



TRIP DOSSIER

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



“Bosnia and Herzegovina- Crossroads of East and West”

£1,095 per person

Departure Dates:

Sunday 15th June 2008

Sunday 14th September 2008

Tour Grade: B

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Introduction

Background We are proud to launch a new eco-tour into one of the most exciting emerging destinations – Bosnia and Herzegovina. A land full of surprises, the biggest surprise being that tourism is definitely back and for those that are able to alter their perceptions (and memories) you will find a land of unimaginable contrasts – miles and miles of untouched forest, peaks upon peaks of craggy mountains, sweeping vistas to the coast, settlements harbouring centuries-old cultural heritage and traditions – a genuine East and West melting pot.

Home to some of the last remnants of Europe's primeval forest, this intriguing corner of the Alps is now welcoming tourists back to discover the hundreds of hiking trails inherited from the former Yugoslavia. From historic Sarajevo and Mostar, peaceful for over a decade now, to ancient mountain villages in the Bjelasnica hinterland, from the magnificent mountains of Sutjeska National Park, to the un-trodden paths of Diva Grabovica, you will experience this fascinating country whilst also contributing to the highland communities and the eco-systems they are so reliant on.

Come and discover more surprises on a trip that takes you to the country's highest mountain and the highest village, Olympic slopes, mediaeval forest, ancient royal hunting trails and Ottoman monasteries. Nowhere else in Europe can one find such a magical mix of ancient civilisations, where Europe meets the Orient – and this time at peace.

Flora and Fauna Where the Mediterranean meets Euro-Siberia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a land of contrast where a diverse and plentiful wilderness thrives. This combination of continental influence and warm coastal climate allows ancient plant life to exist alongside a more contemporary genus and many of these species are endemic to the region. Ferns, flowers and mosses populate the landscape of the foothills, which are not just a pretty sight; the local population still uses the local vegetation for medicinal and nutritional needs. Perhaps most spectacular is the vast expanse of forest, which still covers large parts of the country despite considerable destruction, which has occurred in some areas of the country.

Much of Bosnia and Herzegovina is wild and untouched with a wide range of creatures such as otters, bobcats, pine martins, deer and porcupines are prevalent. The birdlife is also very vibrant with a range of eagles, hawks and falcons frequently observed. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina's dark past has wrought the present state of the wildlife; the once widespread bear, wild deer, wild goat and wolf population has been largely affected by the former conflicts which were chiefly fought in the high mountain ranges. Wild boar has however increased in number since the hostilities and is now frequently seen in the lower mountain passes and valleys. Bear and Wild Goat can be considered as endangered species in much of Bosnia and Herzegovina although sightings of Bear and even the illustrious and largely secretive Wolf are not unusual in the Sutjaska National Park as are Wild Goats which can also be seen in the canyons of Neretva.

Trekking conditions and staff The area of Bosnia and Herzegovina visited in this trip is a fine example of highland scenery in central Europe - picturesque villages accompany dramatic landscapes, which lay home to deep canyon valleys and limestone peaks. The mountains are not overly lofty with the highest peaks soaring just over 2,000m with craggy peaks and lush green undulating slopes. Traditional homes, wild alpine meadows and deep forest cram the valleys forcing the local population to co-exist with nature. Here one can find themselves away from the beaten track amongst warm, hospitable communities and stunning natural scenery. The walking is suitable for anyone who walks regularly in the UK and who is interested in visiting an enthralling country before more people realise how mesmerizing a journey Bosnia and Herzegovina can provide.

An experienced, English speaking guide will assist you in your journey. He/she will be knowledgeable in all aspects of the areas visited and provide a fantastic resource and opportunity to learn about the local culture and history as well as the country as a whole.

Ecological considerations *We ask for your full consideration and co-operation concerning all ecological matters, especially in the disposal of rubbish. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please let our local staff know and inform us at Walks Worldwide on your return. It is with the tourists, the locals and the tour operators' co-operation that we can ensure that our tours are as eco-friendly as possible.*

Itinerary

Please be aware that although we will do our best to adhere to this itinerary occasionally events out of our control may prevent us from following the exact schedule. Please be assured that the clients' best interests will be foremost in any changes that may occur. A degree of flexibility is essential in travelling on such a trip. All times given are approximate.

Day 1

Fly to the iconic capital of Sarajevo to discover its restored centre – a mix of elegant piazzas and boulevards leading to a maze of alleyways and mosques, which stand alongside orthodox churches and synagogues. Sarajevo represents a blending of cultures, empires and faith with examples of this readily on display if you only take a walk through the streets, which is a local pastime in Sarajevo. In the afternoon you will have the opportunity to take a city tour to such symbolic spots as Princip's Bridge where World War I began, the Sebilj Square fountain and the Markale market. Sarajevo is a city which feels very much alive anytime of the day and you will be surprised by the gentleness of this once war-torn city with its street side cafes and quiet leafy streets. ***Pension, Sarajevo, D***

Day 2

A fantastic introduction to highland life. The Bjelasnica region is a great location to start your journey into the Bosnian mountains. From the hill village of Umoljani with its beautiful surroundings and memories of ancient existence you will trek along a ridge that leads you to the stunning canyon of Rakitnica, the least explored canyon in Europe which drops 800 metres below and feeds the Neretva River. The beautiful cascades of the veiled Studeni Potok can be seen below tumbling 400 metres. Traversing the Studeni fields, passing the odd shepherd and flock you arrive at Lukomir, the country's highest inhabited village at 1469 metres. Mediaeval tombstones, stone houses and villagers in traditional dress (the occasional turban and fez are still worn) will leave you thinking you are on the edge of the world. 5 hours walking. ***Pension, Sarajevo, B,L***

Day 3

South of Sarajevo lies the home of the 1984 Winter Olympics. Starting at the site of the Olympic ski slopes you will make your way up the slopes to a remote mountain hut, which happens to be the highest in the country. The hut is located at the summit of Hranisava (1953 metres), which boasts great 360° views of the Dinaric Alp. Alternatively, you may take a walk through primeval forest and up the opposite side of the valley to Jovornik which also boasts fantastic views down the valley and across to Igman mountain. This remote spot parked on steep mountainside also boasts a mountain hut similar to that of Hranisava. 7 hours walking. ***Pension, Sarajevo, B, L***

Day 4

Travelling a short distance east, leaving Sarajevo behind, you will transfer to Sutjeska National Park, home to some of the last standing primeval forest in Europe. This is Bosnia and Herzegovina's oldest National Park which provides an untouched wilderness and opportunities for countless adventures. Whilst walking this mountainous terrain you will walk through beech forest and eventually the open ground of Planinica's summit (1772 metres). Planinica, with its sheer 1,200-metre drop offers one of the best views of the Sutjeska valley, Perucica primeval forest and Volujak's sheer limestone walls. This really gives a sense of wilderness as you look around this unpopulated land. From here you will move onwards to lakes of Donje and Gornje Bare with their placid waters offering a tranquil end to a great day of discovery. 5 hours walking. ***Hotel, Sutjeska National Park, B,L,D***

Day 5

Day 5 marks the most challenging walk of the trip – to mighty Maglic, at 2386 metres the highest peak in the country. En-route to the summit you will traverse round the peak into Montenegro (passports required just in case!) to the serene Trnovacko Lake with its green and vegetated sidings offering a clear 360° view of towering peaks. The lake is renowned for its emerald waters and for some this point marks the start of the ascent to Maglic's peak whilst for others it is a place to relax and enjoy the glorious panorama. Either option is thoroughly satisfying – please note the final ascent involves steep gradients and a head for heights. 9 hours walking. ***Hotel, Sutjeska National Park, B,L,D***

Day 6

Visit the Herzegovinian town of Blagaj with its long history which has been traced back 12,000 years! During this time both the Romans and Ottomans have consecrated this settlement with fantastic architecture and reminders, which serve as a time machine. Most notable is the Ottoman monastery and the fortress of Herceg Stejpan which like many Bosnian highlights provides a fantastic view. From here you will loosely follow the course of the Neretva River and continue into the city of Mostar,

justifiably famed for its picturesque architecture and of course its emblematic bridge so symbolic of the war, now proudly rebuilt and very much the centre of this popular town. A personalised city tour will take you away from the tourist sites and into the backstreets of this once-divided city. **Motel, Mostar, B,L**

Day 7

A magical day hiking in the pristine wilderness of the untouched Diva Grabovica Valley. Travel to Cvrsnica Mountain and trek along one of King Karadjordzevic's old hunting trails. This is a natural boundary between Mediterranean and Continental climates allowing a unique ecosystem to occur. The beech-tree forests line the steep ascending slopes allowing for some fairly tough climbs. Eventually you will come across several natural springs – most of the country's water is refreshingly potable so water is 'nema problema'. After some fantastic hiking over craggy mountainsides you will stop for lunch overlooking Veliki Kuk - the largest rock face on the Balkan Peninsula at over 1,000 metres – fit for a king indeed. If you are lucky you may even witness a daredevil attempting to climb the rock face – something which has been completed only a few times! 5 hours walking. **Motel, Rujiste, B,L,D**

Day 8

Today marks your last day in the area known as Herzegovina's Himalayas. In the morning you will turn back towards Mostar and into the Podvezlje Plateau. This area of natural beauty is home to several shepherd communities and a traditional way of life. The plateau is a perfect example of the variation in Bosnia – this sparsely populated rural location is only 20 minutes from Mostar. You will walk around the foot of Velez Mountain (1,980m) and be in awe of the limestone headwalls towering above Mostar in an area known for its chamois, wild boar and bear. 5 hours, walking. **Motel, Rujiste, B,L,D**

Days 9

Travel up through the Neretva Canyon to the affluent town of Konjic. Hike along the ridge of the canyon to the mouth of the Rakitnica River. The Neretva is the emerald "gem" of Herzegovina, flowing into the Adriatic Sea. Expect deep canyon walls, endemic flora and fauna, and a wild and pristine ambiance that only the Neretva can provide. There is also the option to take to rafts through the upper canyon where you will find some of the most enjoyable rafting in Europe. Return to Sarajevo for a final evening enjoying the bustling market streets, the intricacies of the handicrafts on sale and the aromas of Turkish coffee. 4 hours walking. **Pension, Sarajevo, B**

Day 10

Fly back to the UK. **B**

Practical Information

Passports and Visas British nationals do not need a visa to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina as a visitor for up to three months.

Food / Meals Bosnia and Herzegovina is a meat eater's paradise as it forms the principal ingredient of any meal although vegetarians should not be discouraged as stuffed vegetable dishes are also a speciality. Traditional food includes stews, kebabs, cevapi (minced meat sausages), stuffed leaves (dolma and sarma) and stuffed peppers. Meat, cheese and spinach are a regular combination. Special dietary requirements can be catered for and should be noted at the time of booking.

Accommodation is in a variety of local hotels and lodges. Mostly they will have private facilities and be comfortable. However bear in mind that Bosnia and Herzegovina is relatively third world in comparison to Western European standards and so expectations should be adjusted.

Language Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are all official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the most part these are largely indifferent – in fact, many say it is similar to the variation between American English and British English.

Climate Where coastal climate meets continental climate some unique ecosystems occur. In recent times Sarajevo has seen some of its hottest and coldest days in the month of June! In its simplest form, the further south you are towards the warm seas of the Mediterranean, the warmer and dryer it is. In central and Northern Bosnia you can expect a cool climate in the summer months; in contrast the winter is bitterly cold with temperatures above 1,700m being well below freezing for six months of the year.

Local transport Transfers are by private minibus.

Baggage Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We request you limit your luggage whilst on trek, and recommend you to pack your clothes in plastic bags to ensure they remain dry. We would prefer you use soft kitbags rather than large rucksacks, and we will be sending you a complimentary Walks Worldwide kitbag about two weeks prior to the tour (along with your tickets and final joining instructions), which is ideal for the purpose. **PLEASE ENSURE YOU WEAR OR PACK, IN YOUR HAND LUGGAGE, YOUR WALKING BOOTS AND WATERPROOFS, IN CASE YOUR MAIN LUGGAGE IS DELAYED.**

During the trip your bags will be transferred by minibus between overnight stops so you only have to carry essentials for the day in a medium sized rucksack, big enough to hold all daily items e.g. waterproofs, spare warm clothes, camera, water bottle(s), snack food etc (around 30 – 35 l rucksack recommended)

Vaccinations and medical precautions There are no statutory requirements for entering Bosnia and Herzegovina. We recommend, however, that you be protected against Cholera, TB, typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A.

Please ask your GP or travel clinic about all these inoculations, and he/she should be able to offer you the most sensible and up-to-date advice, you should therefore make an appointment to see him/her well in advance of your holiday.

Strong factor sun cream and a shady hat are essential against the sun.

Water in Bosnia is perhaps surprisingly highly regarded as unanimously safe to drink. Water in the mountains comes from springs, which are safe to drink. The guide will be able to advise you during the trek the best springs for filling your water bottles.

Money and currency Bosnian currency is known as the Convertible Mark (KM) that is directly linked to German Currency resulting in Low inflation rates. The currency comes in .10, .20, .50, 1 and 2 Mark coins. Notes come in 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 marks. It is also possible to bring Euros, Pounds sterling or USD\$ and these can be easily exchanged in shops, restaurants and hotels. Ensure that you receive a receipt for your transactions. Amex, MasterCard and Visa are accepted at large hotels and some restaurants and shops. ATMs can be found at main banks, airports and shopping centres but should not be relied upon as a sole source of cash. Travellers cheques, like credit/debit cards are only useful in large hotels and banks, and should be in USD\$ or Euros. Usually it hovers around £1 = 2.71KM. Please check www.xe.com for up-to-date rates.

Electricity 220 volts AC, 50Hz, plugs are two-pin European type.

Time Bosnia and Herzegovina is GMT +1hrs from Sunday 25th March to Sunday 28th October Day light saving time is observed where time is shifted forward 1 hour (GMT+2)

Contact details It is not our policy to provide addresses and telephone numbers of every location that you will be staying at on this tour, as, due to frequent changes in contact details, it is very difficult to provide an accurate list for all our tours. Your Final Joining Instructions, which you will receive 2 weeks prior to departure, will show any local contact details that are required for your tour. Mobile phones do work in Bosnia and Herzegovina although roaming prices are very high. If you have not used your mobile outside the UK before you will have to contact your operator to enable international calls. *Please ensure your phone is set for roaming if you are taking a mobile.* Please note that it is expensive to phone both to and out of a mobile when abroad. We do not encourage mobile phone use whilst walking on any of our trips – out of courtesy to other clients please use your mobile phone discretely. If you do need to get in touch, or if anyone needs to get in touch with you, please contact the Walks Worldwide office (01524 242000) during office hours.

Tipping There is no compulsory tipping on any of our treks. However it is customary to tip the local guide and driver accompanying you on your trip.

Maps We recommend either: The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) www.themapshop.co.uk or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321) www.stanfords.co.uk

Flights. As airlines often change their routings and timings with little warning, we do not state them here but the exact details for your flight will given to you with your booking confirmation. Please note however that these details are subject to change up until the last minute, and there may be occasions when we even need to place passengers on a different airline.

Inclusions and exclusions

Inclusions

- Flights and UK airport taxes
- All transfers
- All accommodation
- Meals as described in the itinerary
- Entrance fees
- Guide

Exclusions

- Drinks and personal spending
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Tips
- Insurance

Clothing and Equipment Lists.

On trek you must not worry about how you look: comfort and protection against bad / hot / humid weather are of prime importance. Because mountain weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive. We will provide you with a kitbag, which is suitable to take on the trip with you.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking boots	1 pair		Personal First aid kit	
Casual Shoes	1 pair		Head torch and spare batteries	
Socks	Optional number		Camera, film & accessories	
Underwear	Optional number		A variety of plastic bags (the kitbags are not waterproof)	
"T" shirts	3+		Sunglasses	
Long trousers	2		Daypack / small rucksack	
Short trousers	1		Binoculars	
Light fleeces	1		Washing & shaving kits	
Waterproof jacket	1		Relevant field guides / reading material / notebook	
Waterproof trousers	1		2 large (1 litre) water bottles	
Warm jacket / thick fleece	1		Blister (compeed) plasters	
Sunhat with brim	Essential		Money belt/pouch	
Swimsuit	1		Trekking poles (optional)	
Woolly hat	1			
Gloves	1 pair			

The following items should also be considered and **those in bold type essential**.

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Moisturising cream		Small sewing kit	
Safety pins		Insect repellent, strong	
Penknife (not in hand luggage)		Universal travelling adapter	
Spare bulbs and batteries		Scissors (not in hand luggage)	
Nail clippers (not in hand luggage)		Watch/clock with alarm	
Padlock for your kitbag		Boot wax	
Spare glasses or contact lenses		Sweets /snacks for energy	
Spare boot laces		Sun cream and lip cream	
Imodium tablets & rehydration sachets such as Dioralyte		Earplugs (against dogs and snorers!)	
PASSPORT		MONEY / TC'S	
AIR TICKET			