

A close-up photograph of a man, likely a jeweler, working on a highly detailed silver model of a sailing ship. The ship has multiple masts, intricate rigging, and a hull decorated with fine filigree. The jeweler, in the background, is focused on his work, holding a torch that is heating a small part of the ship's hull. The scene is set in a workshop with a blue cloth visible in the background.

KOSOVO

A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

KOSOVO

KIESA: Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency
Author: Lura Limani
Photographer: Samir Karahoda
Design: PR Solutions
Copyright: Lura Limani, Samir Karahoda.



Table of content

1. Kosovo, a diamond in the rough	11
2. Prishtina, the urban center of Kosovo’s rebirth	18
3. The ancient settlements and bustling town of southeast Kosovo	38
4. Vibrant Prizren and its imposing mountains	44
5. The Accursed Mountains and their blessed Plain	73
6. The trade routes and the mining roots of Northen Kosovo	99
7. Fact Sheet	110



1.

Kosovo, a diamond in the rough

Located at the heart of the Balkan peninsula, this landlocked country is one of the region's hidden gems. A devastating war has defined Kosovo's image for far too long, and visitors and tourists will soon find that there is much more to it. Beyond asphalt and dust, which at times seem overwhelming, one can discover rolling hills, lush green forests and meadows, high snow-covered peaks and charming old towns. Throughout history, the strategic location of this territory has made it an enviable possession for many rulers, most of whom have contributed to its cultural diversity. Since antiquity, many roads have passed through the region, connecting inland areas to the coast, boosting commerce and nourishing the growth of local craftsmanship. In addition to its central position, Kosovo's underground riches made the area an invaluable asset. Mines in Novobërdë and Mitrovica have been exploited since Roman times, supplying with minerals a dozen different invaders and militaries.

Kosovo declared its independence in 2008 and since then has been recognized by 110 countries, including most European Union members and the United States of America. Borders with Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro make the country a natural stop on a Balkan tour.

Amounting to roughly 1.8 million people according to the last census, Kosovo's population is predominantly young. The majority is ethnically Albanian; minorities include Serbs, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Bosnians and Gorani. The majority of the population is Muslim, practicing a moderate form of Islam, while a smaller percentage is Catholic (2.20%) and Orthodox (1.8%). There is great pride that Mother Teresa (born Anjeza Gonxhe Bojaxhiu) was Albanian. The main boulevard in Prishtina and a Catholic cathedral are named after the beatified nun who heard her calling to join the mission in the church of Letnica, in southeast Kosovo.

Amounting to roughly 1.8 million people according to the last census, Kosovo’s population is predominantly young. The majority is ethnically Albanian; minorities include Serbs, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Bosnians and Gorani. The majority of the population is Muslim, practicing a moderate form of Islam, while a smaller percentage is Catholic (2.20%) and Orthodox (1.8%). There is great pride that Mother Teresa (born Anjeza Gonxhe Bojaxhiu) was Albanian. The main boulevard in Prishtina and a Catholic cathedral are named after the beatified nun who heard her calling to join the mission in the church of Letnica, in southeast Kosovo.

Albanian and Serbian are both official languages, although English is widely spoken. Due to a large diaspora community and experiences as seasonal workers or gastarbeiter, it is not unusual for people to know German, French and Italian as well. A tourist will be relieved to find out that the official currency is the euro.

Close to the Adriatic coast, well connected to both the southern and northern parts of the Balkan peninsula, Kosovo has great potential for tourism. The untouched scenery of the Sharri and Rugova mountains and beautiful waterfalls and rivers are year-round attractions. Ancient ruins, medieval churches and castles, Ottoman townhouses, and Austro-Hungarian buildings make up a large chunk of the country’s cultural heritage. Almost as mixed as the architectural landscape is the culture of the country. Influenced by 500 years of Ottoman rule, an “oriental” flair marks most of the bazaars in Kosovo and especially the old town of Prizren.

Finally, Kosovars are particularly proud of their traditions of hospitality; guests in a Kosovo home are treated with the highest honor. Always ready to offer help, a cup of coffee or a free meal, Kosovar hosts will guarantee a great trip.

Nature

Only 10,908 km² in size, this small country is surrounded by high mountains that form natural borders with its neighbors. The central plain is divided into two valleys, Kosovo and Dukagjini, both irrigated by rivers that sustain agriculture, one of the main economic sectors in the country. The Drini Bardhë (White Drin) river has the largest drainage basin in Kosovo while the smaller Nerodime river bifurcates into two different seas, a very rare natural phenomenon. Kosovo’s rivers flow into the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The two highest mountain ranges are the Sharri Mountains, continuing into Macedonia, and the Rugova mountains, part of the Albanian Alps. At 2,656 meters, Gjeravica is the highest peak, best accessed from Junik. Although landlocked, Kosovo has many artificial and glacial lakes that are great summer getaways. The largest lake is Gazivoda (9.2 km²) located at the northern tip of the country and continuing into Serbia. Radoniq (5.06 km²) lake, near Gjakova, and Batllava lake (3.06 km²), near Prishtina, are also picturesque artificial lakes that supply their surroundings with drinking water.



History

Archeological findings from 8000 years ago and artifacts from the Bronze and Iron Age have been found all over the country. However, many sites are waiting to be explored, as the recent discovery of the Kekola Castle in Keqekollë shows. During antiquity, the peninsula was inhabited by Illyrian tribes who shared a single language. The Illyrian region of Dardania included the territory of modern Kosovo, which is why most Kosovars see themselves as descendants of the Illyrians. After the Romans had conquered the Illyrian tribes in 168 BC, the region experienced a period of development as a transit point for most of the peninsula’s trade routes. At the time, Ulpiana, located a few kilometers from where Prishtina stands today, became an important trade center and was promoted to the status of a Roman municipium.

After the break-up of the Roman Empire, the region fell under Byzantine control. Slavic tribes arrived in the peninsula at sometime in the sixth century AD, settling in Illyrian territories. By 1184, the Serbian Nemanjić dynasty had solidly established itself by expanding southwards, ruling over the territory that is Kosovo and Macedonia today. The Nemanjić dynasty ruled Kosovo for 250 years, and most of the old Orthodox churches in Kosovo stem from this period. During King Dušan’s reign, the Serbian empire even controlled Albania and northern Greece. After his death, family quarrels weakened the kingdom, with the lords dividing up areas of control.

The famous Battle of Kosovo, the confrontation between Ottoman forces and a Balkan coalition, has spawned many great tales and legends. The Battle, which took place on 15 June 1389, plays a central part in Serbian mythology, symbolizing the downfall of the Serbian monarchy. However, the battle was not a complete victory for the Ottomans, ending with both warring parties severely damaged and their leaders dead. It took the Ottomans approximately 70 more years to fully establish control over the Balkans, achieved only after Novobërdë surrendered after a 40-day siege. The Ottoman Empire ruled over the area for approximately 500 years, traces of which are still visible in the country’s old towns, culture and cuisine. Although the Ottomans were seen as invaders, an era of stability stimulated the growth of urban centers and the region’s slow but steady development. Towns like Vushtrri and Prizren became important administrative, cultural and economic hubs. The enduring influence of the Ottoman Empire was not completely one-way, as Albanians, albeit individually, shaped the Empire as well.

In comparison to their European counterparts, Albanians were late in starting a nationalist awakening that would eventually result in a nation-state. The Rilindja (‘Renaissance’) only started in the second half of the nineteenth century, but managed to channel political aspirations for autonomy and shape an Albanian identity based on a shared language. Starting with the League of



Prizren, founded in 1878, the struggle ended with Albania’s declaration of independence on 28 November 1912.

A bargaining chip during negotiations between the Great Powers, the territory making up modern Kosovo remained under Serbian rule throughout the World Wars, although sporadic free zones were established during the kaçakrebellions. During the Second World War, Kosovo was occupied by the Axis powers: Italians in the south, Germans and Bulgarians in the north.

After the Allies had won the war, the Kosovo Communist Party decided that Kosovo would join the Yugoslav federation as an autonomous region of Serbia. Unmistakablesocialist monuments and buildings,built at the time,are stillpeppered all over the urban landscape. For much of the period of communist rule, the Albanian population was oppressed while the region’s economic development lagged far behind other Yugoslav republics. Nevertheless, the country experienced a period of steady development in the 1970s after a new Yugoslav constitution recognized Kosovo as a constituent element of the Yugoslav federation, giving it rights equal to those of other republics.

Many factors affected the fall of Yugoslavia through in creased nationalist fervor which resulted in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. With Tito’s death and increasing economic difficulties, scare-mongering secured Miloševića leading position. During his rule, Kosovo’s autonomy was retracted and hundreds of thousands of Albanians in public employment were laid off en masse. On 7 September 1990, the Kosovo parliament met secretly in Kaçanik and declared the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Elections (held illegally) resulted in the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) winning 99% of the votes and the establishment of a government in exile. Soon afterwards, Albanians established parallel structures offering health services,,education and information thorough a satellite broadcasting television operating form the nearby Albania, all services denied to Albanians during the 1990s. Except for elementary education, high schools and the university had to operate illegally in people’s homes. Ibrahim Rugova, Kosovo’s president and leader of the LDK maintained a pacifist approach, hoping that the Kosovo question would be solved by diplomatic means.

Culture and gastronomy

Home to a variety of communities and historically a crossroad of peoples, Kosovo has inherited a variety of cultural influences. It should come as no surprise that travelling through the country you will encounter a variety of local dialects, regional traditional clothes and dances, as well as customs. Albanian folk music, for example, is uniquely recognizable by the sound of traditional instruments such as the lahuta (a single-stringed instrument), the çifteli (a double-stringed instrument), and the gajde (a bagpipe). As elsewhere, the Roma are well-known and appreciated for their energetic music, which has inspired a cult following. Some of the traditional sounds have even been adapted beyond recognition into the so-called “turbo-folk”, popular throughout the Balkans.

Serbs and Albanians alike are passionate about raki, a strong brandy-like liquor, which is produced from plums, pears, grapes, quinces, and even honey. The local cuisine, too, bridges the ethnic divide, including Ottoman-inspired dishes with a local spin, as well as indigenous recipes developed with local produce in mind. Indeed, although it is the Gorani and Bosnians who are known for their burek, good examples of this delicious pastry can be found all over Kosovo. Even in the ethnically divided town of Mitrovica, delicious meatballs, called qebapa in Albanian or ćevapčići in Serbian, are staples on either side. A large variety of pies or pite are baked in the region with miscellaneous fillings including spinach, cheese, ground meat, and even potatoes. There are a number of varieties of tava, a casserole-like dish cooked in an earthenware pot for several hours in the oven. Most traditional dishes are made throughout Kosovo, albeit with small differences, but some regions are well-known for specific products, like the Sharri mountains for their flavorful cheese.





Prishtina, the urban center of Kosovo's rebirth

A little chaos is an inescapable sign of urban life, and nowhere more so than in the buzzing streets of Prishtina, Kosovo's capital. Archaeological excavations have found traces of prehistoric settlements in the area, although Prishtina itself developed into an important center quite late. In this city of stark contrasts, the few surviving Ottoman houses are overshadowed by socialist concrete constructions and modern glass buildings. Nevertheless, the people that populate this chaos redeem the city's reputation and infuse it with a vibrant spirit. The largest city in Kosovo has approximately 200 000 residents according to official data, although due to many commuters and students it often feels like the number is higher. Although located on the northeastern edge of central Kosovo, Prishtina is an economic hub for the entire country. No wonder that "all roads lead to Prishtina," as a local song goes, with the city being an administrative, commercial, cultural and educational center.

Neolithic artifacts have been found in multiple sites around Prishtina, dating as far back as 6,000 BC. The Goddess on the Throne, a Neolithic terracotta figurine of a pagan goddess, is now the capital city's emblem. During the Roman period, Ulpiana, a settlement close to Prishtina, was one of the most important Roman centers in the Balkans. Prishtina itself was first mentioned in 1342 by the Byzantine emperor John Cantacuzene, who described it as a village. Due to its proximity to Balkan trade routes, the town became a trading center, a connecting point between Thessaloniki and Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik). Erected between two rivers, the Vellusha and the Prishtevka, both flowing underneath asphalted roads today, the old town was a trade and crafts center during the Ottoman period.

Connected by railway and telegraph lines from the late 1800s on Prishtina prospered. However this prosperity did not last long as it soon fell under Serb rule in 1912. When the communist government declared Prishtina capital of the Kosovo province in 1947, Prizren was still the largest city in Kosovo. Unfortunately for Prishtina, the 'honor' came at a steep price, as the new government decided to build the city anew, destroying a large part of the old town in the process. As an administrative center, the city expanded with high-rise apartment blocks forming new neighborhoods.



The Golden Age of Kosovo’s development under communist rule, from the late 1960s to 1981, was most visible in the capital which became a cultural center, especially after the University of Prishtina opened in 1969. Economic crises during the 1980s affected the capital as well as other parts of the country, and Prishtina’s development came to a halt.

During the 1990s, after Albanians were fired en masse by the Milošević government, life in the city became segregated as Albanians could not participate in public life. However, unlike other parts of Kosovo, Prishtina was not heavily damaged during the war. After 1999, the city experienced a great boom, mostly due to the concentration of national and international organizations. New apartment buildings define Prishtina’s current skyline as the city has grown, gaining new suburbs.

Dust and concrete give the city a dull appearance, a façade that in fact hides interesting attractions. In the historical center alone there are great examples of Ottoman townhouses, old mosques and glimpses of an old Ottoman bazaar. Following the Clock Tower, one can see three mosques standing in very close proximity: the Çarshi Mosque, Jashar Pasha Mosque and Fatih Mosque. The Great Hammam, just across the street from the Fatih Mosque, is another fourteenth century construction. Further along in the old town, the Emin Gjiku compound, or Ethnological Museum, is a splendid example of the townhouses that once characterized the city. The National Museum, exhibiting great archeological findings from the region, is also located in the vicinity. Not far from here, the Brotherhood and Unity Monument, a Yugoslav construction, is still standing, although plans to turn the square into a parking lot are underway. Down Mother Teresa Boulevard, which traverses the heart of the city, the recently refurbished government building, overlooks Skënderbeu square, Ibrahim Rugova square, and the National Theatre.

Modernist architecture can be seen throughout the city, but especially in Mother Teresa Boulevard, where apartment buildings have changed little of their original design. Particular examples are the National Library, whose design is as confounding as it is astounding, and the Youth and Sports Palace with its spiky roof. Prishtina is infamous for its lack of green spaces, with Gërmia Park, only a walk away from the city center, is the capital’s main spot for outdoor recreation. Summer heat is usually escaped by flocking to the shores of Batllava or Badovci lakes, both a short drive away from the city. The city’s biggest attractions, however, are its relaxed lifestyle and the many people who stroll its streets. On sunny days, café terraces are full of people who drink coffee and chat for hours. With young people making up the majority of the population, the nightlife is also vibrant.

Only a few kilometers away from an international airport, well-connected by national roads to major towns, Prishtina is definitely Kosovo’s nucleus. Although daily commuters arrive from all corners of Kosovo, Prishtina’s growth has mainly affected the central region of the country which it clearly dominates. The surrounding area includes smaller towns and municipalities, some of which have been overshadowed by Prishtina’s quick development.

Leaving the city, many other attractions are only a drive away. Gračanica, a Serb village and municipality, is very close to Prishtina and is home to the Gračanica Monastery. Immediately after the war, as Serbs fled Kosovo, Gračanica was at first isolated. Today, it is a predominantly Serb municipality which includes a few other villages, benefiting from its close proximity to the capital.

The archeological site of Ulpiana, a very important Roman town, is on the city’s outskirts. The Gazimestan Memorial Tower, commemorating the Battle of Kosovo, is close to the Sultan Murat Türbe (tomb) and Bajraktar Türbe in Mazgit, only nine kilometers from the capital.

Janjeva, in the nearby municipality of Lipjan, is a charming small town which houses a small Croatian minority. Lipjan is also worth a visit for the limestone cave at Gadime.

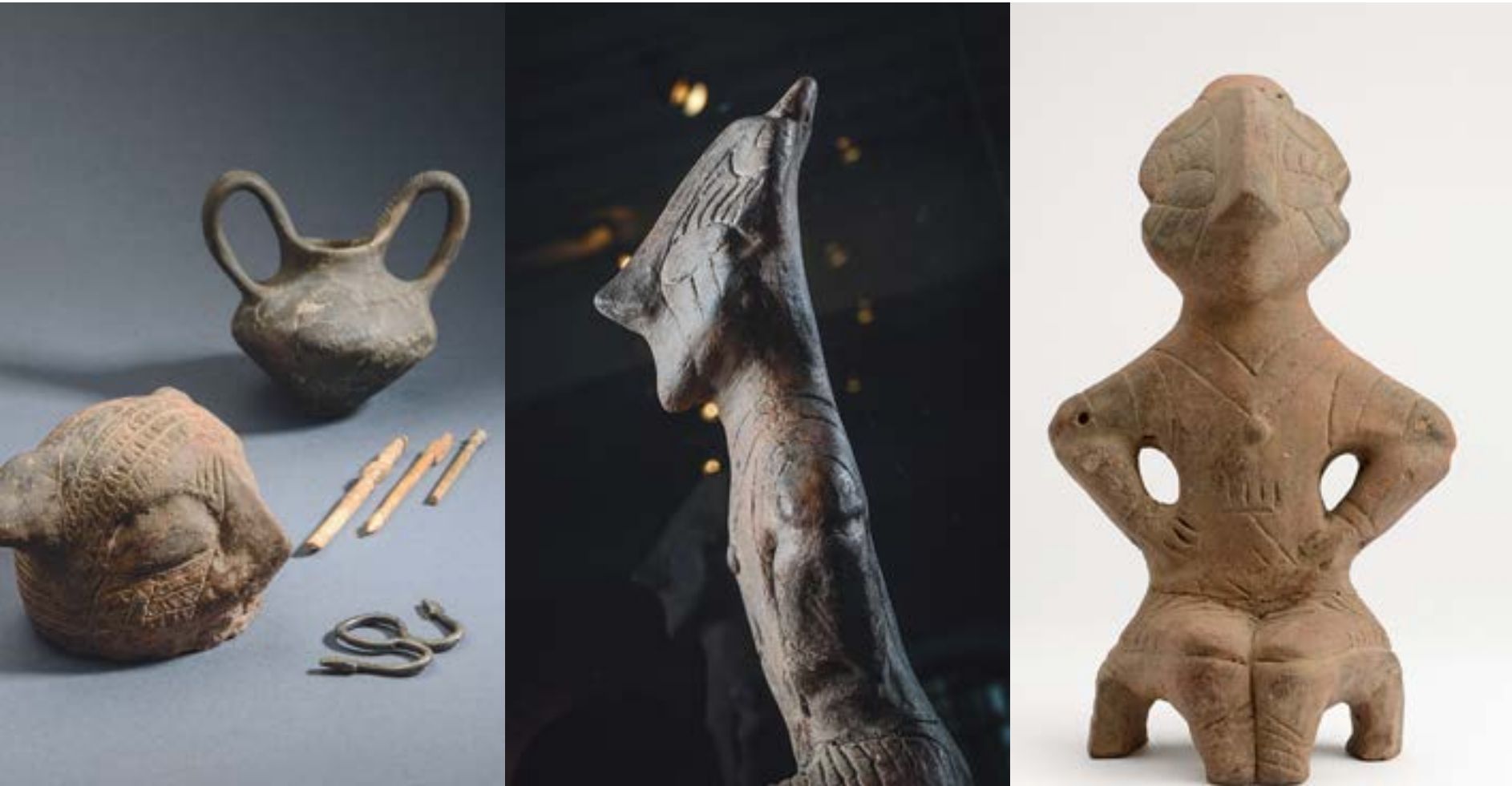
National Museum

Built in 1889, the bright yellow, stylistically Austro-Hungarian building, has been home to the Kosovo Museum since 1949. The permanent and temporary collections recounting Kosovo’s legacy, from 4,000 BC until today, are displayed in three galleries.



Neolithic artifacts

The museum used to have a rich collection of prehistoric artifacts, most of which were taken to Belgrade before the war in 1999. Here, one can admire Neolithic figurines, tools and pots, all found in the vicinity of Prishtina, amongst other items of jewelry and weaponry. The crown jewel of the collection is the Goddess on the Throne, a terracotta figurine dating from 4000 BC.



The Goddess on the Throne, 4000 BC.

Discovered at the Spinning Mill archeological site. The image of the Goddess is used as the capital's emblem.



Ulpiana

What once was an ancient Roman and Byzantine center is today no more than a collection of ruins. Ulpiana dates back to prehistoric times, but it only reached its peak during the 3rd and 4th century AD as a Roman municipium called Ulpiana Splendidissima. A strategic location, fertile land and rich mines in the vicinity, made the city the most important center of Dardania. Ruined by an earthquake, the city was reconstructed by Justinian I, at which point it was renamed Justiniana Secunda.



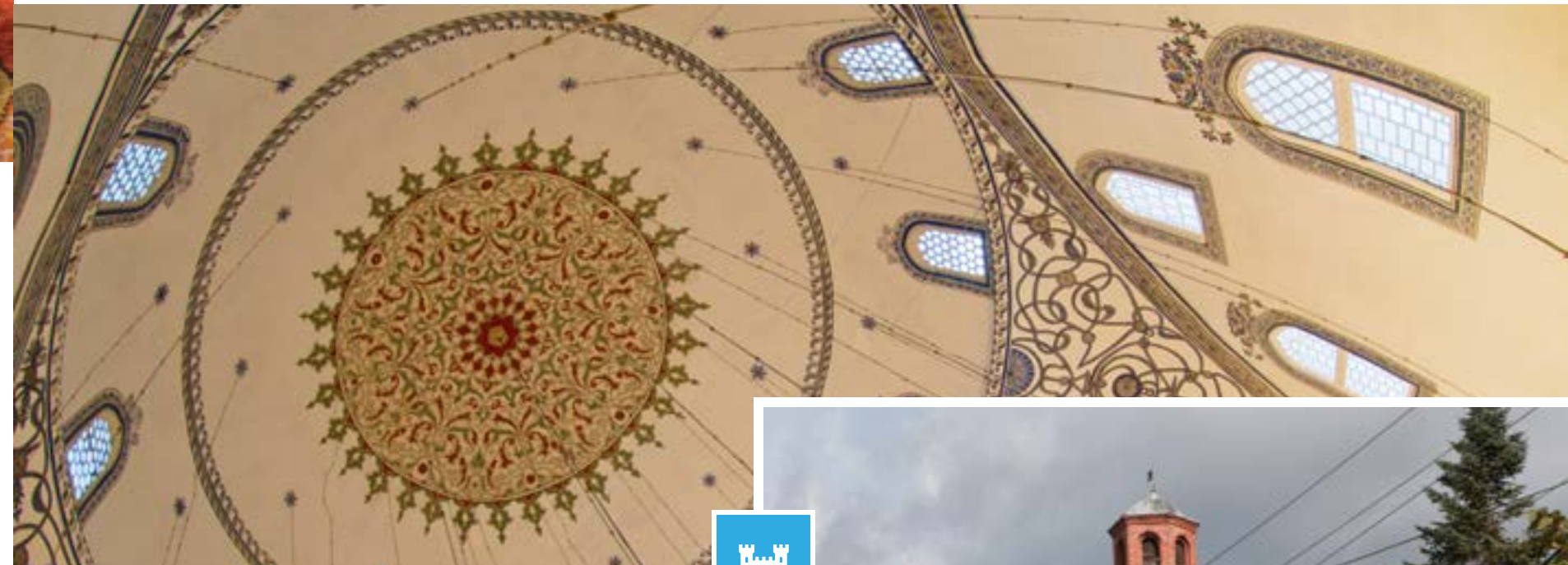
Ethnological Museum

An eighteenth century traditional house with a charming balcony is the base of the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina. Also known as the Emin Gjiku compound, the museum, opened in 2006, exhibits more than a thousand artifacts depicting Albanian traditions: rituals of birth, marriage, and death; family life and the function of the oda men's meeting room; handicrafts, traditional clothing, and examples of vernacular architecture.



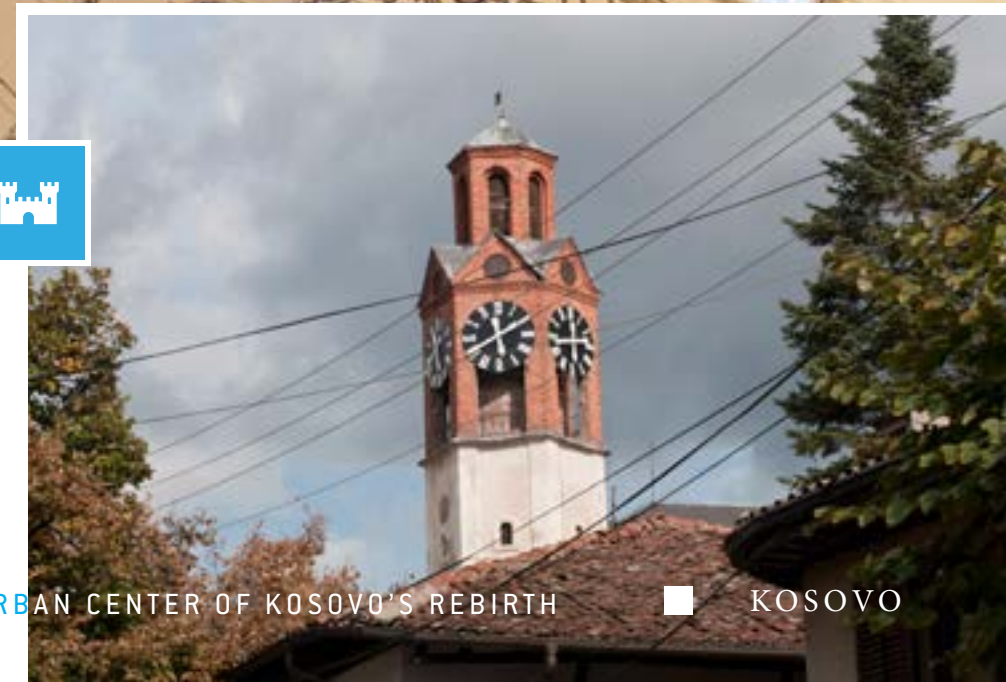
Fatih Mosque

Locally known as the Great Mosque (Xhamia e Madhe), the mosque of Sultan Mehmed II al-Fatih was built in 1461 and is one of the oldest surviving Ottoman buildings in Kosovo. The large 15.5 meter dome and the innovative use of pendentives to hold it up, together with the large portico and the elaborate arabesques make this mosque one of the most prominent in Kosovo. It was used briefly as a church in 1689 during the Austro-Turkish wars. The surviving building was renovated in 1682-83 while the minaret was reconstructed after an earthquake in 1955. Located at the heart of the old town, it's just across the street from the Great Hammam, another 15th century construction.



Sahat Kulla

A nineteenth century construction, the Sahat Kulla (Clock Tower), is one of the landmarks of old Prishtina. Standing next to the Fatih Mosque, this stone and brick construction used to be a chiming clock. However, its bell was stolen in 2001 and the clock has stopped telling time altogether.





Union Hotel & Skënderbeu Statue

Distinguished for its Austro-Hungarian style, the Union Hotel, built in 1927, graces one end of Mother Teresa boulevard. Accommodating various cafés and restaurants, it has served as a quaint landmark for townspeople for almost a century. The building was named the Union Hotel only after the Second World War. After a fire in 2009, most of the building was destroyed; recently renovated, it has now been turned into a Benetton shop.

The statue of Skënderbeu - Gjergj Kastrioti, a medieval Albanian leader and national hero who fought the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century - stands at one end of Mother Teresa boulevard, just opposite the Union Hotel. Erected in 2001, it was designed after a similar statue in Kruja, Albania.



Mother Teresa Boulevard

Traversing the center of the city, the Mother Teresa Boulevard is a pedestrian walk starting from the Parliament building, ending at Zahir Pajaziti Square. Named after the Catholic missionary and Nobel Peace Prize winner of Albanian origin, the boulevard leads towards the recently erected Cathedral of Blessed Mother Teresa, whose tower allows for a close inspection of the city's landscape and skyline.



National Library

Architecturally fascinating, the National Library, designed by the Croatian architect Andrija Mutnjaković, is one of the most interesting buildings that Prishtina’s cityscape has to offer. Built in 1982, the library has 99 translucent domes and its exterior is entirely covered by a metal cage. While it is considered ugly by some, with its unique look, it has won over many fans. The 16,500 square meters building includes reading rooms as well as amphitheatres for public events. The domes, which might symbolize the traditional Albanian plis hat, provide plenty of natural lighting.



The Youth and Sports Palace

Poking the sky with its spiky roof, the Youth and Sports Palace dominates Prishtina’s cityscape. Built in 1971, this Yugoslav construction houses a shopping center, sport halls, concert halls, bars, clubs, a theater and even the American School of Kosova. The NEWBORN monument, unveiled upon the declaration of independence in 2008, sits in front of it, stealing a bit of the limelight.



Coffee Culture & Nightlife

Coffee Culture

With a hip café opening up on every corner, the city is full of coffee drinkers and people-watchers. The nation's favorite pastime - sitting in a café and slowly drinking a coffee with friends - becomes instantaneously apparent to any visitor. Whether you have a date or a business meeting coffee will certainly be involved. Kosovars love their caffeine rush so much that every café has an espresso machine whisking delicious macchiato and other Italian specialties.

Night life

The day crowds of the city disperse only to reconvene for nightly adventures in Prishtina's numerous bars and clubs. With Kosovo's population being predominantly young, youth has become the city's biggest attraction. Young, fashionable and enthusiastic, they crowd the streets during the week and on the weekends, creating an atmosphere a visitor isn't likely to forget.



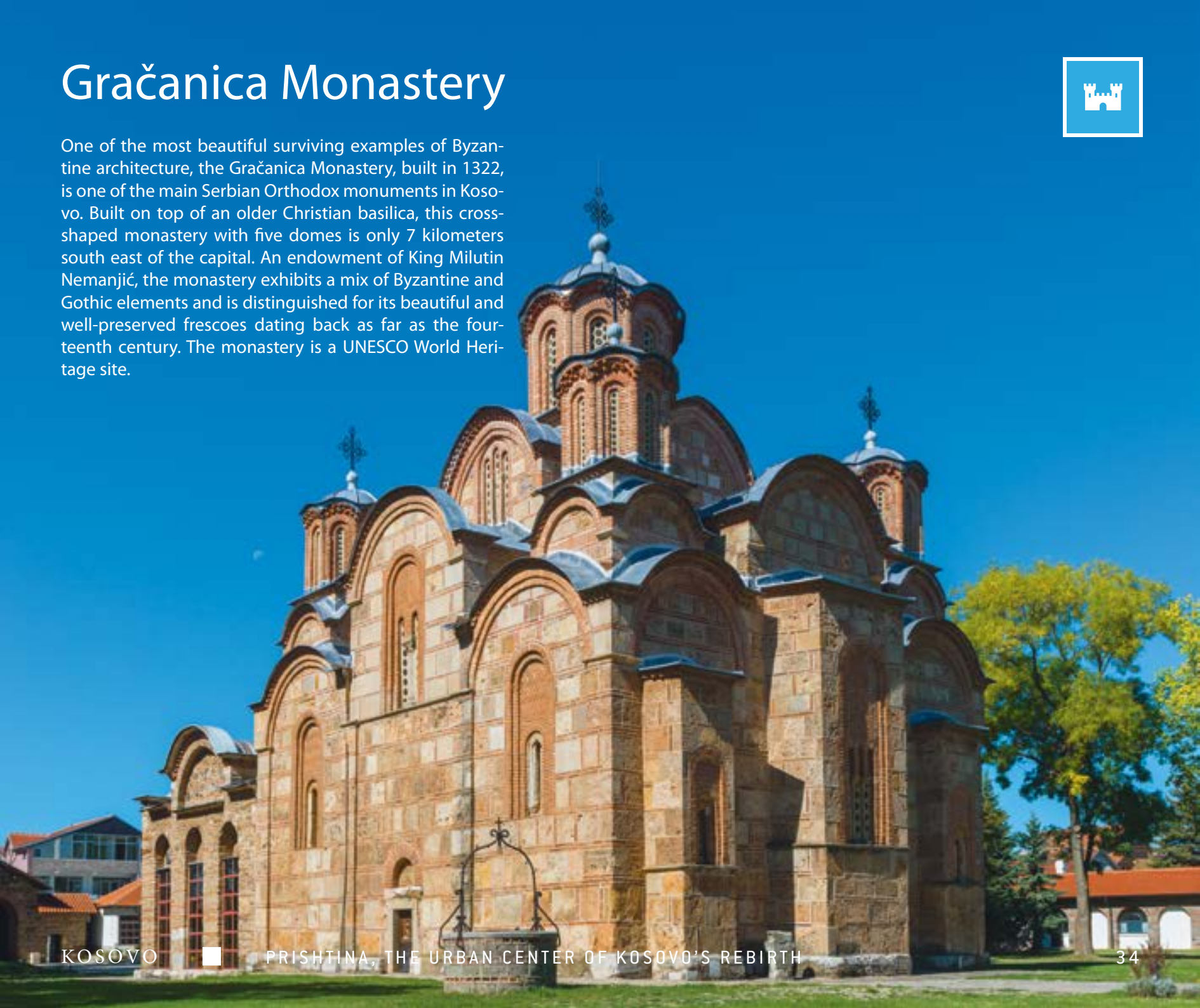
Gračanica Monastery

One of the most beautiful surviving examples of Byzantine architecture, the Gračanica Monastery, built in 1322, is one of the main Serbian Orthodox monuments in Kosovo. Built on top of an older Christian basilica, this cross-shaped monastery with five domes is only 7 kilometers south east of the capital. An endowment of King Milutin Nemanjić, the monastery exhibits a mix of Byzantine and Gothic elements and is distinguished for its beautiful and well-preserved frescoes dating back as far as the fourteenth century. The monastery is a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Sultan Murat Mausoleum

Built sometime during the 14th century, the Mausoleum was built in honor of Sultan Murat I, who was killed during the historic Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The mausoleum, Ottoman baroque in style, is located in Mazgit, only 7 kilometers west of Prishtina. The battle, of tremendous importance for the region, was won by the Ottomans but ended with leaders of both the two warring parties dead. Many myths and songs have been inspired by the battle, especially by the Sultan's death. The Serbian myth says that the Sultan was murdered by Milosh Kopiliqi who cunningly switched sides and stabbed the Sultan in his own tent.





Gadime Cave

Although cave enthusiasts will find plenty in the Rugova mountains or close to the Mirusha waterfalls, nothing is quite as special as the Gadime Cave. Discovered in 1969 and opened to the public in 1976, this limestone cave is distinguished for its deposits of stalagmites, stalactites and aragonites. The cave is 1,500 meters long, but only a fraction of that is open to visitors.

The ancient settlements and bustling towns of southeast Kosovo

It is hard to believe that the barely populated Novobërdë used to be the largest city in Kosovo. A mining center during the Middle Ages, Novobërdë had a population of 40,000, counting Saxon and Ragusan (from modern Dubrovnik) mining communities in its midst. Very little of that illustrious past is visible today in one of the smallest municipalities in Kosovo. Nevertheless, Novobërdë's many cultural monuments, located close to one another, make the ghost town a crucial cultural heritage site, dominated by its fourteenth century castle.

Mentioned first as Nuovo Monte in 1319, Novobërdë reached its peak as a mining center during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Rich silver ores provided the raw material for minting coins and the production of jewelry and silver spoons that were exported to Ragusa and beyond. The city went into decline in the seventeenth century while the nearby town of Gjiilan slowly replaced it as the important trading town in the area. The mines of Novobërdë, which were once part of the Trepça complex, are now inactive. An area of 130 hectares surrounding the castle has been put under legal protection as a cultural heritage site. The site includes a fourteenth century mosque, the ruins of a cathedral, St. Mary's and St. John's churches, and a türbe (mausoleum).

As Novobërdë lost its importance, Gjiilan became an important center due to its vicinity to the trade route connecting Shkodra to Niš. Although the date of the town's foundation is unknown, there is a popular belief that it was founded by the feudal family Gjinaj, who governed a large chunk of Kosovo's territory. Three rivers supply Gjiilan's surroundings with water, making the area suitable for the cultivation of fruit, especially its famous cherry trees. A mostly industrial and trade town, Gjiilan's few attractions are in the city center, including St. Nicholas' church constructed in 1861 and the Madrasa Mosque, a fourteenth century construction.

Southeast Kosovo includes a few areas that seem to have been inhabited since antiquity. Although extensive archeological research has yet to be undertaken in most parts, the recent discovery of the Keqekollë fortress in the Gallup region is a harbinger of further hidden treasures. Similarly, in Gjilan, part of the Anamorava region, archeological artifacts dating from antiquity have been discovered.

The region's most developed city, Ferizaj, only developed after the construction of the railroad between Skopje and Mitrovica in 1873. In 1900, out of the 400 buildings in town, 200 were shops and Ferizaj became an industrial center after the Second World War. Today, the city benefits greatly from being next to the Prishtina-Skopje highway, maintaining its status as the most important trade and industrial center in the country. Ferizaj is known for its many factories, which include a metalwork factory, a pipe factory and a few food industry operations. The town itself is buoyant with young people frequenting the city's many cafés. A few attractions can be spotted in the city, including a mosque and an Orthodox church sharing the same yard. Another quaint sight is the city's library, an old red and yellow building erected in 1928.

Outside the city, in the village of Nerodime, a rare hydrological phenomenon occurs: the bifurcation of Nerodime river to flow into two different seas. The bifurcation point is clearly visible from Nika's Mill, only a few kilometers away from the city center, and the Mill has become a landmark in itself.

Well hidden in the Black Mountains, the village of Letnica is also an attraction as it is home to the Church of the Black Madonna. A quiet village with a small population, most of whom are Catholic Albanians or Croats, Letnica is flooded with visitors every year in August. The village's main attraction is the statue of the Black Madonna, a 300 year-old wooden statue that is worshiped in an annual celebration, attended by thousands of pilgrims.

Further south, Kaçanik is another small town erected next to the Kaçanik Gorge, where the Lepenci and Nerodime rivers meet. Kaçanik, a small town close to the border with Macedonia, and historically part of the Skopje vilayet (it is only thirty kilometers from Skopje), became a transit stop on most routes leading from Skopje to the northern trading towns. The town was built by Koca Sinan Pasha, an Ottoman vizier who was also known as the Conqueror of Yemen. Sinan Pasha commissioned the construction of a mosque, which is still named after him, the town's castle, a madrasa, two guesthouses, a hammam and a few mills. The town's fortress is in almost complete disrepair, but the Sinan Pasha Mosque built in 1594-5 is still open to congregations and is worth a visit.

The town is mentioned by Evliya Çelebi, the great Ottoman chronicler, who explains the origin of the town's name in his Book of Travels. Apparently, the name stems from the Turkish word *kacanlar* meaning fugitives. According to him, the town was named after a group of fugitives who were caught in Kaçanik after having looted Skopje.

The Mosque and Church in Ferizaj

A rare sight, the Mosque of Mulla Veseli and the St. Uroš Orthodox Cathedral share the same yard in the center of Ferizaj. The mosque was built in 1894 and reconstructed in 1941, while the church was constructed in 1927. Neither was destroyed during the war in 1999, although the church did suffer damage during riots in 2004.



Nerodime Bifurcation

The bifurcation of the Nerodime river occurs only 6 kilometers away from Ferizaj. It's a hydrological curiosity, unique in Europe, because the two divided streams run off and flow into two different seas: the Aegean and the Black Sea. The rare phenomenon can be witnessed at the bifurcation point, close to Nika's Mill, which is open to visitors as well. The Nerodime Bifurcation is a strict wildlife sanctuary protected by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Novobërdë Fortress

At the top of a gently sloped hill, the Novobërdë Fortress (also known as Artana Fortress) is a well-preserved remnant of the region's bygone glory. First mentioned in 1319 as Nuovo Monte, an urban center developed within the fortress walls, quickly gaining importance due to its rich mines. A commercial and mining center, Novobërdë reached its peak in the fifteenth century and even minted its coins, called Grossi Di Novoberda.

The Feast of the Black Madonna

In the middle of August every year, thousands of pilgrims flock to celebrate the Feast of the Black Madonna in a small village hidden away in the Karadaku mountains. The almost deserted village of Letniç comes back to life when its Croat population returns together with many other Catholic believers to pray to the statue of the Black Madonna. In addition to being the home of the rare statue of the Black Madonna, the white church is also famous because it is believed that Gjonxhe Bojaxhiu – better known as Mother Teresa – was on a pilgrimage here when she heard her calling.

Keqekollë Fortress

The archeological wealth buried in the Gallap region, where Novobërdë fortress is also located, has yet to be fully discovered. One of the most recent additions to this list, is the excavated Keqekollë Fortress, a Dardanian construction of the fourth century AD. Experts believe this is Kekola Castle reconstructed by Emperor Justinian the Great in the sixth century AD. The castle is fortified with defensive walls and has a uniquely constructed tower. Tools and ceramics have also been found, shedding light on life in this Dardanian settlement.

Tour de Culture Kosovo

Enthusiastic cyclists can experience Kosovo in a unique way by participating in the Tour de Culture. The annual event takes bikers on a day tour around cultural and natural heritage landmarks, cultivating an appreciation for the country's vast heritage. In 2013, the tour started in Ferizaj, with participants visiting the town's mosque and Orthodox church, library, and Nika's Mill at the bifurcation of Nerodime. Covering 25 kilometers the route ended in Kaçanik, after bikers visited the spectacular Kaçanik Gorge, the historic Sinan Pasha mosque, and the medieval fortress. Every year the tour changes its route, stopping off at different sights.



Cream-filled peppers and pogaçe

A delicious appetizer, cream-filled peppers is a regular dish at any traditional meal. Lovers of dairy products will find that the filling can vary, it can be mazë (cream) or gjizë (cottage cheese), both combinations being simple and complementary to the heat of the pepper. Spicy and savory, it is best devoured together with freshly-baked pogaçe, a traditional home-made bread.

Vibrant Prizren and its imposing mountains

Walking down the narrow streets of Prizren, it is common to hear the melodious sound of Turkish, still a lingua franca in the former Ottoman center. Once an administrative center of the Kosovo vilayet, Prizren used to be its largest and wealthiest city. On a crossroads with ancient trade routes connecting the inland to the coast, the city enjoyed centuries of steady development. Located at the foot of the Sharri Mountains on one side, and the Pashtriku mountain on the other, Prizren is endowed with impressive scenery and highly fertile arable land, from which the area's inhabitants have greatly benefitted. Close to the Macedonian border, Brezovica mountain is one of the most developed skiresorts in the country. Prevallë, another village in the Sharri Mountains, is another hotspot for skiing and hiking. Venturing deeper into the mountain range, remoter pristine areas full of wild flowers come into full view as one enters Dragash. On the other side of the Drini i Bardhë river, deep into the Hasi region, a peek at Albanian traditional life is still possible during the annual folk festival held since 1976. Further north, Rahovec's undulating hills are covered with high-yielding vineyards, from which most of Kosovo's wine varieties come.

Prizren is unequivocally Kosovo's main attraction and rightly so. A well-preserved old town, spectacular mountain scenery, the cool breeze blowing from the Lumbardhi river and cultural diversity make Prizren an unmissable stop. An ancient settlement, it developed around the fortress which still sits on top of the hill overlooking the city. Ancient trade routes passed through the area, while the fortress, from which the entire city can be seen, was ruled by Byzantines, Serbs, and Ottomans one after another. During the long reign of the Ottoman Empire, Prizren became an epicenter of artisanal work whose powerful guilds controlled more than one thousand shops. A strong tradition of craftsmanship is still detectable in the winding streets of the bazaar. One of the ancient crafts still practiced today is the art of filigree, whose main product is delicate silver or gold jewelry.

After becoming the center of the Kosovo sandzak and vilayet, Prizren's fate becoming closely linked to that of the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottoman Empire weakened, Serbia's interest to expand south worried



Albanian landowners and the intelligentsia who founded the League of Prizren to protect their interests and lobby for the unification of Albanian territories into a single vilayet. Founded in 1878, the League managed to form an interim administration by 1881, but soon after that the movement was stamped out by the Sublime Porte. The house where it all started has been turned into a museum. In 1913, Prizren became part of the Serbian Empire, its mosques becoming barracks and armories. The Balkan Wars affected Prizren's economy, which had a boost during the Second World War when trade routes to Albania were reopened. After the war, Prizren lost some of its prestige with the declaration of Prishtina as capital.

From the cobbled streets to the teashops in the city's bazaar, Prizren has a singular Ottoman flair. There is plenty to see, and the city is a treasure for the entire region. Monuments and museums make room for old townhouses, bridges, drinking fountains and places of worship of three religions. Turkish is spoken by most and is used as a third official language, both in public service and schools.

One look at the city's skyline and one can quickly surmise that this city is home to a population of diverse faiths; the city counts amazing examples of Ottoman mosques, dervish tekkes, important Orthodox churches and the seat of Kosovo's Catholic diocese. This diversity is reflected in the city's ethnic makeup as well - its population being a mix of Albanians, Turks, Bosniaks, Serbs, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian. Prominent Ottoman buildings such as the Sinan Pasha and Bajrakli Mosques, as well as the Gazi Mehmet Pasha Hammam, which now serves as a cultural space, are a must-see for any visitor. The Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš, is a good example of Byzantine architecture, while the smaller chapel-sized Church of Saint Nicholas, constructed in 1331-2 is also an interesting stop.

As Kosovo's cultural capital, Prizren is home to many festivals and cultural events happening all year round. Its main attraction is the international documentary film festival, Dokufest, held in July or August each year. Hundreds of thousands of people amass to watch films in the open-air cinemas and party through the night in Prizren's narrow streets and lush Marash park.

A bizarre event, 40 BunarFest is a competition in which participants race each other down the Lumbardhi river while uncomfortably seated on truck tires. More traditionally inclined events include Zambaku i Prizrenit, an annual festival of city songs and the Cultural Fair, another annual event. NGOM Festival on the other hand focuses on contemporary music, attracting a youthful crowd. Outside Prizren, in the Hasi region, two traditional events are also organized on an annual basis, namely Gjeçovi Meetings (Takimet e Gjeçovit), a literary event, and Hasi Echoes (Hasi Jehon) a folk music and dance festival.

Snow covers the narrow hiking paths between the pine trees in the Sharri Mountains, while alpine lakes make for spectacular scenery as one climbs to the top of the peaks. Abundant pastures on the sides of these mountain peaks have fed herds of sheep for centuries, producing delicious dairy products like the Sharri cheese. At 2,498 meters the peak of Luboten stands apart, clearly visible both from Macedonia and Kosovo.

39,000 hectares of this mountain range have been turned into a national park, protecting the rich variety of flora and fauna indigenous to the Sharri Mountains. An intriguing example of this is the Sharri dog, an indigenous shepherd dog of strong build and shaggy hair.

Brezovica, a well-established popular ski-resort, can be too crowded once the ski season is open, but the nearby Dragash municipality is full of hidden treasures, which have only recently begun to be explored. The village of Brod is an up-and-coming popular spot for skiing, with a brand-new ski lift taking skiers and snowboarders up the hill. Many other villages in the Dragash region are home to Gorani, a Slavic minority who practice Islam. Isolated amidst wild flowers and high peaks, the highlanders of this region have preserved their traditions and customs well. For wedding ceremonies, for example, the bride is extravagantly dressed and her entire face is decorated in great detail.

Elsewhere in the Prizren region, the panoramic Rahovec valley, surrounded by mountains, is famous for its wines. This ethnically diverse municipality is defined by its gentle hills, upon which many local and foreign grape varieties are grown. While Vranac is a popular grape throughout the Balkans, Prokupa and Frankovka are also popular indigenous varieties. Besides their local grapes, the many vineyards in the area also grow Merlot, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling and Chardonnay.





Prizren

The picturesque city of Prizren has been a very important commercial and administrative center throughout history. Today, visitors clatter down the narrow cobbled streets amidst centuries-old monuments. At the center, the drinking fountain, shadërvan, provides refreshment on hot summer days.



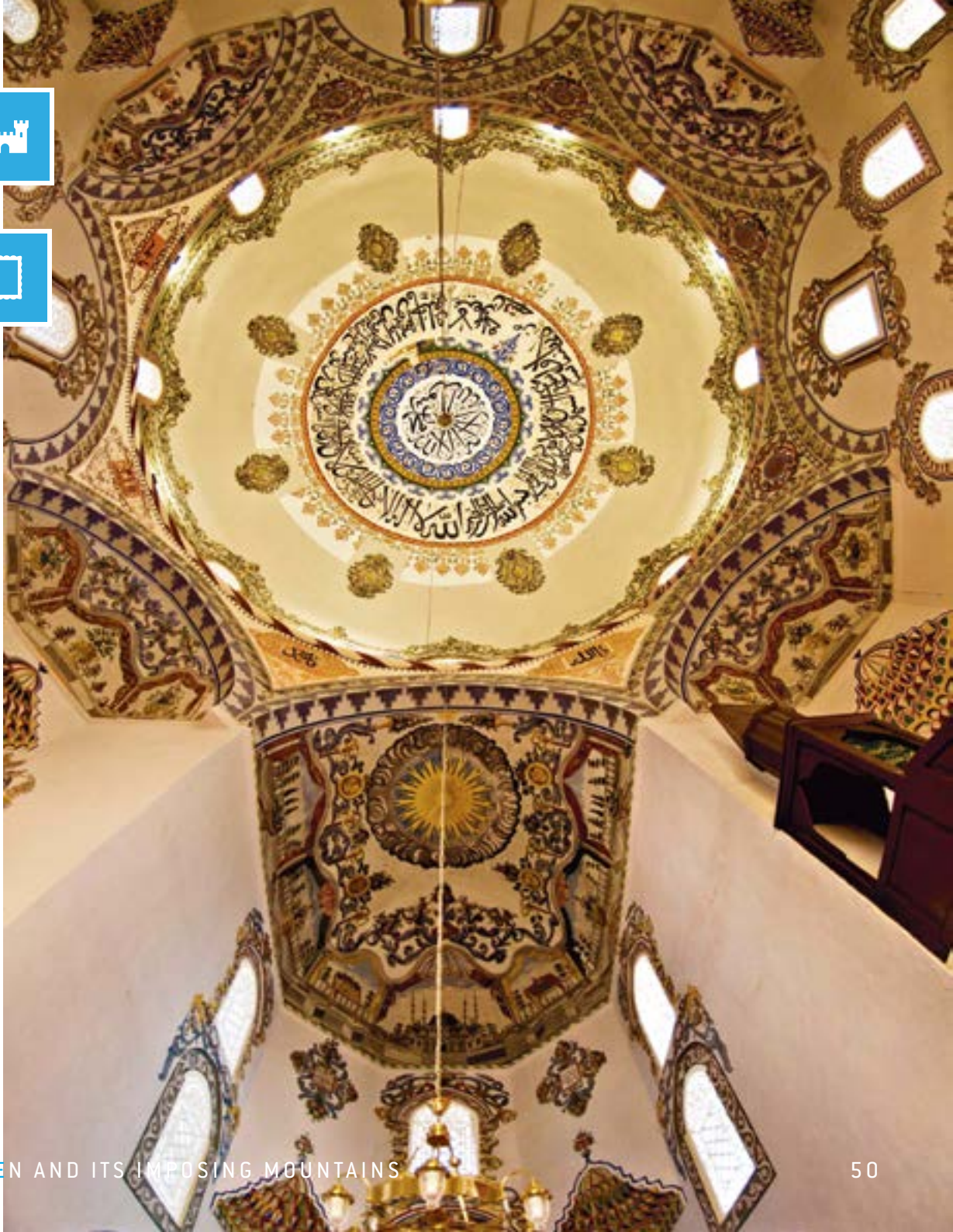
Prizren Fortress

Looking out over the old town, the Prizren Fortress, possibly a settlement since the sixth century AD, was expanded into a fully-fledged fortification during the Ottoman period. A steep climb away from the city centre, the top of the fortress offers magnificent views of Prizren, Pashtriku mountain and the Bistrica valley. Used until 1912, it quickly fell into disrepair, only to be consolidated in recent years.



Sinan Pasha Mosque

Just across the old stone bridge, dominating the city center, stands the mosque of Sinan Pasha built in 1615. The mosque is considered to be the most significant and prettiest mosque in Prizren. The large dome, carved mahfil and the mural decorations with floral motifs and calligraphy inscriptions make this mosque a cultural heritage gem. With the changing of rulers, the mosque altered its function and was damaged, most severely in 1919 by the Serbian authorities.



League of Prizren Museum

Concerned by the consequences of the war between Turkey and Russia - namely Serbia's expansion - Albanian intelligentsia and wealthy landowners formed the League of Prizren to protect Albanian territories. The League's mission, defined on June 10th 1878, was the defense of the rights of the Albanian nation and the unification of Albanian territories into a single autonomous vilayet. After the League appointed a "temporary government" in 1881, the Sublime Porte quelled the movement by arresting many of its leaders and members. The building on the site where the League's meetings were once held now serves as a museum.





Bajrakli Mosque

Part of the League of Prizren complex, the Gazi Mehmet Pasha Mosque (also known as the Bajrakli Mosque) is one of the most elaborate places of worship in Prizren. Erected in 1566, the mosque was founded by Gazi Mehmet Pasha together with a hammam, mausoleum, madrasa and a library - all constructed between 1563 and 1574. The mosque's large porch, water fountains for washing and garden seats make the yard pleasant while blue and white mural decorations adorn its interior.



Gazi Mehmet Pasha Hammam

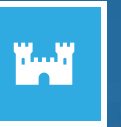
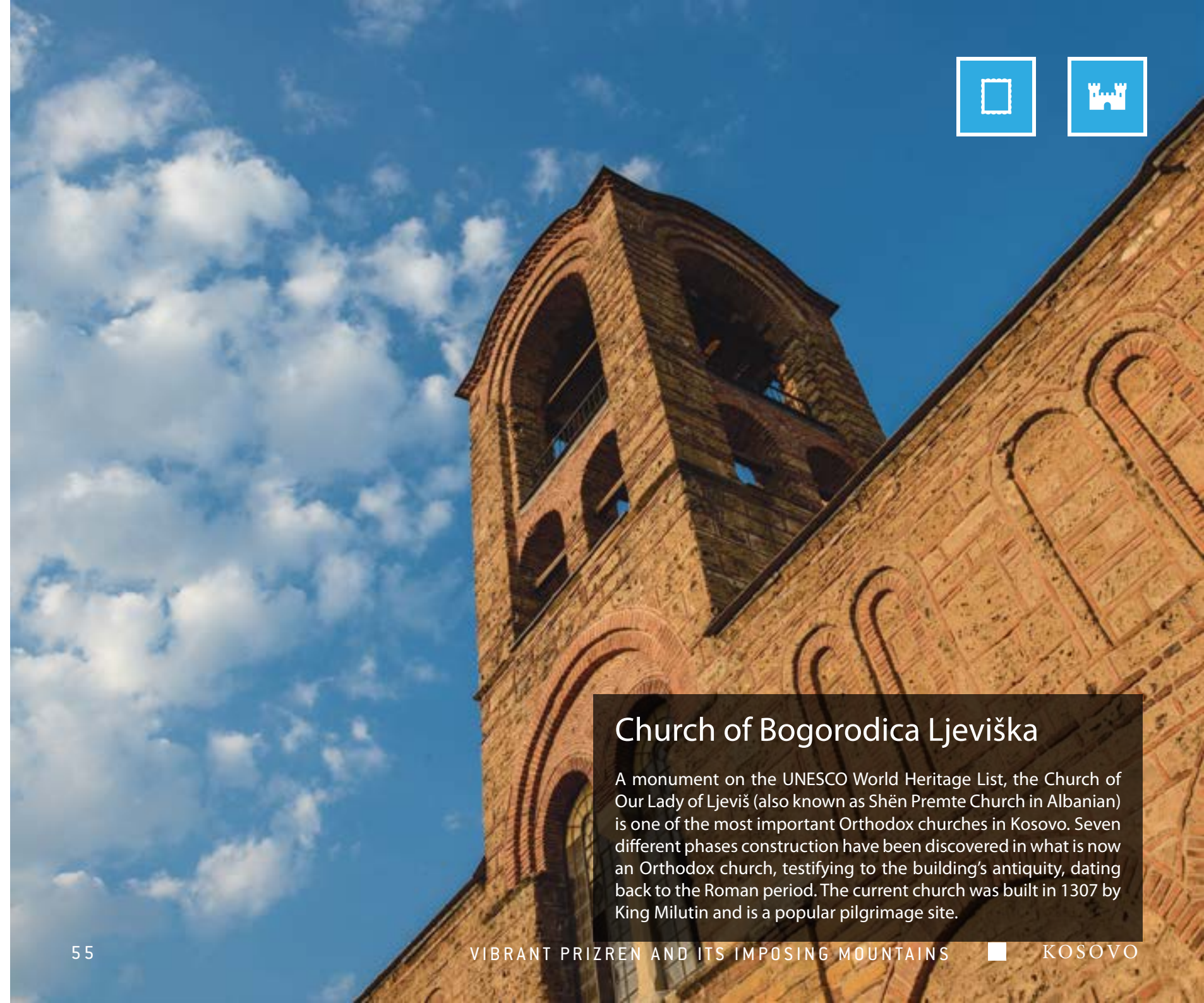
Built in 1573, during the heyday of Ottoman rule, the Gazi Mehmet Pasha hammam had separate sections for women and men. The Turkish bath functioned fully only until 1926, and was completely closed in 1944. Today, its vast rooms and stonewalls serve as a gallery and a venue for cultural events.





Sufi Ritual

Although the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim, Sufi congregations based mostly in the western part of Kosovo enrich the country's religious makeup. Dervish orders organize annual events in dervish lodges (tekke), where they perform rituals that include piercing of their flesh and rhythmic dances.



Church of Bogorodica Ljeviška

A monument on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš (also known as Shën Premte Church in Albanian) is one of the most important Orthodox churches in Kosovo. Seven different phases construction have been discovered in what is now an Orthodox church, testifying to the building's antiquity, dating back to the Roman period. The current church was built in 1307 by King Milutin and is a popular pilgrimage site.



Cathedral of the Lady Helper

Prizren's skyline reflects its religious diversity: a mosque, and Orthodox, as well as, Catholic churches all characterize the old town's center. The Cathedral of the Lady Helper, the seat of the Kosovo Diocese, was built in 1870.



Dokufest

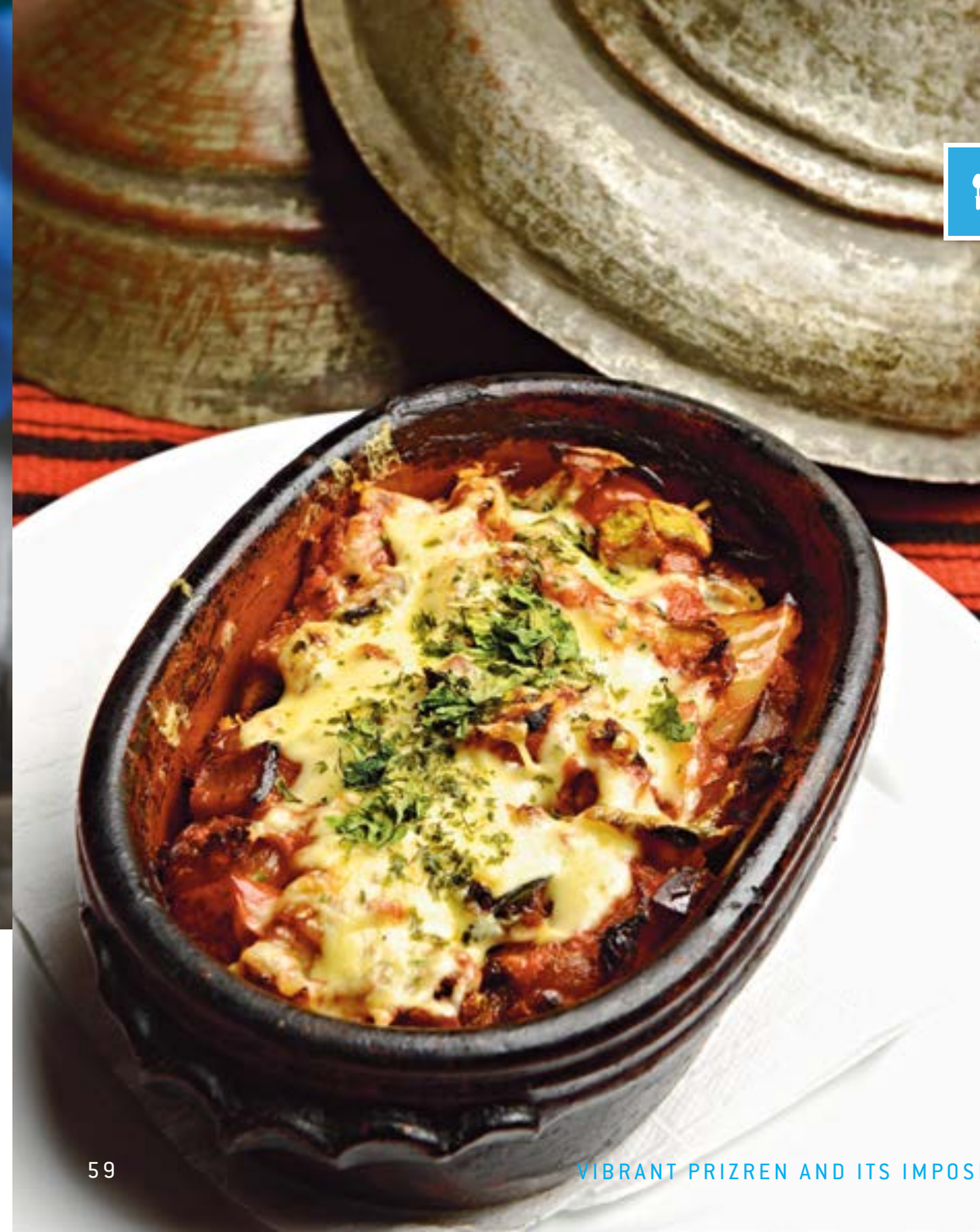
An annual international documentary film festival, Dokufest has put Prizren on the world map. A pilgrimage site for filmmakers worldwide, Dokufest attracts thousands of visitors every summer to this city rich in history and full of youth. Whether one is watching films above the Lumbardhi river, or partying in Marash park, there is never a dull moment.





Filigree Art

Filigree is a traditional craft, relying on the use of fine silver and gold wire to produce ornate jewelry. Though the art itself dates back to Ancient Egypt, it is believed that it arrived in Kosovo in the fifteenth century. It has been practiced ever since, and in Prizren alone there are tens of small shops which produce little pieces of filigree art which can be purchased at a fair price.

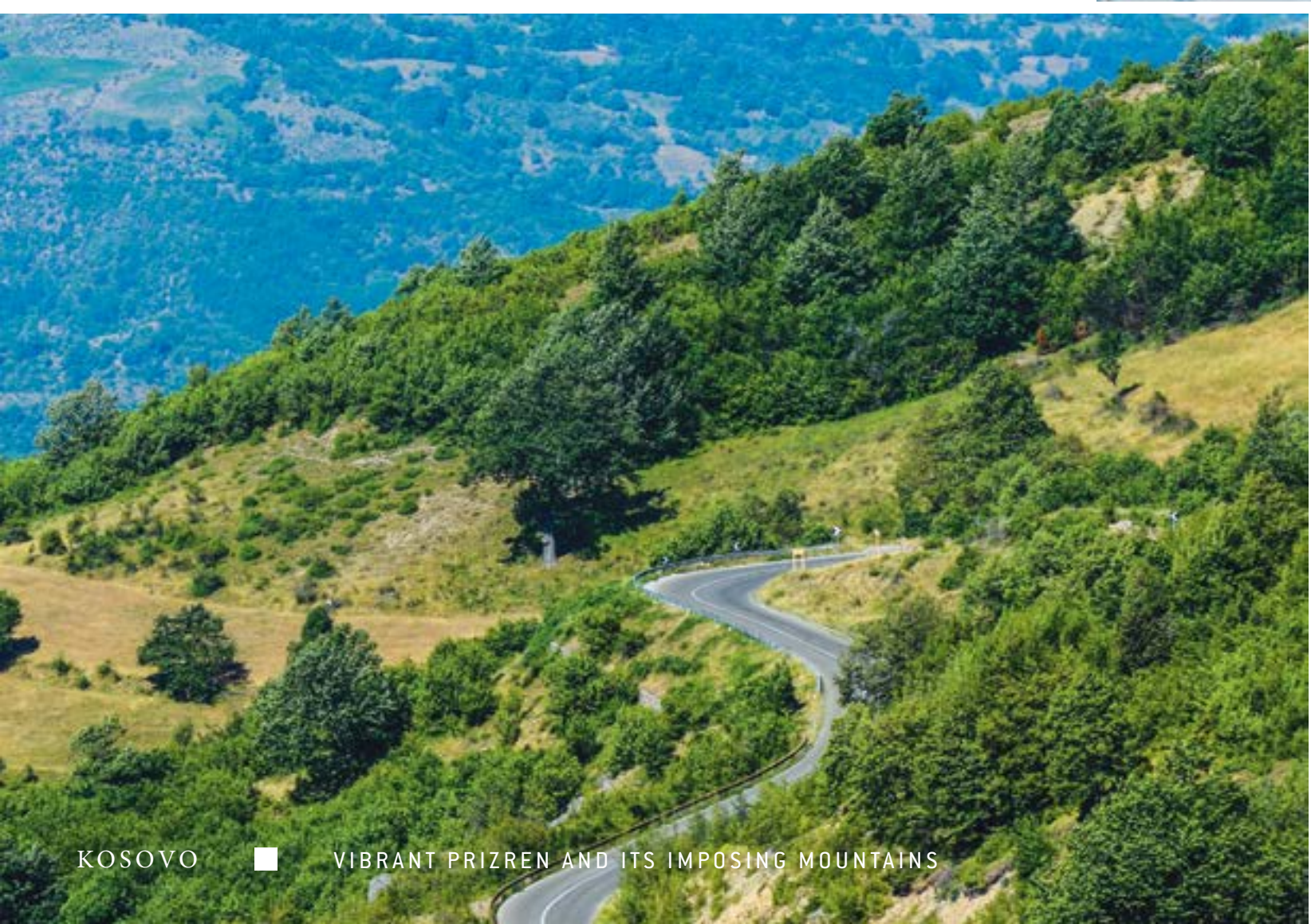


Prizren Tava

Tavas - dishes cooked in an earthenware pot, similar to casseroles - represent local cuisine at its best. All the varieties include some kind of protein accompanied by vegetables or covered in yoghurt and cooked for hours in the oven. While the Prizren tava is Ottoman-inspired, it has been traditionally cooked in the region for centuries. Besides the obligatory beef or lamb meat, this tava, is also made with okra.

Sharri Mountains

Stretches of snow cover the pine forests and green meadows of the Sharri Mountains, the peaks holding on to their white cover even during summer. This alpine mountain range expands from southern Kosovo to northern Macedonia, providing impressive views of high peaks and glacial lakes. Great for hiking, skiing, and mountain biking, a large part of the mountains has been turned into a national park.



Brezovica

A very popular winter destination, Brezovica skiresort is busy with visitors every season. Accommodation is mostly in chalets, with some hotels at the foot of the mountain, while snow-covered slopes provide ample room for skiers, snowboarders and hikers.





Dragash

Surrounded by steep mountains on either side, Dragash was a remote area until very late, its beauties and natural wealth undiscovered. Part of the Sharri Mountains, many villages in Dragash are home to Gorani, a Slavic Muslim community known as highlanders. Besides being known for baking the best burek, the community is also famous for its well-preserved customs and traditional costume which the Gorani women still wear.



Gorani bride

The elaborate wedding dress pales in comparison to the astonishing and intricate decoration of the faces of Gorani brides on their wedding day. This custom is still practiced today.



Traditional wrestlers, Pelivans

A rare sight, traditional wrestling is a sport one can only witness in the village of Lubinjë, tucked away in the Sharri mountains. The wrestlers, called pelivans, rub their torsos with oil before the matches with consequences that can be imagined. Quite a spectacle to watch, the championship occurs only once in every five years during a three-day festival.





Sharri cheese

Traditionally made from sheep's milk, Sharri cheese is produced in the peaks of the Sharri mountains. Distinguished for its salty flavor, the cheese has a hard texture and is covered in dill.



Hasi Echoes

Since 1976, folk ensembles all over Kosovo have flocked to the village of Gjonaj for the annual festival of folk music and dance titled Hasi Jehon (Hasi Echoes). Held each May only 15 kilometers from Prizren, the festival attracts thousands of visitors with its dance and music performances, exhibitions of regional Hasi clothes, and an abundance of traditional cuisine.

Rahovec vineyards

Rahovec’s rolling countryside is full of vineyards and farms, the area being the biggest agricultural producer in Kosovo. Well-known as traditional wine producers, the Rahoveci vineyards cultivate both indigenous and foreign grape varieties, such as the popular Vranac. Visitors are welcome to wine and raki tastings all year round while a special grape and wine festival is organized annually.



The Accursed Mountains and their Blessed Plain

Bordering Albania and Montenegro, western Kosovo is famous for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The Albanian Alps rise majestically above the Dukagjini plain that begins at the Mokna mountain in the north and continues down to the Sharri Mountains in the south. The glaciated peaks of the so-called Accursed Mountains are notoriously difficult to climb, although daring alpinists have taken on the challenge. The Peaks of the Balkan trail, a transnational project, takes hikers on a trek throughout the entire range, covering Montenegrin, Kosovar, and Albanian parts of the Alps. The trail is a great way of discovering remote mountains, glacial lakes and highland settlements hidden deep in the Alps. Rich in water, with the Drini i Bardhë (White Drin) and its tributaries flowing throughout, the fertile Dukagjini plain has historically been affluent. Agriculture thrives all over the plain, while towns such as Peja and Gjakova once played an important role as trade towns. Less prominent Deçan is also renowned despite its plainness because of the singular Decani Monastery sitting on its outskirts. Amidst Dukagjini's greenery and farmland it is also easy to spot traditional stone houses, or kullas, a prime example of vernacular architecture.

First mentioned as a town in 1202, Peja's location guaranteed its development, especially as a trading outpost to Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik). The town's history is also closely connected to the Patriarchate, once the seat of the Orthodox Church. During Ottoman rule, Peja was a trading town of great importance with a large population and hundreds of artisan shops. The old bazaar (Çarshija e Gjatë), where artisans and craftsmen once plied their trade, is still the heart of the city, although it has lost most of its original flair. Peja is very dear to Albanians, as it is home to Haxhi Zeka, a nationalist leader and founder of the League of Peja in 1899. His family house and the mill, one of the first to be automated in the country, can still be found in the city center. After the Second World War, Peja was industrialized, although most of the factories are inactive today. Nevertheless, the town is still a hub of economic activity, being the home of Pejabeer, the most popular local brew. With its architectural mix of socialist constructions, Ottoman townhouses, Austro-Hungarian buildings and stone kullas, the town has a quirky feel to it. Refreshingly clean and green, with the Bistrica river cutting through town, Peja has many parks, stretches of which can be found right at the town's center.

The old bazaar, Çarshija e Gjatë, still maintains some Ottoman elements, with shops crowding the narrow, long street. Other interesting stops in the city include theÇarshi or Bajrakli Mosque, the oldest Ottoman monument in the area, and the Ethnographic Museum, an Ottoman townhouse exhibiting traditional artifacts characteristic of the Rugova valley and Dukagjini plain. Only six kilometers from the citystands the Patriarchate of Peja, once the seat of the Serbian Orthodox church, built towardsthe end of the thirteenth century.

Traditional stone houses, kullas,are very common in Peja, and indeed throughout the Dukagjini region. The kulla, a tower-like construction, housed a stable on the ground floor, the family quarters on the first floor, and oda e burrave (men’s chamber) in the third. While in Peja the house of HaxhiZeka (Pasha Kulla) is a must-see, many other kullasstill owned and used by families can be spotted around town. Impressive kullas can also be seenin the villageof Isniq where the kullasof the Osdautajand Kukleci families are located. Some of the kullashave been transformed into guesthouses providing bed and breakfast services. A unique experience of the traditional life in akulla, including a traditional meal, is possible in Junik and Dranoc, also very close to Peja.

The Rugova Mountains, part of the Albanian Alps,extend from northern Albania to Kosovo and Montenegro, forming a breathtaking vista. The dramatic Rugova Gorge cut sharply by the fast-flowing Bistrica e Pejës is surrounded by caves that are best explored with professional guides. Further up in the mountain villages, amidst pine trees, ski slopes and hiking routes make an appearance. Proud of their highlands, the locals are great hosts and will undoubtedly offer their mountain cheese and raki. Just a hike away from the village of Kuqishtë, visitors will find Leqinat, one of the twenty lakes spread all over the Alps. During summer, the 13 villages of the Rugova valley are crowded with people escaping the city heat, and some visitors dare to swim in the cool lakes in the mountains. Hiking and paragliding are also popular activities in the warmer seasons. During winter, the snow-covered hills are perfect for skiing and snowboarding, especially in the village ofBoga, where a ski-lift takes people up to the piste.

According to local legends, Gjakova grew around the Hadum Mosque, which is still at the center of the old trade town. According to stories, the mosque’s construction (1594-5),preceded the town’s foundation. Gjakovars say that the mosque was built on the land of JakVula, a Catholic, who sold his land for the site of worship to be built,with the single condition that the settlement surrounding the mosque would be named after him. Gjakova was indisputably a great trade town with powerful guilds, traces of which are still visible in the sixteenth century wooden bazaar and the beautiful bridges standing over the Ereniku and DriniiBardhëivers. The town prospered economically during Yugoslav times, becoming an important industrial center. During the war of 1999, Gjakova suffered great damages and human losses.After the war, the town experienced a severe economic decline, with most of its socially owned enterprises idle and derelict.

Artisans and craftsmen still sell their work at the Grand Bazaar or Çarshija e Madhe, a network of cobblestoned streets full of wood-shuttered shops. Thissixteenth century market was completely burnt down during the war in 1999 butwas reconstructed faithfully after the war. In its center stands the Hadum Mosque, a gorgeous sixteenth century place of worshipwhich was carefully restored in 2005. The mosque and its external facilities were also damaged during the war, the 2,000 books of the burnt library irretrievably lost. Home to Catholics, Sunni and Sufi Muslims, Gjakova is quite diverse in terms of religion. A stronghold of dervish communities, Gjakovahas seven dervish lodges,or tekkes. A low-roofed building, called the Grand Tekke, is the autocephalous tekke of the Saadi order in the Balkans, while the BektashiTekkeis the lodge to the Bektashi order, which has a strong following in Albania as well. Ottoman town houses add tothe city’s architectural wealth, with the ethnographic museum of Gjakova housed in a18th-20th century building. Other great examples include the Hani iHaraqisë (or Haraqî Guesthouse) and Hani iVjetër (the Old Guesthouse). Up on the Çabrat hill, one can see the entire city: the old town with its wooden shops and minarets, as well as the city’s clock tower. A beautiful fifteenth century bridge, the Terzi(Tailors’) Bridge stands over the Erenikuriver just outside the city. Further away, the Holy Bridge (Ura e Fshejt) standing 18.5 meters above the DriniiBardhë river, is a stunning eighteenth century construction where an annual divingcompetition is held.

A small and plain town, Deçan is mostly known as home toVisokiDeçani Monastery, one of the highlights of Kosovo’s cultural heritage. Housing a small monastic community,forcenturies the DeçaniMonastery has been protected by Albanians and Serbs alike. Surrounded by chestnut trees, the monastery, set at the foot of the Gjeravicamountain, is a mix of Gothic and Byzantine architectural styles. Stefan Uroš III was buried there and he is still venerated as a saint by Orthodox and Muslims alike, who believe he can still perform miracles.

Peja

Surrounded by the towering Albanian Alps, Peja, one of the biggest towns in the Dukagjini plain, is a charming stop. Shops, mainly silversmiths and goldsmiths, are lined up one after another in the Old Bazaar (Çarshija e Gjatë), once a very important commercial center. Many architectural and historical landmarks, including the Çarshi Mosque, the Mill of Haxhi Zeka and the Begolli townhouse, enrich a simple stroll around the city center.





Bajrakli Mosque

The first and one of the most important places of worship built during the Ottoman period, the Bajrakli Mosque (also known as the Çarshior Market Mosque as it stands in the old bazaar) was constructed in 1471. It was built by Sultan Mehmed II Fatih, who also constructed the Fatih Mosque in Prishtina. HaxhiZeka, a nationalist activist who founded the League of Peja, and Ali Pashë-Gucia, one of the founders of the League of Prizren are buried in the mosque's graveyard.



Kulla of Haxhi Zeka

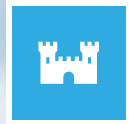
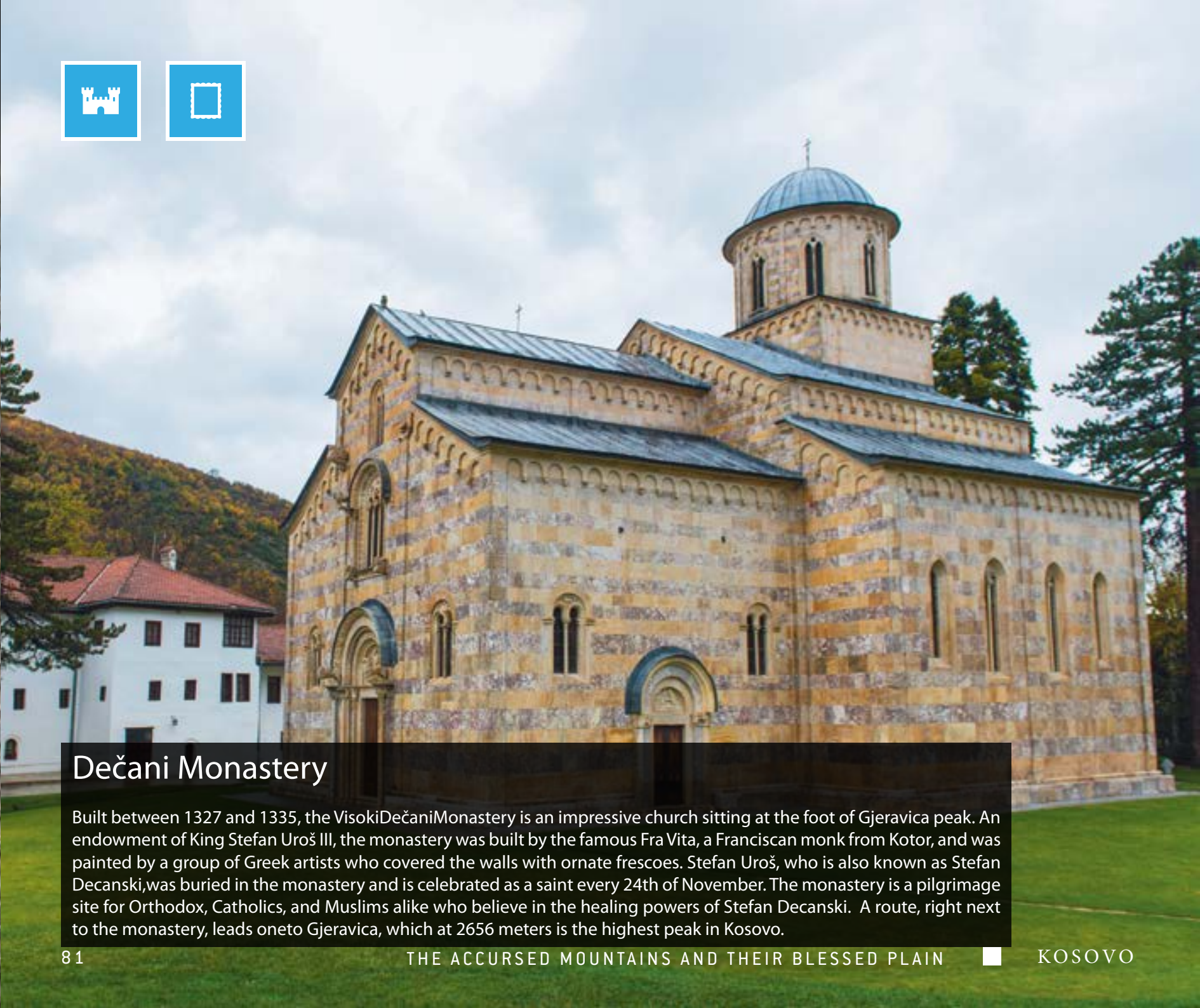
A unique vernacular construction, a kulla (that in Albanian means 'tower') is a stone house typical of the Dukagjini plain. Hundreds of these Albanian family-houses, dating mostly from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, have survived up to this day. The Kulla of Haxhi Zeka, an Albanian nationalist activist who founded the League of Peja and lobbied for education in Albanian and the application of the Code of Lekë Dukagjini, is also called Kulla e Pashës. This eighteenth century construction is a showcase of unique façade decorations, amongst which the lion and the star of David are easily distinguished.





Ethnographic Museum of Peja

An eighteenth century townhouse, Tahir Beu'skonak, houses the Regional Museum or the Ethnographic Museum in Peja. Similar to the ethnographic museums in Prishtina and Gjakova, traditional artifacts and artisanal works are on display, with an emphasis on Rugova and Dukagjin traditional wear and handicrafts.



Dečani Monastery

Built between 1327 and 1335, the Visoki Dečani Monastery is an impressive church sitting at the foot of Gjeravica peak. An endowment of King Stefan Uroš III, the monastery was built by the famous Fra Vita, a Franciscan monk from Kotor, and was painted by a group of Greek artists who covered the walls with ornate frescoes. Stefan Uroš, who is also known as Stefan Decanski, was buried in the monastery and is celebrated as a saint every 24th of November. The monastery is a pilgrimage site for Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims alike who believe in the healing powers of Stefan Decanski. A route, right next to the monastery, leads on to Gjeravica, which at 2656 meters is the highest peak in Kosovo.

Patriarchate of Peja

Considered as the spiritual seat of Orthodox Serbs, the Patriarchate of Peja was built sometime in the thirteenth century. The stunning setting is complemented by the awe-inspiring frescoes inside, some dating back to the fourteenth century. The complex includes three churches and a chapel, all connected by a single narthex. Experts argue that the church was built on foundations of an older Catholic church, the ruins of which are still visible in the compound’s yard.

Ajvar

A delicious hot pepper spread made on an open fire is a must-have forKosovar families. Made from red and greenpeppers every autumn, ajvar is delicious whether wolfed down with white bread and cheese, or with the distinctive Kosovar dish like a large tray of layered baked pancakes,flija.



The Rugova Gorge

Only six kilometers away from Peja is the astounding Rugova Gorge created by the tempestuous flow of the Lumbardhiriver. The deepest canyon in the country is the en-try point to the Rugova valley, the Kosovar part of the Albanian Alps. A winding road following the Lum-bardhi’s flow takes one to a beauti-ful waterfall and eventually to the Albanian villages in the so-called Accursed Mountains.





Leginat lake

Steep cliffs and pine trees surround the glacial lake of Leginat. Reflecting a majestic view, the crystal clear water is a steep hike from the village of Kuqishtë in the Rugova region. This lake is an ideal spot for swimming during the hot summers that are typical of the mountainous climate.



Boga

Part of the Albanian Alps, the high peaked Rugovamountainswith their glacial lakes, caves, and waterfalls come close to an earthly paradise. Out of the 13 villages in the Rugovamountains,Boga is possibly the favorite for both summer get-aways and winter sports. A good location for hiking and climbing, great views and cozy accommodation lure thousands of visitors each year. Bike rentals, paragliding and a ski lift offer tourists recreational opportunities.



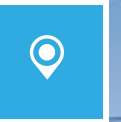
Drini i Bardhë

Traversing the fertile Dukagjini plain, the DriniiBardhë (White Drin) river has the largest drainage basin in Kosovo. Its source in Radac, only ten kilometers from Peja, is quite a sight. The surging riverformsa number of waterfalls which can be seen as one walktowards the spring.



Kulla of Osdautaj family

Another historically important tower, the Osdautaj family kulla is an exceptional specimen of vernacular architecture due to its four-storied construction. Located in Isniq, this nineteenth century kullawas restored in 2001 and has been turned into a museum where one can see a great example of theoda e burrave (literally the men's chamber), and traditional artifacts provided by the Ethnological Museum.



Gjakova

Gjakova's bazaar is a series of small shops, some still selling handcrafts, with wooden shutters on cobbled streets. Çarshia e Madhe or the Grand Bazaar has been the heart of this trading town since the sixteenth century. Burnt down completely in 1999, it has been reconstructed faithful to the original design.



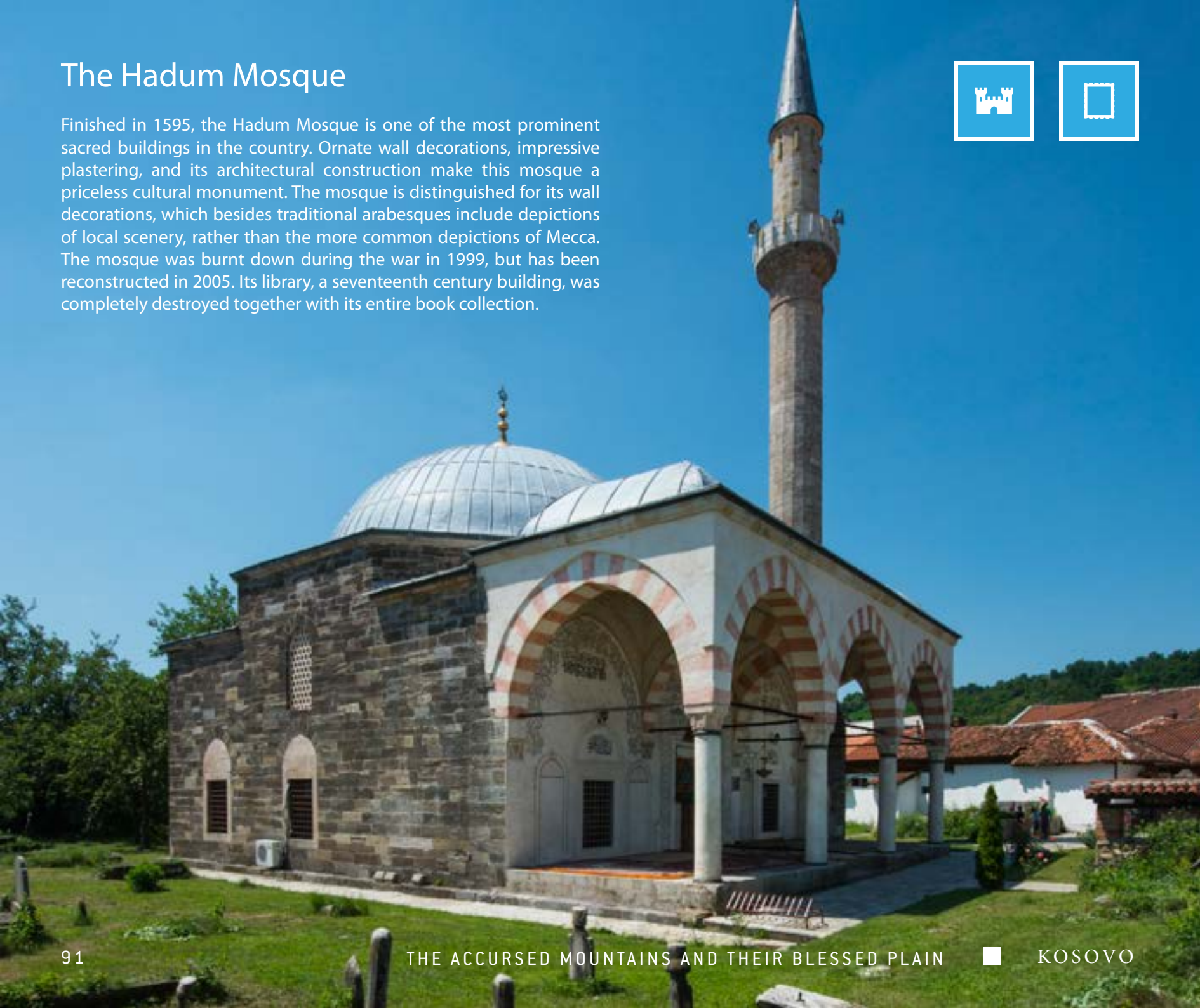
The Grand Tekke

Believers of mystical Islam, dervishes, belong to orders of Sufi Islam which study philosophy, poetry, and attempt to reach enlightenment through various rituals that bring them closer to God. The Grand Tekke or Teqja e Madhe is an autocephalous tekke of the Balkan Saadi order with a sister tekke in Prizren. This low-roofed building, located close to the Grand Bazaar, was originally built in the seventeenth century.



The Hadum Mosque

Finished in 1595, the Hadum Mosque is one of the most prominent sacred buildings in the country. Ornate wall decorations, impressive plastering, and its architectural construction make this mosque a priceless cultural monument. The mosque is distinguished for its wall decorations, which besides traditional arabesques include depictions of local scenery, rather than the more common depictions of Mecca. The mosque was burnt down during the war in 1999, but has been reconstructed in 2005. Its library, a seventeenth century building, was completely destroyed together with its entire book collection.





The Kulla of Abdullah Pashë Dreni

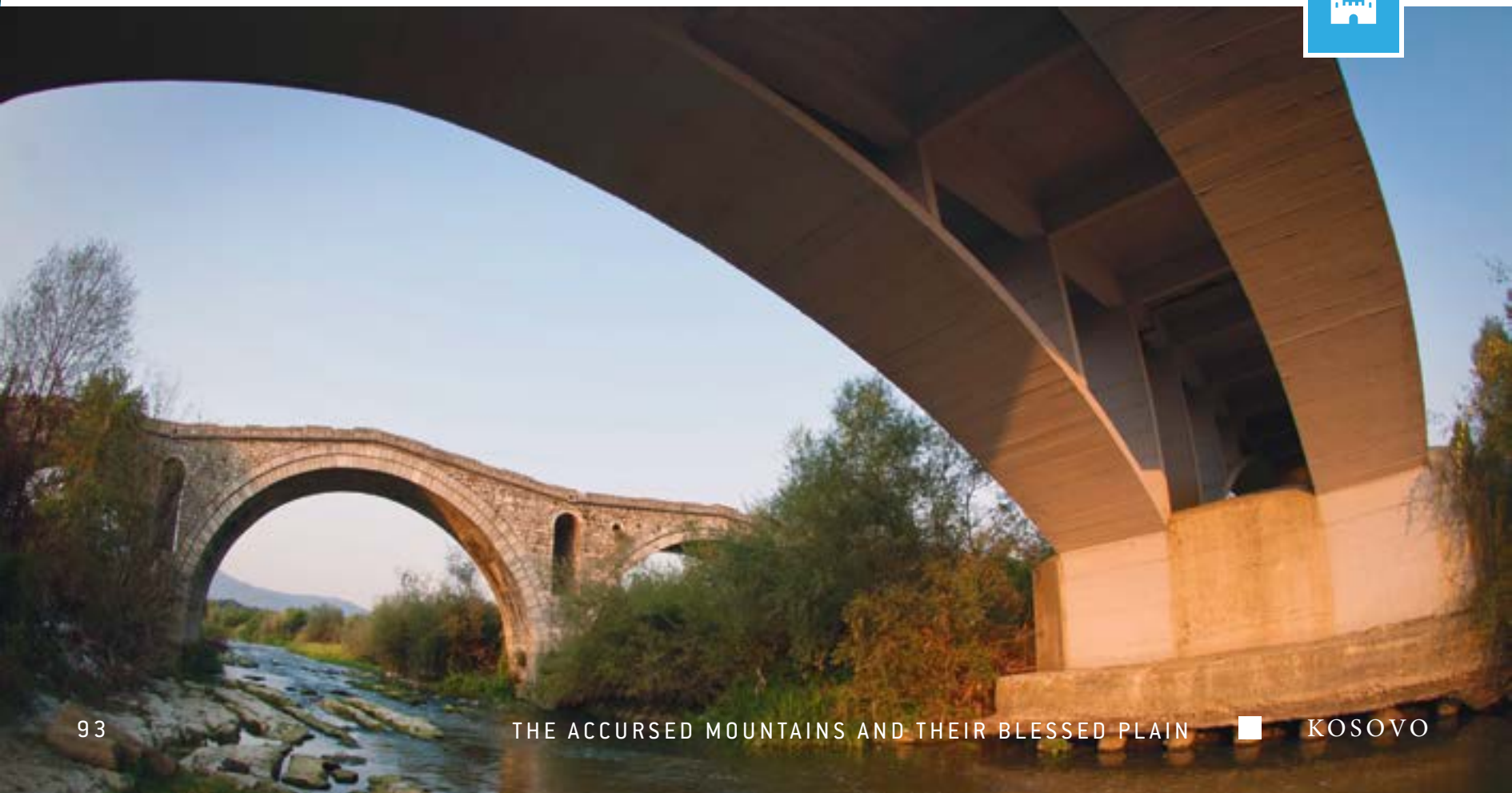
A traditional Albanian house, the house or kulla of Abdullah Pashë Dreni is both an architectural and historical landmark in the center of Gjakova. This brick and stone construction built in 1790 served as a site of the first military operation of the League of Prizren in 1878. Mehmed Ali Pasha, an Ottoman marshal who had come to oversee the cession of Albanian territories to Montenegro, was a guest of Pasha Dreni, a former League member. By Albanian custom Pasha Dreni was obliged to protect his guest. They both died fighting following a long battle between the marshal's troops and League members. An important cultural monument, the house is due to be turned into a city museum.

Raki

Strong liquors are the region's strong suit, but nowhere more so than in Gjakova where homemade raki, a clear liquor fermented from grapes, quince, plums or even honey, is a conversation starter. Although served in a small glass, misleadingly posing as a shot, it is sipped and savored slowly.

Terzi Bridge

The Terzior Tailors' - Bridge, is an emblematic Ottoman-style construction made at the end of the fifteenth century. With its 190 meters length, the bridge, which connected the two trading towns of Gjakova and Prizren, was once the longest bridge in Kosovo. During the eighteenth century, the tailor guild of Gjakova sponsored the bridge's reconstruction, hence the bridge's name.



Radoniqi Lake

The second biggest lake in Kosovo, Radoniqi is a picturesque lake only fourteen kilometers away from Gjakova. Supplying Gjakova and Rahovec with drinking water, this artificial lake is not suitable for swimming although hot summer days will drive people to its shores.



Mirusha Waterfalls

Easy to find from the main road between Prishtina and Gjakova, the Mirusha Waterfalls are a spectacular natural attraction. Carving through cliffs, the Mirusha river, a tributary of the Drini i Bardhë, creates a chain of 13 waterfalls which pour into quiet river pools, ideal for swimming. The highest waterfall is 22 meters high.



The trade routes and the mining roots of Northern Kosovo

Stretching between the Kopaonik and Rogozna mountains, along the valley of the Ibër river, northern Kosovo has historically served as a gateway to the Kosovo plain. Whoever ruled the Mitrovica region controlled the entire valley. Plagued by wars, the mountainous region developed in fits and starts, its mineral wealth exploited by various rulers one after another. The Zvečan Fortress, due to its strategic position for example, became a frontline where Byzantine, Ottoman and Serbian forces battled for control over the area. Starting from Vushtrri, an affluent city during Ottoman rule, northern Kosovo includes Mitrovica, a mining town; Skenderaj, the capital of the Drenica region, and further north the predominantly Serb municipalities Zvečan, Leposavić and Zubin Potok. The area has been inhabited since antiquity, with prehistoric archaeological sites having been discovered in multiple places (e.g. Zitkoc, Karagaç, Vallaç), as well as the remains of a Roman town, Municipium Dardanorum, situated just outside Leposavić.

Little remains of Vushtrri's illustrious past as a Roman town called Vicianum or as an opulent Ottoman administrative center. During the Middle Ages, like the entire region, Vushtrri was part of the Nemanjić kingdom. Throughout the Ottoman campaign to occupy the Balkans, a military garrison was based in Vushtrri making it an important center. Close ties with Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik), helped Vushtrri become a rich trade town. Dating from the town's economic peak, the nine-arched stone bridge and the castle, both fourteenth century constructions, are the only surviving monuments of what was once a prominent town.

Unlike Vushtrri, the Drenica region has historically been poor. Dependent on subsistence farming, the region experienced no industrial development to speak of during communist rule. Traditionally a hotbed of nationalist rebellions, Skenderaj was the center of the Kosovo Liberation Army during the war in 1999. As the KLA increased its attacks on Serbian forces, a violent retaliation on the civilian population forced thousands to flee. Prekaz, a village a couple of kilometers away from Skenderaj, was the home of Adem Jashari, a KLA commander who was killed together with his entire family during an attack by the Serbian police and paramilitary forces. The ruins of his destroyed house are now part of the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex, where an annual commemoration event, the Night of the Fires, is held to honor martyrs of the 1999 war. The event is part of a three-day event called Epopeja e UÇK-së ('the Emergence of the KLA') which is held on 5-7 March.

Unlike Drenica, Mitrovica was traditionally an ethnically-mixed and integrated town. Historically, reserves of gold, silver, lead and zinc made the Mitrovica region attractive to Romans, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Ottomans. The city of Mitrovica grew around the Trepça mining complex; Trepça first being mentioned as a mining settlement in 1303, while the area was ruled by the Nemanjić dynasty. At its peak, Trepça had more than 20.000 employees and included 40 quarries, factories and other socially-owned enterprises. For years the inhabitants of the mining town nourished a strong local identity, especially among the miners whose ethnicity had little to do with solidarity down in the shaft. However, since the 1999 war Mitrovica has been divided by the Ibër river which flows through its center. The bridge over the Ibër, once connecting the old town in the south to the new apartment buildings and cafés in the north, now symbolizes their divide. The river has become a natural border in the town divided into ethnic lines: the predominantly Serb municipality in the north, and the predominantly Albanian municipality in the south, which has suffered a tremendous economic hit with Trepça's dilapidation.

Throughout history, various militaries have controlled the area from the Zvečan Fortress, situated on top of a hill overlooking the Kosovo plain to the south and the Ibër valley to the north. After the fortress became the first Ottoman garrison station in 1399, it fuelled Mitrovica's development into an important military center. At sometime during the eighteenth century the fortress was abandoned.

Mitrovica experienced a development boom after the construction of the railway in 1873-78. Connected to Skopje and Thessaloniki, Mitrovica quickly became a trading center, importing and exporting goods. In 1926, the British company Selection Trust Ltd. bought the rights for the exploitation of the Stan Tërg mine, turning the Trepça complex into a highly profitable enterprise. During the Second World War Mitrovica like most parts of the present-day country, fell under German control. After the liberation, heavy investments resulted in Trepça becoming an industrial giant, one of the largest enterprises in Yugoslavia. In 1989 Trepça miners went on a general strike to protest the amendment of the Yugoslav constitution which was a retraction of Kosovo's autonomy as a province. As in other public enterprises, thousands of Albanian employees were fired in the early 1990s. Heavily damaged after years of mismanagement, Trepça was opened in 2005 but is still barely operating even today.

In addition to the bridge that divides the city at its center, the bazaar and an eighteenth century hammam, are worth a visit. In the south, you can visit the Stan Tërg mine and the crystal museum, while in the north the most obvious attraction is the Monument to 'the Mining Heroes,' sitting atop a hill overlooking the entire city. Outside the city, the stone house of Isa Boletini, a national hero and leader of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century has been turned into a museum in the village of Boletin. The same village is also home to the Sokolica Monastery. North of Mitrovica the first attraction is the Zvečan Fortress, which has been abandoned since the eighteenth century. Today, very little other than the ruins of Saint Nicholas church remain in the once heavily populated fortification.

Further north, the Ibër river flows into the biggest lake in Kosovo, Gazivoda, which is the main water source for the north. A sight for sore eyes, the picturesque landscape offers great paths for strolling and a few places for sunbathing.

The Night of the Fires

On the last night of the annual commemorative event in honor of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the loss of commander Adem Jashari is remembered with "the Night of the Fires." Just after sunset, a large number of torches are lit to mourn the loss of the Jashari family, killed by Serb police and paramilitary forces in 1998. The event starts with torches and a central fire being lit in Prekaz at the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex, and ends at the main square in Skenderaj with a concert and more fireworks.

The Kullaof Isa Boletini

Said to have declared “I am well when Albania is well,” Isa Boletini, a national hero and revolutionary leader of the struggle against Ottomans and Serbs, was born in the village of Boletin in Mitrovica. The family’s original kulla, a fortified stone tower constructed in 1887, was burnt down by the Ottoman military in 1908, the ruins still visible today. Next to it, a reconstructed kullahas been turned into a museum where visitors can learn about Boletini’s life and activities.



Stone Bridge in Vushtrri

Very few remnants of Vushtrri’s opulence have survived, although the town used to be an important trading center from antiquity until the late Middle Ages. A remnant from the town’s heyday, the nine-arched Stone Bridge is possibly the oldest in Kosovo. A peculiar case, the bridge stands over dry ground since the riverbed of the Sitnica has moved west of the bridge over the years. The bridge is 135 meters long and up to 6 meters wide.

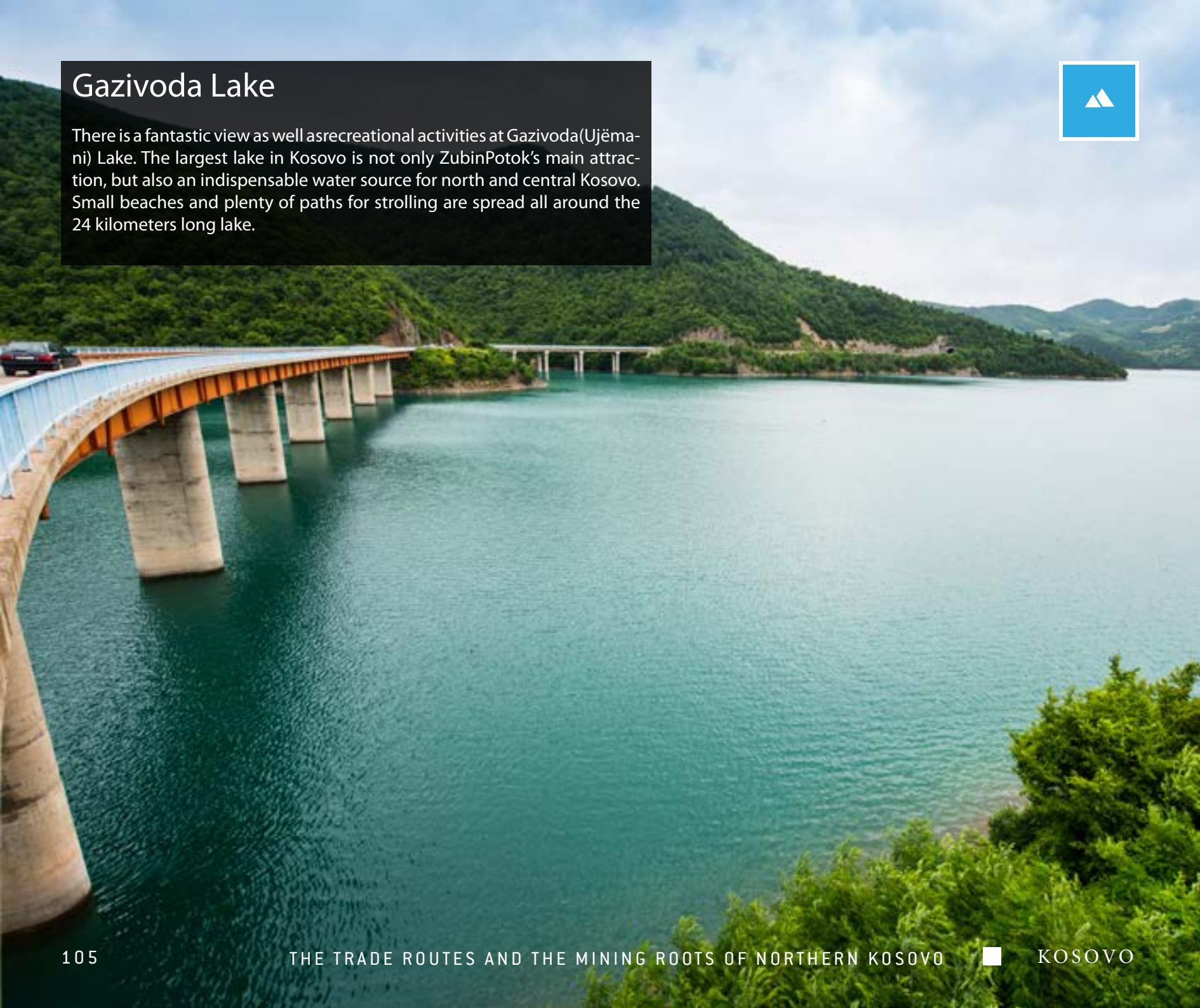


Monument to the ‘Mining Heroes’ of the National Liberation Movement

Sitting on top of a hill overlooking both Mitrovica and Zvečan, the monument dedicated to the miners who joined the National Liberal Movement during the Second World War was inaugurated in 1973. The strange design, symbolizing wagons that haul minerals from the mines, is a work of the famous architect Bogdan Boganović, whose Yugoslav memorials have become go-to spots for architecture aficionados.

Zvečan Castle

Sitting at the top of an extinct volcano, the Zvečan Fortress was envied and consequently conquered by many invaders due to its strategic position. A precious monument of Roman, Byzantine and Medieval periods, the settlement was first written about in 1091 in an account of clashes between Serbs and Byzantines. Later on, it was conquered by the Turks and abandoned sometime in the eighteenth century.



Gazivoda Lake

There is a fantastic view as well as recreational activities at Gazivoda(Ujëmani) Lake. The largest lake in Kosovo is not only ZubinPotok’s main attraction, but also an indispensable water source for north and central Kosovo. Small beaches and plenty of paths for strolling are spread all around the 24 kilometers long lake.

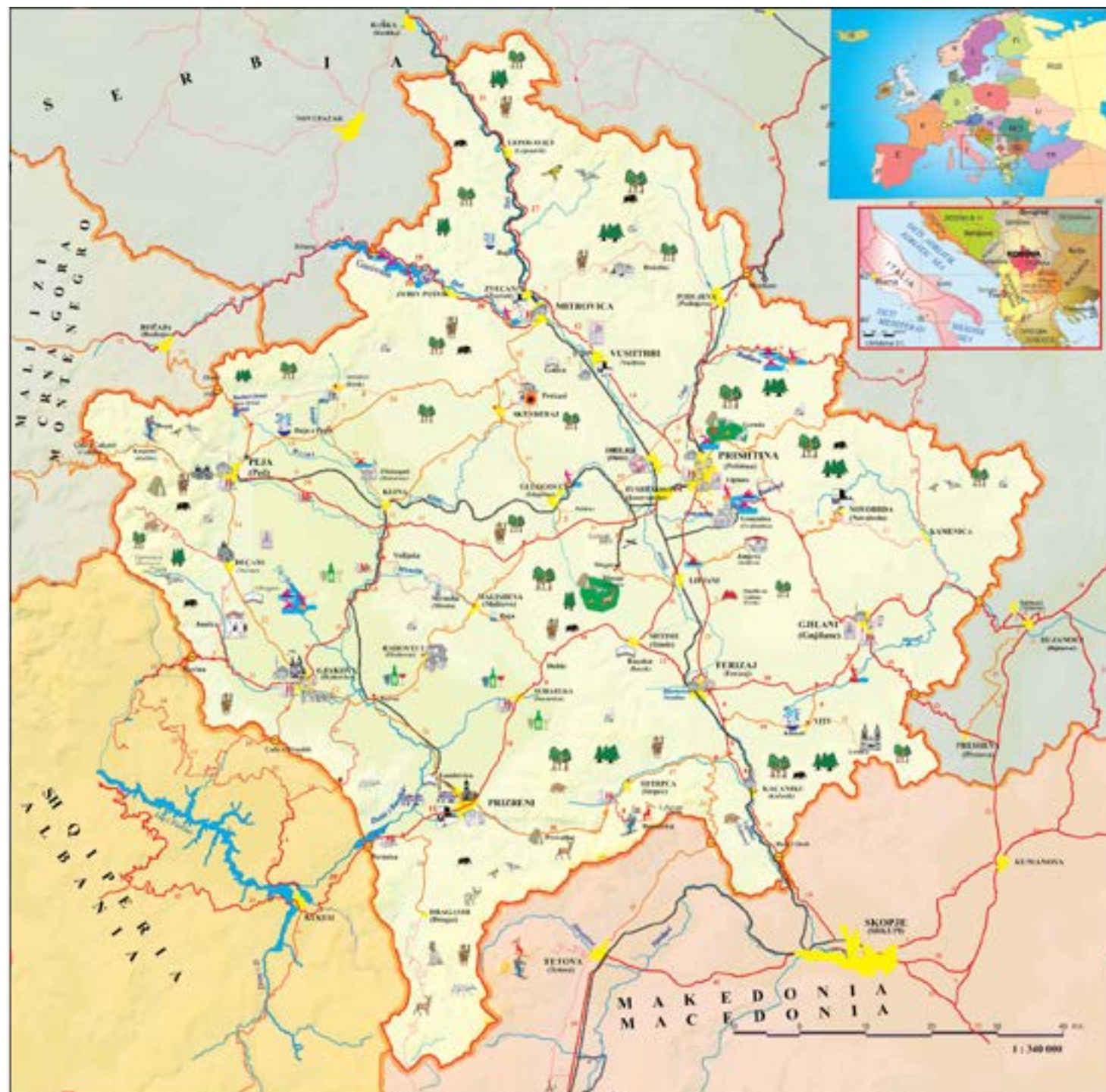






























































Flija and mantija

Kosovar cuisine is rich with types of pastry, amongst which local favorites are flija and mantija. Flija, a uniquely Kosovar dish, is made from layers of batter. It takes hard work to conjure up this delicious treat: each layer is “baked” individually with asaç (a metal dome) heated on an open fire. Its crepe-like texture goes well with both savory and sweet spreads.

Mantija is another popular kind of pastry that is both traditional and easy to eat on the go. Mantija are made by wrapping small portions of minced meat in very thin pastry and baking them in the oven. They are best served with a yoghurt topping.



	Park turistik Turistički park Tourist park		Qytetet Gradovi Cities		Vend peshkim Mesto za ribovanje Fishing place		Xhami e vjetër Stara Damiya Old Mosque		
	Pyje gjetërinëse		Rrugë magjistrale Magistralni putevi Magistral roads		Vend noti (peshinë, liqe) Mesto pливanja (bazen, jezero) Swimming place (pool, lake)		Kishë e vjetër katolike Stara katolička kisha Old catholic church		
	Pyje gjetëmbajtëse		Rrugë regionale Regionalni putevi Regional roads		Vend noti (peshinë, liqe) Mesto pливanja (bazen, jezero) Swimming place (pool, lake)		Manastir Manastir Monastery		
	Ari Medved Bear		Rrugë lokale Lokalni putevi Local roads		Ski-lift Ski-lift Ski-lift		Kompleks për kultimor		
	Kaproli		Hekurudhë Železnica Railways		Terrene skijimi Skijaše terene Ski terrain		Urë e vjetër gur Stari most Old stone bridge		
	Ujku Vuk Wolf		Lum Reka River		Teatar Teatar Theater		Hotel Hotel Hotel		
	Derri i egër Divlja svinja Wild Pig		Liqe Jezero Lake		Restoran Restoran Restaurant		Motel Motel Motel		
	Lepuri Zec Rabbit		Ujëvara Slapovi Waterfall		Vreshta (Bodume vere) Vinogradi (Vinski podrumi) Wine yards		Arkitekturi e vjetër Stara arhitektura Old architecture		
	Shqiponjë Orao Eagle		Venkalim kufitar Granični prelaz Cross border		Tereni qietie Lovački tereni Hunting terrain		Termoçentral Termoçentral Thermal power plant		
	Qeni i Shamit Šanski pas Sham's dog		Aeroport Aeroport Airport		Kufiri Graniča Boundary		Hidroçentral Hidroçentral Hydro power plant		
	Peshku Riba Fish		Kulla e Jasharve Jashar's Kulla		– Nature			– History	
	Zogu i malit Bird		Lokaliitet parahistorik Preistorička lokaliteta Prehistoric locality		– Gastronomy			– Culture	
	Bajë shëruese Zdravstvena banja Remedial Spa		Lokaliitet antik Antika lokaliteta Antique locality		– City			– Sport Center	
	Bajë Banja Spa		Kështjellë mesjetare Srednjovekovna tvrđava Middle age Castle						
	Shpell Pečina Cave		Kulla e Boletinit Boletinska Kulla Bolešin's Kulla						
	Kamping Kampovanje Camping		Vend me trashëgemi kulturore Cultural heritage place						



Fact Sheet

Area:	10.908 km2
Population:	1.8 million.
Ethnicities:	Albanian, Serb, Bosniak, Turkish, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani
Religions:	Muslim, Serb Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant
Capital city:	Prishtina
National official languages:	Albanian, Serbian.
Currency:	Euro
Time:	GMT +1
International telephone code:	+381, mobile: +377 and +386

