

*Tourism Development and Promotion Project*

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**Regional umbrella identity**  
**Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations**

**GUIDELINES FOR STORYTELLING AND TOURIST  
ATTRACTIONS DESCRIPTION**

**for the monuments and sites tentatively included in the regional  
umbrella identity**

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## 1. Introduction

### ***Western Balkan Crossroads of Civilisations regional umbrella identity***

The aim of creating the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations (WBCoC) umbrella identity is to spearhead the repositioning of the WB6 region in international travel market and to contribute to better visibility of WB6 economies in the European and worldwide tourism markets, at the same time supporting the environment conducive to development of high quality services and products and essential tourism infrastructure at tourist destinations.

By developing unique cultural tourism products/itineraries, the WBCoC aims to attract tourists to the region and through improved cooperation among the key stakeholders from culture, tourism and related industries contribute to the increased spending at locations and extended stay of travellers and visitors in the region itself, thus positively contributing to economic development, growth and jobs creation in the region.

WBCoC umbrella identity will integrate the WB6 under shared, overarching regional identity and thus provide a comprehensive framework for the development and marketing of regional cultural tourism products and itineraries.

### ***Steps already done***

During 2018 under the Triple P Tourism project's guidance the Concept for the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations was developed that identified core points of historic overlap that can justify the claim and developed basic guidelines for selection of sites that communicate the heritage of the WBCoC. Further, the tentative list of sites and locations throughout WB6 has been established.

### ***Next steps ...***

In June 2019 the second phase of the project started with the aim to develop a business model with an effective and viable regional governance and management structure that will facilitate the establishment of cultural tourism network involving key stakeholders from the public and private sector, and NGOs, and promote strategic alliance to generate joint synergies between culture, tourism and local communities, and national authorities in the WB6 economies. Further on, brand and brand management structure, marketing strategy and 2-year marketing action plan will be developed.

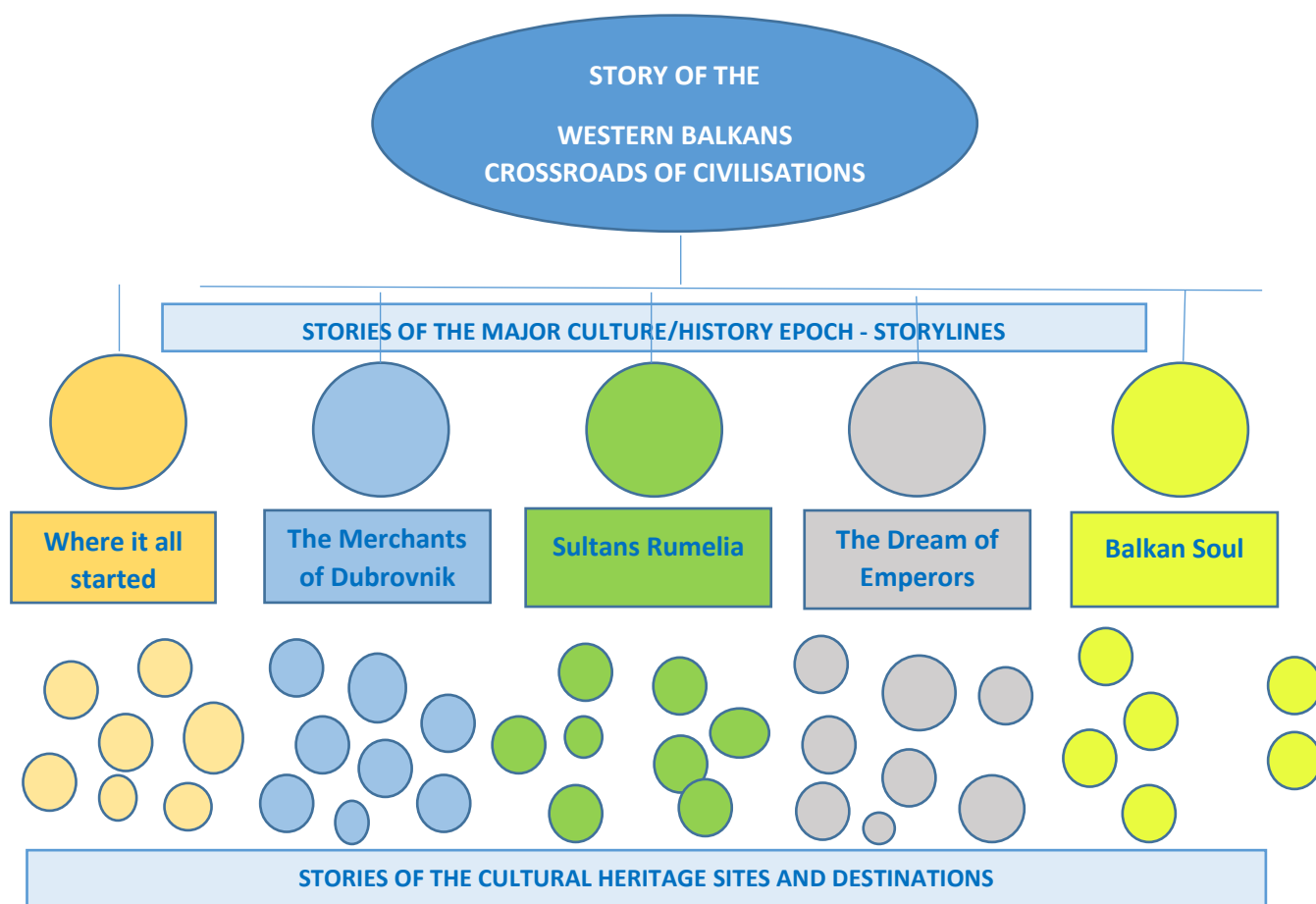
### ***Includes also ...***

identification of storytelling potential for the WBCoC regional umbrella identity, which needs to contain as many different historical angles as possible, created by different cultures over the widest period of time, establishing an environment that will allow the future routes and itineraries to express the richness of the cultural layers and the route's stations to rely on different civilisational/cultural landmarks. The storytelling needs to be built so that a future visitor will be able to comprehend and experience the unique heritage of the WB region.

### ***Storytelling of the WBCoC umbrella identity ...***

which is designed on three main levels. First, the overall story of the Western Balkans as a crossroads of civilisations is created. The second level depicts the stories of the major cultural/historic epoch, which are presented in five main storylines or cultural themes. The third level includes the stories, legends, myths of the destinations and sites, which are proposed to be included under the WBCoC umbrella identity. The architecture of the WBCoC is presented in the Picture 1 below.

**Picture 1. Architecture of the WBCoC umbrella identity storytelling**



While the overall story of the WBCoC umbrella identity (first level) and the stories for each storyline (second level) are already designed by the history and storytelling expert, the next step is to prepare the stories of the destinations and sites, included in the tentative list of monuments/sites under the WBCoC umbrella identity. At this point, an active engagement of the professionals, who know the stories of the sites and destinations, from all WB6 economies is required.

## 2. Guidelines for storytelling and tourist attractions description for the monuments and sites

These guidelines are prepared with the aim to support the key stakeholders in WB6 economies to provide the stories, legends and information on the most interesting attractions in the destinations/localities, which have been tentatively included under the WBCoC regional umbrella identity.

This information will complete the key stories of the WBCoC regional umbrella identity and provide significant insight into the cultural tourism potential of the sites, thus create a pool of choices for visitors and travel agents for creation of itineraries, which will meet visitor's expectations and let them write their own stories of the region.

In order to ensure a uniform approach, we have prepared a **Template (Attachment 1)**, which sets the main rules for the content writing, selection of most interesting stories, legends and attractions, which are linked to one of 5 main cultural route themes and suggested itinerary under each theme.

**Please read the key story of the Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations and the main story of the cultural routes storylines in Section 2**, before you start writing the stories of your site and destination.

**The example of Kotor is presented in Attachment 1** to give you some hints on how to prepare your descriptions. Please just overwrite the text with your own stories.

### 2.1. Key story of the Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations regional umbrella identity

*This should be understood as an introduction to the WBCoC for the visitors.*

The Western Balkans represents a bridge between East and West. Placed between the Danube river and Adriatic Sea, set in the breath-taking scenery of the Dinaric Alps, which hides Europe's deepest canyons, glacial lakes and last remaining virgin forests the Western Balkans was always a meeting place, a crossroad of civilisations.

It is where Ancient Greece and Rome meet; it is the region where the Roman Empire splits; it was the border between western Latin and eastern Greek cultures of Middle Ages; it was the border of three Empires, Ottoman, Russian and Austrian, and three religions, Christian Catholic, Christian Orthodox and Muslim.

For the West this region was where the Orient began and for the East a gateway to Europe. The legacies of numerous emperors, kings and sultans were only superseded by the number of armies which passed through its valleys and gorges, fields and mountains. Luckily for us, those armies didn't just leave stories and legends of glorious battles. They also left marvellous acts of architecture, engineering and art.

This region represents a true Crossroad of Civilisations, wherein an area of rich and turbulent history, numerous cultures and three religions have meet to create a distinct cultural identify, unique in Europe. This uniqueness is definitely a result of intertwining of numerous cultural influences, but with a constant touch of local particularities, shown numerous times in history, from Illyrians to present day.

It is no wonder that it is almost impossible to find a cultural heritage site in the region that won't hold several other cultural layers below it. If it is a Roman temple, there is probably a Greek and Illyrian one below it. If there is an Ottoman fort, there are probably Venetian, medieval, Byzantine and Roman remains underneath it.

This is a region where cities founded by figures of legend, which were built, destroyed and rebuilt for uncountable times bear witness to all the winds which shaped the Old Continent. Every village and town, every church and mosque hide numerous tales, legends and myths of 3000 years of history. This makes Western Balkans **one of Europe's most unique cultural regions**.

## 2.2. Key stories of the main WBCoC umbrella identity themes / storylines

The complexity of cultural heritage in the Western Balkans is a challenge to present. Presenting too much information may lead to lack of understanding and attractiveness while over generalising may lead to losing the essence of attractiveness. Therefore, we have suggested **5 main route themes – storylines**, each depicting a major cultural/historic epoch of the region. The mentioned 5 route themes jointly create and depict the regional umbrella identity: Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations. These are presented in Picture 2 below.

**Picture 2: Scheme of Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations umbrella identity**

<b>WESTERN BALKANS: CROSSROADS OF CIVILISATIONS UMBRELLA IDENTITY</b>				
<b>5 ROUTE THEMES / STORYLINES</b>				
<b>WHERE IT ALL STARTED</b> A route depicting the antique (Bronze Age, Greek, Hellenic, Roman and Byzantine) cultures.	<b>THE MERCHANTS OF DUBROVNIK</b> A route depicting the medieval period of the Western Balkans	<b>SULTANS RUMELIA</b> A route depicting the Ottoman cultural heritage in the Western Balkans	<b>THE DREAM OF EMPIRES</b> A route depicting the Austro-Hungarian cultural heritage in the Western Balkans	<b>BALKAN SOUL</b> A route of the capital cities of the region

## 2.2.1. Where it all started

**WHERE IT ALL STARTED**

***A route theme depicting the antique (Bronze Age, Greek, Hellenic, Roman and Byzantine) cultures.***

**Context**

The route includes sites of cultural heritage which depict the most prominent cultural elements of the Bronze age, first Illyrian states, Greek colonies, Greece-Illyrian fusion, Roman Empire and early Byzantine Empire.

**Storytelling - Places where history began**

*Beginning of history is often shrouded in myth and legend. Tales from ages long ago tell stories which are woven into the fabric of Europe. The Western Balkans is a place where the great civilisations of antiquity left their mark, and impassable mountains protected their remains from millennia which have passed.*

*Besides legends and myths sometimes the very earth preserves traces of civilisations we didn't know existed. At **Lepenski Vir** you can find one of the oldest settlements in Europe, whose beginnings can be dated up to 9 millennia BC. We don't know the name of the people who inhabited Lepenski Vir, but we know the name of people who came after them, the Illyrians.*

*The remains of Illyrian Iron Age forts and cities are scattered all around the region. But two of them stand out. The mighty fortress of **Daorson**, and the port city of **Risan**, the capital of the Illyrian pirate queen Teuta. Even though the Illyrians created their own states, culture, cities and technologies were influenced by their more advanced neighbours from the south, the Greeks.*

*Quite early colonies of the Greek cities sprang on the coast of the Western Balkans. Most of the coastal cities in the region today connect their foundation to these times and figures of legends. Such is the town of **Budva**, which was founded by Cadmus, the first hero of the Greeks, founder of Thebes and brother to Europa.*

*Numerous coastal towns and villages cherish legends of this hero and of his final resting place.*

*Going from legend to history, in the Western Balkans you can find the remains of numerous Greek cities, most prominent at the sites of **Butrint** and **Apollonia**. All of the Illyrian and Greek sites show the cultural fusion of these two civilisations. A little to the east, another ancient culture developed, Macedonia. Here we can find Heraclea Lyncestis, a town founded by Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. Even if it was a border town, it provides an insight into the world of a civilisation which conquered the East.*

*While the Western Balkans was experiencing the cultural growth of the Hellenistic period, a new power was rising in the West. It took the Romans almost 2 centuries to conquer this region, and when they did, they created architectural wonders which could be seen all across Europe. At **Ulpiana**, **Stobi**, **Doclea**, **Gamzigrad** and **Viminacium** you can get a glimpse of the might of the Roman Empire and their way of life. Finally, as antiquity made way in Western Europe for the Middle Ages, the Eastern Empire, today known as the Byzantium, survived. The Byzantine Empire will have a profound influence on the Middle Ages in this region, but an insight into the time when it was in its full glory during the reign of Emperor Justinian can be seen at **Caričin grad** or better known as **Iustiniana Prima**.*

**Selected sites**

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Site</b>
<b>ALBANIA</b>	Apollonia archaeological site, Butrint, Antigonea archaeological site
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA</b>	Daorson/ Stolac
<b>KOSOVO<sup>1*</sup></b>	Ulpiana
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	Doclea, Risan, Budva, Heraclea Lyncestis
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b>	Heraclea Lyncestis, Stobi, Kokino
<b>SERBIA</b>	Gamzigrad, Viminacium, Iustiniana Prima/Caričin grad, Arandjelovac, Lepenski vir

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

## 2.2.2. The Merchants of Dubrovnik

THE MERCHANTS OF DUBROVNIK	
<i>A route theme depicting the medieval period of the Western Balkans.</i>	
Context	
<p>The route shows the main sites created by the medieval states in the region. The theme revolves around the voyage of a Merchant from Dubrovnik through the region, as in the Middle Ages the tradesmen from this city were present in all corners of the Western Balkans. Also, a lot of the Medieval era of the region is known because of the documents kept in the archives in Dubrovnik. The route is designated to show the influences of Latin Catholic West and Greek Orthodox East in the formation of the medieval Slavic and Albanian states, as well as their eventual fall under the Ottoman Empire. The role of the Venetian Republic will also be represented.</p>	
Storytelling - Travelling between Rome and Constantinople	
<p><i>When the Roman Empire split in the 4<sup>th</sup> century on its Western and Eastern part, they became cultural zones of what will become western Latin Catholic and eastern Greek Orthodox. As the border of these two new Christian worlds went straight through the Western Balkans, the region found itself in strife for influence between Constantinople and Rome.</i></p> <p><i>The culture of the first Slavic and Albanian medieval states was profoundly influenced by this strife, creating a mosaic of Christian heritage influenced by both sides. This is especially seen in religious architecture where Catholic and Orthodox churches and monasteries alike, besides being built in the dominant styles of the time, cherish the elements of the other sides, with a local touch. Being on the border of Empires often meant conflict, so the local rulers, more often fighting between each other than foreign invaders, built strong fortresses, on top of inaccessible hilltops. In this violent border region full of canyons and impassable mountains and forests quite often only one group of people had the freedom to go as they pleased. Those were the merchants from the Republic of Dubrovnik. They had their representatives on all courts and market places in the region, never caring much for the wars as long as their business continued.</i></p> <p><i>In their travels of the medieval world of the Western Balkans, they would visit port cities, such as <b>Kotor</b>, with its cathedral from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, or important market places, such as <b>Prizren</b> and <b>Skopje</b>. They would trade in towns in the shadow of strong fortresses, such as <b>Berat</b> and <b>Kruje/Gjirokastra</b>. They would see important Catholic pilgrim sites such as the now dead city of <b>Svač</b>, or <b>Ohrid</b> where Christianity and literacy spread among the Slavs.</i></p> <p><i>During their travels through the rugged terrain of the Balkans they would see massive migrations of sheep-herders in the spring and autumn, while trying to get to one of the rare bridges over strong mountain rivers, like the one in <b>Vushtrri/Vučitrn</b>. Going through the dense forests they would ever so often stumble upon a monastery or a church built in a secluded place to protect from attackers and to be in touch with nature, in line with the old Slavic pagan tradition. One of these churches will be near an ancient fortress, called <b>Old Ras</b>, a place where the first medieval Serbian principality will be created, a principality which will eventually rise into an Empire. Finally, the merchant would witness the constructions and fall of mighty forts in <b>Smederevo</b> and <b>Jajce</b>. These forts would be the last stand of local princes and kings in a futile attempt to defend against the onslaught of the new and mighty Ottoman Empire.</i></p>	
Selected sites	
Economy	Site
ALBANIA	Berat, Gjirokastra, <b>Kruje</b>
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Jajce, Travnik
KOSOVO*	Prizren, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Peja/Peć
MONTENEGRO	Kotor, Bar, Svač
NORTH MACEDONIA	Ohrid, Skopje
SERBIA	Bač, Stari Ras, Smederevo, Kupinik



## 2.2.3. Sultans Rumelia

**SULTANS RUMELIA**

***A route theme depicting the Ottoman cultural heritage in the Western Balkans.***

**Context**

The Ottomans were present in the region from the late 14<sup>th</sup> until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During that time the Ottoman Empire went from one of the most important world powers to being the “Sick man” of Europe. Still, the Ottoman Empire had a profound influence on the development of culture in the region. The title comes from the fact that in Ottoman administrative division the Western Balkans region was for a long time under Rumelia Elayet (Beylerbeylik of Rumelias the highest administrative division). The name Rumelia comes from the Turkish (lands of the Romans) meaning they took it from the Romans (Byzantium) or it was a part of Rome.

**Storytelling - Beauty of the Orient in Europe**

*The Ottoman Empire held the Balkans for five centuries. It conquered these lands when it was still power on the rise, strengthened its grip during the centuries while it was the world's most powerful Empire, and left as a “Sick man of Europe”. Still, its cultural influence in the region, which they called Rumelia or the land of Romans, is hard to ignore. And by this, we don't just mean the beautiful architecture the sultans' architects left us, but also an unmissable influence in culture, music, food and way of life.*

*Almost every city in the region has some Ottoman mark left on its appearance. Of course regional political and trade centres experienced the most of the urban development during this time, and have the most to show. Craft and trade neighbourhoods with their specific urban architecture, public buildings, bathhouses, clock towers and mosques still cherish that feeling of a busy oriental town. Quite often, these landmarks are dedicated to sultan or major event in Ottoman history.*

*Most of the current regional capitals have neighbourhoods with a strong Ottoman influence. But you'll find entire towns such as **Vushtri/Vučitrn**, **Prizren**, **Gjirokastra**, **Berat** and **Travnik** preserved as regional centres. Some towns, such as **Shkodra/Škoder**, where the largest urban settlements in this part of Europe during the Ottoman times. You'll find marvellous examples of Ottoman culture in coastal towns such as **Bar**, where the mosques lean on Venetian fortresses and olive trees. There are hidden jewels, like the mosque in **Pljevlja**, which has the highest minaret in the Balkans.*

*The Ottoman Empire has always been the society of traders, so it's no surprise that towns sprawl around important market places and market places sprawl around bridges. Two of these bridges, in **Mostar** and **Višegrad**, became the subject of stories in world renowned literature.*

*In the end, the journey of the Ottoman Balkans always ends, or starts, in **Sarajevo**. A city which was born during this time and grew into one of the region's most important cultural spots, a true place where civilisations meet.*

*The Ottoman Empire didn't just bring a new layer of culture to the region, depicted in Islamic fate and oriental style of architecture. Mixing with the local population it created a universe of tales and songs which speak and sing of love, adventures and travels to the greatest city of that time, Istanbul.*

**Selected sites**

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Site</b>
<b>ALBANIA</b>	Berat, Shkodra, Gjirokastra
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA</b>	Višegrad, Mostar, Travnik, Sarajevo
<b>KOSOVO*</b>	Prishtina/Priština, Prizren, Vushtri/Vučitrn
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	Podgorica, Pljevlja, Bar
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b>	Ohrid, Skopje
<b>SERBIA</b>	Belgrade, <b>Niš</b>

## 2.2.4. The Dream of Empires

**THE DREAM OF EMPIRES / DREAMS OF EMPERORS*****A route theme depicting the Austro-Hungarian cultural heritage in the Western Balkans*****Context**

In its expansion the Hapsburg monarchy reached the shores of rivers Sava and Danube by the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century. They tried to create a permanent presence in the region south of these two rivers, but besides some short-term victories, they only succeeded after 1878 and the occupation and later Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this time the Empire changed its name to Austro-Hungarian Empire. This region was a goal to conquest (a dream) for many Emperors and Empires. They considered it vital for further expansions (in Austro-Hungarian case to the East). The tensions and competitiveness over this region were one of the reasons WWI started here.

**Storytelling - The Dream of Empires / or Dreams of Emperors**

*The Balkans was always a bridge that everyone who wanted to pass from west to east or vice versa had to cross. But the rugged mountain terrain of this region quite often presented a challenge for armies who wanted to go through here. More than once, this region became a borderland of different Empires which dreamt of using the Balkans as a staging ground for their ambitions of expanding forwards west or east. The Hapsburg monarchy reached the shores of Sava and Danube rivers by the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century. They tried to create a permanent presence in the region south of these two rivers, but besides some short-term victories, they were successful only after 1878 and the occupation, and later Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this time the Empire changed its name to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian Empire remained in the region for just a couple of decades, even if it's political and cultural influence started much earlier. Still, this was enough to leave a permanent mark on the region.*

*The Western Balkans was the southern frontier of the Empire. The main pray, the ever so weak Ottoman Empire, was to the south. Also the newly formed independent nations of Serbia and Montenegro were pressing on the borders. Rugged terrain, unstable border and a population not willing to follow the strict rules of the Monarchy's administration apparatus meant that there was always a strong presence of the military in this region. It was accompanied by the construction of **massive fortresses**, such as the one in **Petrovaradin**, or systems of fortifications, as those around **Kotor** and **Trebinje**.*

*The military was followed by an equally disciplined administration. Quite soon the life in the territories north of Sava and Danube mimicked the daily town life of any other town or city in the Empire. It was life set on fast industrialisation and progress. The same thing happened in the towns which were once under the Venetian rule.*

*But the towns and cities which for so long have lived under the traditional life of the Ottoman Empire faced more difficulty in adapting. Nowhere the unlikely fusion of architecture, daily life and mentality were more noticeable than in **Sarajevo**. The famous hajj station, full of bazaars and mosques, became the centre of industrialisation, technical and architect innovation. The effort of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to integrate this region was nowhere more visible than in the efforts to construct a railway and to connect the region with other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Still today the remains of these railway lines can be seen as symbol of an effort of an industrial nation to tame the rugged terrain. Austro-Hungarian Empire was a stark contrast to the Ottoman Empire. Its arrival in the time of national awakening created friction. This friction was destined to create a spark in the place where the contact of different cultures was the most visible. Unfortunately, at the time, no one knew that this spark could start one of the greatest conflicts in history.*

**Selected sites**

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Site</b>
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA</b>	Trebinje (Forts around Trebinje), Mostar, Sarajevo
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	Kotor
<b>SERBIA</b>	Subotica, Novi Sad (Petrovaradin)

## 2.2.5. The Balkan Soul

<b>THE BALKAN SOUL</b>	
<b><i>A route of the capital cities of the region.</i></b>	
<b>Context</b>	
Capital cities of regional economies are a perfect example of crossroads of civilisations as all the cultural elements in the mentioned economy or even the region can be seen in the architecture, culture and atmosphere of these cities.	
<b>Storytelling – Balkan Soul</b>	
<p><i>In various parts of the region, a visitor can experience and enjoy different aspects of its long and rich history. Such a rich culture doesn't just give a sense of national pride, but has also influenced different aspects of contemporary culture in the region, which are now part of everyday life.</i></p> <p><i>Nowhere elements of that culture can be more seen than in the contemporary capitals of the region. Cities which are centuries and even millennia old, sometimes don't have that much to show due to a number of devastating wars or natural disasters, which have destroyed their cultural heritage. But in their streets, in the music and food, you can recognise all the various influences of civilisations long gone.</i></p> <p><i>The capital cities are a melting pot of cultural influences from all regions and somehow that mix always has a similar taste.</i></p> <p><i>In the shadows of ancient forts, constructed and devastated numerous times by numerous conquerors, there is an old town with a market place or bazaar, a Catholic and Orthodox church and a Mosque. Quite often there is a stone bridge, a clock tower or a fountain and all of them have numerous stories.</i></p> <p><i>On the tables of coffee shops sits Turkish coffee and wine from vineyards grown in the surrounding area since the times of the Romans or Greeks. There is olive oil from the 2000-year-old olive trees and variations of food from most cuisines from central Europe and the Mediterranean.</i></p> <p><i>There are stories of locals who went and did great deeds in Vienna, Rome and Constantinople/Istanbul. But most of all there is a unique mixture of different European cultures, with a touch of Orient and local specifics, all placed in this small region, at the Crossroads of Civilisations.</i></p>	
<b>Selected sites</b>	
<b>Economy</b>	<b>Site</b>
<b>ALBANIA</b>	Tirana
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA</b>	Sarajevo
<b>KOSOVO*</b>	Prishtina/Priština
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	Podgorica, (Cetinje)
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b>	Skopje
<b>SERBIA</b>	Belgrade