF); the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) and the United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP – WCMC) which runs the database of all natural world heritage sites; with the Cultural and Science sectors at UNESCO and etc.

Sometimes countries on which territory there is a large number of cultural and natural sites of global significance do not possess enough financial resources for effective management and conservation of their properties. That is the reason for the establishment of the **World Heritage Fund** within the framework of the Convention. All states, signatories of the World Heritage Convention participate in the fund raising by 1% of their regular mandatory contribution intended for the UNESCO budget. There is also an option for extra funding by NGOs and private entities<sup>2</sup> (the so called Funds – in –trust).

The adoption of the World Heritage Convention was followed by establishment

<sup>2</sup> The World Heritage Fund provides about USD 4 million annually; The World Heritage Committee determines the use of the fund, giving a priority for the endangered properties. International assistance from the fund can be given for requests falling under one of the following five categories:

- Preparatory assistance - to prepare tentative lists, nomination reports for properties, conservation project proposals or management plans;
- Training assistance – to finance group training courses, mainly for personnel, working on world heritage sites (individual financing is not allowed);
- Technical cooperation – to provide expertise and material support in the purpose of preparation of management plans, as well as other conservation activities, intended for the enlisted properties;
- Emergency assistance – to provide urgent action aiming to repair damages, caused by human activity or natural disasters;
- Promotional and educational assistance;

of a system, giving an opportunity for the general public to participate actively in the conservation of the world heritage of the mankind. The system is supported by permanent legislative, financial and administrative assistance in scope of properties protection.

In accordance with the Convention requisites for world heritage sites can be acknowledged physico-geographical, geological and biological formations or groups with universal, aesthetical or scientific significance. As world natural heritage are included designated territories, which are habitats of endangered animal and plant species. In order for a property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, it should bear a testimony for outstanding universal value and meet at least one of ten criteria for selection. The criteria are described at the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention<sup>1</sup>. Till the end of 2004 the properties were selected on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria. With the adoption of some amendments in the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, all of them were united in a set of ten criteria for selection. Each site, justified as world heritage should meet at least one of the following conditions:

- to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius<sup>2</sup>;
- to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

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<sup>1</sup> There are four basic instruments of the Convention, as follows – the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (available in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabian); The Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (in English and French); List of the State-Parties to the World Heritage Convention (in English and French); The World Heritage List (in English and French). The latter is updated and published annually.

<sup>2</sup> The criteria for selection, World Heritage Centre, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>

- to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Important step for the initiative implementation was marked within the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Heritage Convention ratification in 1992 when the **World**

**Heritage Centre at UNESCO<sup>1</sup>** was founded. During the celebration except for the center establishment the Committee adopted a special site category called cultural landscapes. This action turned automatically the World Heritage Convention into the first international legislative instrument for acknowledgement and protection of such kind of territories. Two years later, in 1994, the World Heritage Committee launched the General Strategy for a Balanced Representative and Credible World Heritage List in the aim to ensure harmonization in the regional distribution and more diversified thematic representation of the enlisted world heritage sites. This strategy encourages nomination of properties, located in regions that are not well-represented and especially ones belonging to underdeveloped categories.

With the adoption of the Global Strategy, the World Heritage Committee wants to broaden the definition of World Heritage in order for it to better reflect the full range of the world's cultural and natural treasures and to provide a comprehensive framework and operational methodology for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. This concept goes beyond the narrow definitions of heritage as it contributes to the recognition and protection of sites which represent outstanding demonstrations of human coexistence with the land as well as human interactions, cultural coexistence, spirituality and creative expression.

Of great importance for the Global strategy implementation are all efforts toward ratification of the Convention from more countries, preparation of tentative lists and site nominations for categories and regions which currently feature low representation on the World Heritage List. The adoption of the above strategy resulted in ratification of the Convention by 40 new countries, including countries from Eastern

Europe, Africa and some Arab states and small pacific island states. Furthermore it stimulated a series of important conferences and thematic research studies that were initiated in Africa, the Pacific region, the Caribbean, the Andean region, central Asia, the Arab region and others.

On the basis of the selection criteria, the majority of sites, enlisted as world natural heritage could be divided into three groups. The first group comprises habitats of large mammal herds, the second one includes properties located on the territory of wetlands, whilst the third group comprises areas of biosphere reserves.

Some of the most popular sites, included in the first classification group are the Serengeti National Park (Tanzania), Wood Buffalo National Park (Canada) – some of the largest protected zones worldwide (44 800 sq km), famous for the large buffalo herds, Garamba National Park (Zair, Democratic Republic of the Congo), Bialoweiza Forest in Poland and others.

In the group of the wetlands, exceptional scientific significance has Niasa Lake (Malawi), West Tasmania Lake (Australia), Djoudj Sanctuary, the national ornithological reserve situated in the Senegal River delta, Sundarbans National Park, containing a large area of mangrove forests in the Ganges delta, being a habitat for the biggest tiger colony and other endangered animals.

In the group of the biosphere reserves we cannot miss Sian Ka'an (Mexico), five from the 43 biosphere reserves in the USA –Yellowstone, Everglades, Redwood, Olympic and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, Saint Kilda (Scotland), Tassili n'Ajjer (Algeria), Talamanca Range – La Amistad Reserves/ La Amistad National Park (Costa Rica) and many others.

World heritage sites are also the Mount Taishan (China), Sagarmatha National Park and Royal Chitwan National Park (Nepal), Te Wahipounamu –South West New Zealand, The Grand Canyon National Park, Mammoth Cave National Park, Yosemite National Park, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (USA), Fontainebleau castle and park,

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<sup>1</sup> The World Heritage Centre is situated in Paris, France. It is responsible for the annual implementation and management of the Convention. It also administrates the World Heritage Fund.

Scandola Natural reserve of Corsica (France), Galapagos and Sagay National Parks (Ecuador), Durmitor (Montenegro), Plitvice Lakes (Croatia), Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu reserve, Willandra Lakes Region, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Lord Howe, tropical wet forests on the eastern coastline of Australia, Virunga, Kahuzi –Biega, Salonga National Parks in Democratic republic of the Congo, Nahanni, Dinosaur Provincial Park, Canadian Rocky Mountains, Gros Morne National Park, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Kluane/Wrangell –St Elijias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini – Aisek (Canada) and etc.

It is obvious that the world natural heritage sites represent valuable samples of natural ecosystems, which establish themselves as nuclei of a large complex network, for the need of information flow and experience transition in the aim of their better sustainable conservation. National parks and natural reserves are also here, which on other hand serve as a base for a series of regional ecological networks.

Cultural landscapes which represent a new category of the world heritage, as stated above, and their ecological significance are determined on the basis of interaction between traditional forms of resource utilization and environment protection. Their inclusion within the common network of world heritage sites will contribute to broaden practical approach in problem solving in terms of sustainable development (Mateeva, 1999).

The idea of a system comprising of natural and cultural sites, whose protection and conservation require permanent interchange of information and know-how, public awareness on problems and their solutions with the support of the mankind is given within the World Heritage Convention. It was commonly used as a basic principle for other initiatives in the purpose of environment protection. Many of them, according to the author above, are based on the concept for breaking the existing restrictions and limitations of access on the territories of reserves through establishment of wider areas, where people and nature

live in harmony. That way there can be secured a free movement of wild animals and migrating bird species.

There can be no state boundaries for the nature – it exists in its integrity. Keeping to its laws for restoration at a balanced exploitation of its resources is the only way to ensure its survival and preservation. This requires development of general concepts and management rules for the big regional units with an emphasis on their key areas, establishment of itineraries, coordination among countries, which manage different parts of mountain ranges, seas and agricultural landscapes. The wide experience in the field of nature protection has shown so far, that this is the only way to prevent further decrease in populations, habitat devastation and potential risks of natural cataclysm (Mateeva, 1999). The basic principles of the Convention, used for the implementation of the idea, leading to establishment of ecological networks of natural habitats according to the same author are as follow:

- human attendance in protected areas should not be banned. Instead it should be regulated in terms of the principles for sustainable development, which include the aspects of environment in different socio-economic fields of politics, taking place on territorial level;
- all preconditions needed for the normal working of the ecological networks should be granted by the legislation, in accordance with the Habitat Directive;
- The initiative implementation is possible and dependent on the active role and participation of local communities.

In the purpose of this analysis a special attention will be paid at the countries, forming the Balkan region. Being one of the very few places worldwide, the Balkan peninsula is inhabited since ancient times. Some artifacts reveal that the first civilizations and cultures living within its territories date back to VII BC. Except for its amazing cultural proliferation the region also features favourable climate, a prerequisite for natural diversity and

abundance in terms of animal and plant species as well as natural formations.

A closer look at the Balkan countries reveals that they share only 14 % of the heritage sites in Europe and North America. In absolute terms the total number of the

sites is 64, classified as follows – 55 cultural, 6 natural and 3 mixed properties, data which relates closely to the common tendency for the numerical superiority of cultural sites over natural and mixed areas.

No	Country	Property	Cultural heritage	Natural heritage	Location	Criteria for selection	Year of inscription	Enlargement	Threats
1	Albania	Butrint	+		District of Sarandë, County of Vlorë	(iii)	1992	1999	1997-2005
		Historic centres of Berat and Gjirokastra	+		Towns of Berat(south-central Albania) and Gjirokastra (southern Albania)	(iii), (iv)	2005	2008	
2	Bosna and Herzegovina	Old bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar	+		Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	(vi)	2005		
		Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad	+		Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Macro Region	(ii), (iv)	2007		
3	Bulgaria	Boyana Church	+		Boyana district, Sofia	(ii), (iv)	1979		
		Madara Rider	+		Village of Madara, Province of Shumen	(i), (iii)	1979		
		Rock- Hewn Churches of Ivanovo	+		Village of Ivanovo, Province of Ruse	(ii), (iii)	1979		
		Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak	+		Kazanlak, Province of Stara Zagora	(i), (iii), (iv)	1979		
		Ancient city of Nessebar	+		Burgas Province	(iii), (iv)	1983		
		Pirin National Park		+	Pirin Mountain, Blagoevgrad Province	(vii), (viii), (ix)	1983		
		Rila Monastery	+		Rila, Kyustendil Province	(vi)	1983		
		Srebarna Nature Reserve		+	Village of Srebarna, Province of Silistra	(x)	1983		1992 - 2003
		Tracian Tomb of Sveshtari	+		Razgrad Province	(i), (iii)	1985		

No	Country	Property	Cultural heritage	Natural heritage	Location	Criteria for selection	Year of inscription	Enlargement	Threats
4	Greece	Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae	+		Prefectures of Messenia, Arcadia, and Ilia in the Western Peloponnese	(i), (ii), (iii)	1986		
		Acropolis, Athens	+		Prefecture and Region of Attica	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v)	1987		
		Archaeological Site of Delphi	+		Prefecture of Phokis, Region of Central Greece	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)	1997		
		Medieval city of Rhodes	+		Prefecture of Dodecanese, Region of the South Aegean	(ii), (iv), (v)	1988		
		Meteora	+	+	Prefecture of Trikala, Region of Thessaly	(i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vii)	1988		
		Mount Athos	+	+	Autonomous region of Mount Athos	(i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii)	1988		
		Paleochristian and Byzantine Monuments of Thessalonika	+		Prefecture of Thessaloniki, Region of Central Macedonia	(i), (ii), (iv)	1988		
		Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus	+		Prefecture of Argolis, Region of the Peloponnesos	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)	1988		
		Archaeological Site of Mystras	+		Prefecture of Laconia, Region of the Peloponnesos	(ii), (iii), (iv)	1989		
		Archaeological Site of Olympia	+		Prefecture of Ilia, Region of West Greece in the Western Peloponnese	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)	1989		
		Delos	+		Prefecture of Cyclades, Region of the South Aegean	(ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)	1990		
		Monasteries of Daphni, Hosios Loukas and Nea Moni of Chios	+		Regions of Attica, Central Greece, North Aegean	(i), (iv)	1990		
		Pythagoreion and Heraion of Samos	+		Prefecture of Samos, Region of the North Aegean	(ii), (iii)	1992		



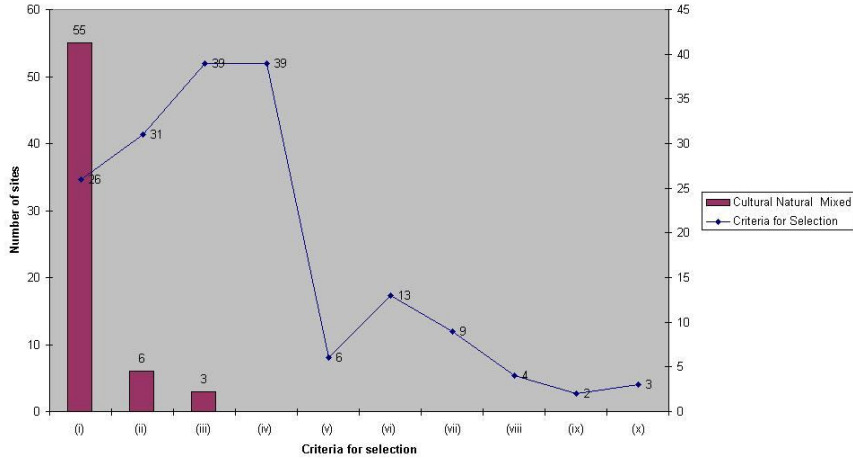
No	Country	Property	Cultural heritage	Natural heritage	Location	Criteria for selection	Year of inscription	Enlargement	Threats
		Archaeological Site of Aigai (modern name Vergina)	+		Prefecture of Imathia, Region of Central Macedonia	(i), (iii)	1996		
		Archaeological Sites of Mycenae and Tiryns	+		Prefecture of Argolis, Region of the Peloponnesos	(i),(ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)	1999		
		Historic Centre (Chora) with the Monastery of Saint John "the Theologian" and the Cave of the Apocalypse on the Island of Patmos	+		Prefecture of Dodecanese, Region of the South Aegean	(iii), (iv), (vi)	1999		
		Old Town of Corfu	+		Ionian Islands, Corfu Prefecture	(iv)	2007		
5	Macedonia	Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region	+	+	Ohrid (municipality)	(i), (iii), (iv), (vii)	1979	1980	
6	Romania	Danube Delta		+	Tulcea County, Dobruja Region	(vii), (x)	1991		
		Churches of Moldavia	+		County of Suceava, Region of Moldavia	(i), (iv)	1993		
		Monastery of Horezu	+		Vâlcea County, Region of Wallachia	(ii)	1993		
		Villages with fortified churches in Transylvania	+		Counties of Alba, Brasov, Harghita, Mureş, Sibiu, Region of Transylvania	(iv)	1993	1999	
		Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains	+		Counties of Alba and Hunedoara, Region of Transylvania	(ii), (iii), (iv)	1999		
		Historic Centre of Sighişoara	+		Mureş County, Region of Transylvania	(iii), (iv)	1999		

No	Country	Property	Cultural heritage	Natural heritage	Location	Criteria for selection	Year of inscription	Enlargement	Threats
		Wooden Churches of Maramureş	+		Districts of Bârsana, Budesti, Desesti, Izei, Târgu-Lapus; Maramureş County, Region of Transylvania	(iv)	1999		
7	Cyprus	Paphos	+		District of Paphos	(iii), (vi)	1980		
		Painted Churches in the Troodos Region	+		Troodos Region, Districts of Nicosia and Limassol	(ii), (iii), (iv)	1985	2001	
		Choirokoitia	+		District of Larnaca	(ii), (iii), (iv)	1998		
8	Kosovo	Medieval Monuments in Kosovo	+		Autonomous province of Kosovo	(ii), (iii), (iv)	2004	2006	2006
9	Slovenia	Škocjan caves		+	Villages of Škocjan pri Divaci, Mata vun and Betanja	(vii), (viii)	1986		
10	Serbia	Stari Ras and Sopoćani	+		Stari Ras, Raška region	(i), (iii)	1979		
		Studenica Monastery	+		Village of Studenica, Commune of Kraljevo, Raška Distric	(i), (ii), (iv), (vi)	1986		
		Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius	+		Eastern Serbia	(iii), (iv)	2007		
11	Turkey	Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia	+		Nevşehir Province	(i), (iii), (v), (vii)	1985		
		Great Mosque and Hospital of Divriği	+		City and District of Divriği, Province of Sivas (Eastern Anatolia)	(i), (iv)	1985		
		Historic areas of Istanbul	+		Istanbul	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv)	1985		
		Hattusha: the Hittite Capital	+		District of Sungurlu, Çorum Province	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv)	1986		
		Nemrut Dağ	+		Southeastern Turkey	(i), (iii), (iv)	1987		
		Hierapolis-Pamukkale	+		Denizli Province	(iii), (iv), (vii)	1988		

No	Country	Property	Cultural heritage	Natural heritage	Location	Criteria for selection	Year of inscription	Enlargement	Threats
		Xanthos-Letoon	+		Provinces of Muğla and Antalya	(ii), (iii)	1988		
		City of Safranbolu	+		City and District of Safranbolu, Province of Karabuk	(ii), (iv),(v)	1994		
		Archaeological Site of Troy	+		Province of Çanakkale	(ii), (iii), (vi)	1998		
12	Croatia	Historical Complex of Split with the Palace of Diocletian	+		County of Split-Dalmatia	(ii),(iii), (iv)	1979		
		Old City of Dubrovnik	+		County of Dubrovnik-Neretva, Adriatic Coast	(i), (iii), (iv)	1979	1994	1991-1998
		Plitvice Lake National Park		+	County of Lika-Senj, 10km east of Bihac	(vii), (viii), (ix)	1979	2000	1992-1997
		Episcopal Complex of the Euphrasian Basilica in the Historic Centre of Poreč	+		County of Istria	(ii), (iii), (iv)	1997		
		Historic Centre of Trogir	+		County of Split-Dalmatia	(ii), (iv)	1997		
		The Cathedral of St James in Šibenik	+		County of Šibenik-Knin	(i), (ii), (iv)	2000		
		Stari Grad Plain	+		Split and Dalmatia Counties	(ii), (iii), (vi)	2008		
13	Montenegro	Natural and Culturo-Historical Region of Kotor	+		City of Kotor and surrounding territory	(i), (ii), (iii), (iv)	1979		1979-2003
		Durmitor National Park		+	Republic of Montenegro	(vii), (viii), (x)	1980	2005	

In scope of predominant criteria for selection, the majority of sites are nominated for the following criteria - (ii), (iii) and (iv), as seen on chart 2.

World Heritage Sites on the Balkans in scope of their type and criteria for selection

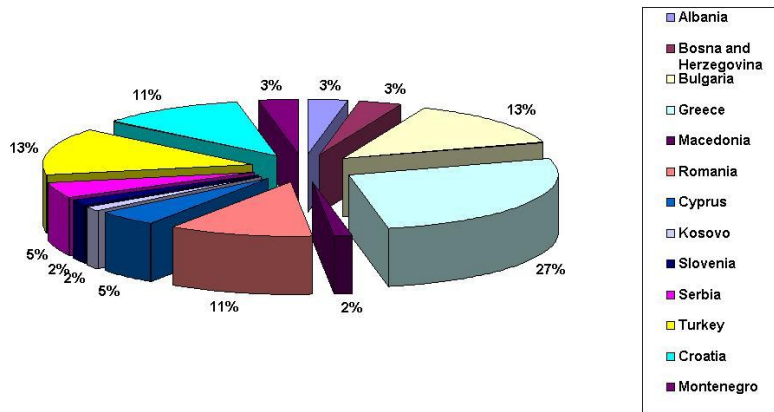


This means, that the dominating proportion of the heritage sites on the Balkans are selected for their authentic historical value and cultural tradition revealed in architecture, monumental arts, town-planning and landscape design. They are a living evidence for the transition in

human values reflected in the way of life and thought of generations of people. This is what makes them global, of universal significance. An analysis aimed to show the site distribution among the countries of the Balkan peninsula

(Chart 3) could serve as a basis for further research of the world heritage in this region.

World Heritage Sites on the Balkans



Within the scope of the Balkan peninsula Greece is ranked on the first place with 17 sites in total, followed by Bulgaria and Turkey with 9 sites for each. Croatia and

Romania also have equal share in the pie graph, as each of both countries has 7 sites, enlisted in the World Heritage List. Next in the rank are Serbia and Cyprus with

three sites per country, while Albania, Montenegro and Bosna and Herzegovina have enlisted only two sites within their territory. Only one site per country is enlisted for the countries Macedonia, Slovenia and Kosovo.

The countries ranked from first to fifth place share 75 % of all world heritage sites on the Balkans or 49 out of 64 sites in total.

There is no tendency in scope of the site spatial distribution as their locations are scattered within the whole territory of the countries they belong to. Furthermore there are lots of sites, located out of towns and villages or lying remote from any settlements such as the archeological site of Mystras in Greece for example.

All world heritage sites, located on the Balkan peninsula have some features in common important for their attractiveness in scope of tourism. One of the key issues in regard with some of the sites is their isolation in regions difficult of access. Examples of such sites are Butrint in Albania, Meteora in Greece, Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains in Romania. Their remoteness of any settlements is a serious disadvantage in scope of tourism for several reasons:

- 1) Restricted number of means of transport, getting to and from the site;
- 2) Lack of or inadequate tourism infrastructure in scope of hotels, camp sites and other places for accommodation and lodging in the site area;
- 3) Lack of or insufficient tourism entities, supplying tourism products and services.

These reasons are a serious stumbling-block for the integration and tourism "exploitation" of all isolated world heritage sites on the Balkans.

Another obstacle in terms of tourism is the fact that a large number of the world heritage sites nowadays represent part of ancient complex venues and many of them are ruined or missing. That means that they offer a tourist product based mainly on passive activities for tourists, visiting those sites, such as watching the site remains and listening to tour guide lectures. In that

way, tourists are limited in their perception of the site and its past functions and glory. In order for visitors to feel satisfied they need to create an emotional relation with the site, they want to feel themselves as an integral part of it and "see" it in its completeness and integrity. That is why the competitiveness and attractiveness of a tourism product nowadays reflects its recourses and utilized means of technology. Their synergy and mutual utilization serve as a meeting point between tourism expectations and demands and tourism supply in terms of product features.

As the majority of world heritage sites on the Balkans (especially the cultural sites) are closely related to the past and historic development of different civilizations and communities different presentation could be included in site product portfolios. They could be in form of interactive multimedia movies or computerized animation films or audio and video interpretative clips and etc. Nevertheless of their format, they will definitely enhance tourists experience and intensify tourist perception of the place of visitation.

World heritage sites are transnational as they bear testimony for universal values which make them of universal significance for the people all over the world. They represent the living relation with the past and will be a testament of the mankind for the future generations. That is why their popularization by the means of sustainable tourism will result in positive effects for tourism industry and site conservation alike.

As seen on the graph above, the Balkan peninsula comprises of 64 sites, out of which 55 are cultural, 6 are natural and 3 are mixed properties, distributed among 13 countries. As their number varies from country to country and there is a big disproportion of their locations, for the purpose of tourism development a relevant classification can be done. There are three main categories, based on the indicators – number of world heritage sites at the selected area; territorial proximity of one another; other places and sites of interest;

key forms of tourism developed in the analyzed region.

In regard with these factors the following three forms of destinations can be classified:

1) **World Heritage area** – an area with high intensification of cultural and natural sites, enlisted by UNESCO in the World Heritage list;

2) **Heritage itinerary** – a route developed for the purpose of tourism, comprising world heritage sites as well as other places or objects of regional/ national/ local significance visited by tourists with special interests;

3) **Integration of heritage tourism with a traditional form of tourism** in scope of the destination profile and resources

A world heritage area could be established in Greece, within the peninsula and region of Peloponnese. This area can comprise of the Archeological Site of Olimpia, Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae, Archeological site of Mystras, Archeological site of Mycenae and Tiryns, Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus. This thematic area consists of five world heritage sites together with other places of archeological, religious and fortifying significance.

The peninsula of Peloponnese is famous for the residents of Greece, as it is one of the top three tourism destinations in terms of domestic tourism. On the contrary, the island is not among the favorite places for international tourists in Greece, who prefer to stay at Crete (over 12 mill people for 2007), the islands in the Aegean sea (11 mill) and Ionian islands.

An establishment of a world heritage area within the territory of Peloponnese could contribute to an increase in tourist visitation of residents and international tourists alike. What is more it could play an important role in the island popularization and sustainable tourism development.

Other forms of integrity of world heritage sites on the Balkans in terms of tourism are the so called cultural itineraries. They could be of national and transnational scale in

regard with the number the countries they encompass.

An example of a world heritage itinerary within the boundaries of one country could be a thematic route in Bulgaria, connecting Veliko Tarnovo.- Trjavna- Gabrovo - Kazanlak. It can be called Bulgaria through the centuries – from thracians to the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, representing different historical monuments from III BC to the XIVAC.

That way this route could contribute to the enrichment of the tourist product of Veliko Tarnovo while at the same time more people will get to know the Thracian tomb in Kazanlak, which is enlisted as one of the heritage sites of the mankind.

Another route, connecting natural and cultural heritage sites could link Ruse – Sveshtari and Silistra. That way tourists can visit the Rock-hewn churches in Ivanovo, Tracian tomb of Sveshtari and as a final stop to see the Srebarna reserve, famous for its bird diversity. This route allows different type of activities such as ecotourism, photo safari, adventure trips as well as cultural tourism.

Except for national, heritage itineraries could be transnational. An example for such type of route could link Montenegro and Croatia. Visiting five world heritage sites – National and Cultural Historic Region of Kotor – the Old city of Dubrovnik - Historical Complex of Split with the Palace of Diocletian –Historic centre of Trogir – The Cathedral of St James in Sibenik. Together with the five world heritage sites tourists could also see other archeological and religious monuments along the Adriatic coast of Montenegro and Croatia. An action that will have a positive impact on sustainable tourism development in Croatia and Montenegro, world heritage site conservation as well as improvement in the well-being of local communities.

When a certain heritage site is located in an isolated area at a destination without any other significant monuments in proximity, a possible solution for the tourist destination is to integrate the site visitation within its profile and other tourism resources.

A typical example of such destination is the world heritage site of Gamizgrad Romuliana, Palace of Galerius in Serbia. The city is popular as a spa resort and attracts visitors for its spa services. In scope of tourism product diversification and supply of extra services organized tours to the world heritage sites could be arranged. Similar example could be given with visits to Madara rider in Bulgaria which is located in Madara village, close to Shumen. It is a way to promote the different aspects of the tourist product of the destination while at the same time tourists combine their recreational holidays with one-day heritage trips.

Similar heritage areas and itineraries could be established for each of the countries on the Balkan peninsula. Their advantage results in popularization of the destinations, increase in visitation rates, enrichment of tourism products and services as well as better competitiveness and attractiveness on national and international level.

The idea of themed itineraries has its roots in a programme aiming at establishing cultural routes, initiated in 1987 by the Council of Europe. The objective of this initiative was to “demonstrate in a visible way, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe represented a shared cultural heritage”<sup>1</sup>. The first route called Saint Jacques de Compostele is established the same year and in 1993 it was given the status World heritage. In 1997 the Council of Europe founded the European institute for cultural itineraries in Luxemburg whilst the next year the International scientific committee for cultural itineraries of ICOMOS was established.

Further to the development of different routes within Europe, ICOMOS Bulgaria promoted in 1999 the Cultural itineraries of South-Eastern Europe, a project which aims to develop routes within the countries of Albania, Bosna and Herzegovina, Bulgaria,

Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and the former republic of Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS as an initiator and main coordinator of the project started development of cultural network of themed routes for the region of South Eastern Europe. Some of the project activities were funded by the King Baudoin Foundation which assisted the project in terms of development of electronic database and maps.

The network of cultural routes in South Eeastern Europe could be divided into two major groups:

- cultural itineraries with specific subject – including values united by specific integrating topics. Of extreme importance are the communication links, possessing cultural value as well;
- territorial cultural itineraries – relating values in outstanding coherent territories, rich in cultural heritage and possessing a definite cultural integrity.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of this classification within the territory of the South Eastern countries the following five types of cultural itineraries are developed:

- Antique archeological zones;
- Fortifications;
- Religious centers and monasteries;
- Vernacular architecture;
- World heritage.

Popularization of the sites, included in the routes is an important step toward recognition and cohesion of the Balkan countries, through the means of their common past. Except for the significance of the conservation of these sites for the future generations and their universal value that should contribute to the cultural synergism and harmonization among people of different nationalities and religions, this project is an important step toward sustainable management of tourism.

The cultural itineraries within the territory of the Balkan peninsula strengthen its position on the global tourism market. A

<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe Cultural Routes, [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

<sup>2</sup> Krastev Todor, International Workshop “Cultural Itineraries of South-Eastern Europe”, Sofia, 2000

region which was inhabited by ancient civilizations and experienced a dramatic development through the ages a testimony of which is the proliferation of historical monuments and sites.

In the recent years cultural and heritage tourism are two of the fast-growing forms of tourism in global scale. Even though for the Balkan peninsula standard forms of tourism (such as recreational, mountain and ski tourism) are predominant. With the purpose of a tourism diversification cultural itineraries on the Balkans contribute to the expansion of its supply opportunities, providing for demands of tourists with special interests. The successful implementation of the project for the countries of South –Eastern Europe is the first step, which has very positive outcomes.

On the other hand it faces some weaknesses, most important of which is the lack of co-ordination with tourism organizations and other businesses involved in the industry. Another weak point is the fact that the electronic database is not updated regularly, once the project is terminated.

In order to keep a long-term effect in scope of project goals it is important for initiatives like the one, implemented by ICOMOS Bulgaria and other Balkan countries, to have support by local authorities and tourism entities. This is a key prerequisite which could guarantee for the long-term effect of the keeping them into force.

The aim of this paper was to emphasize on the opportunities for the Balkan peninsula to integrate its world heritage sites into its overall tourism vision. Being one of the few places in the world, inhabited by people since ancient times, the Balkan peninsula offers sites and monuments of universal value for the mankind.

By means of cross-border coordination and cohesive efforts in sustainable tourism policy and management, the Balkan countries could create an image attractive for their cultural authenticity and uniqueness in global scale. And the latter is important for the region profitability in terms of tourism, but it also can contribute to the preservation and transmitting to next generation of sites, which value is eternal.

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