



Good Practice Story Title: *“Hiking, Hikers and Local Traditions”*

Destination: Canton Sarajevo, Monument of Nature Skakavac

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Submitting Organization: Cantonal public institution for Protected Natural Areas

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is located in a valley surrounded by mountains from all sides. Such a location naturally led to mountaineering being a popular activity with the local population. One of the most appreciated mountaineering locations has been Skakavac, which, since 2002 has been a protected monument of nature partly located on Mt. Ozren (highest peak Bukovik at 1534 m.a.s). The area of Monument of Nature Skakavac was first mentioned as an area for mountaineering and hiking tours in 1913 in the illustrated guide issues during the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Currently there are three mountaineering huts that keep the mountaineering tradition and culture and that are located within or immediately next to the Monument of Nature Skakavac. Those are: mountain hut Bukovik, mountain hut Motka and the mountain home Skakavac (latest addition and located in the territories of MoN Skakavac).





Summary of Good Practice Story:

The tradition of mountaineering in Sarajevo and the mountains that surround it is over a century old. Its beginnings as an organised activity date back to the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, with new settlers bringing this new culture and tradition that before were not present among the local population. The guide published in 1913 mentions that the trail to Skakavac has been marked¹.

Issues faced:

Problems solved:

The culture and tradition of mountaineering in Sarajevo does not differ, nor it ever has, from the culture and tradition of mountaineering anywhere else around the world. The existence of the mountaineering huts that offer shelter in case of bad weather, but also serve as a meeting place after the time spent in nature, was an obligatory part of mountaineering. However, during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990ies, the mountaineering huts that had been established previously were destroyed. The mountaineering clubs and associations that were nurturing the tradition lost big parts of their history. The new time that came after the years of conflict abandoned the old, pre-war practices and the new models, for right or wrong reasons, did not provide for the mountaineering and the mountaineering huts to be revived.

But people could not abandon their mountains. Several years later, the strongest enthusiast among them led the movement and their love of nature, the culture and the traditions slowly became the engine of recovery.

Hiking was back, but the network of huts was still heavily damaged and not being restored.

All mountain huts within the MoN Skakavac were destroyed during the war. First, a couple of huts were reopened but not in the MoN Skakavac, rather at its edge. The huts of Bukovik and Motka started serving the mountaineers and their number grew. During the Covid 19 pandemic local people rediscovered their backyard too. And the number of visitors kept growing since the travel has been back. This brought to the focus the fact that the existing hut service within the territory of MoN Skakavac, the Mountain Hut Bukovik, although on Via Dinarica trail, was not sufficient for the growing number of hikers, mountaineers and other visitors.

The Public Institute for Protected areas of Canton Sarajevo brought this to the attention of the Municipality of Canter. They joined forces with the GIZ in BiH, and with the support of the EU4Recovery project the Mountain House Skakavac was established.





Resolved issues:

The project activities confirmed interest among the local population to embark on re-establishing a mountain house - the mountain house Skakavac. Funding was provided to rebuild one of the abandoned and destroyed pre-war houses as the mountain house that will offer refreshment and shelter for visitors within the MoN Skakavac. This significantly improved the offer at the location as well as ability to support research activities within the protected area. It also contributed to the ability to host mountaineering events and gatherings that are now becoming regional and international. Such events, in turn, serve to connect mountaineers around the globe and promote both beauty and protection and preservation of nature.

Respecting the strict building requirements within the protected area, The Mountain House Skakavac was built on the foundations of the pre-war family home. The design and materials used respected the traditional techniques. The revival of the house enabled the owners to come back to the otherwise abandoned village and, not only started generating income through offering services to the mountaineers, but also to re-establish a small homestead. Through project support the mountain house and the homestead were also equipped with solar panels for power and water treatment plant

Solution:

Key success factor for the revitalisation of the mountaineering culture and tradition in Skakavac area, and consequently within the territory of the MoN Skakavac, lies in the long history that was not allowed to ever die - not even through its darkest times. Since the first mountaineering club was established in 1892, the hiking culture and the social traditions of mountain huts were never abandoned.

Enthusiasts that hold family homes and properties in the MoN Skakavac, that had been derelict, have not abandoned them - with creativity and persistence the process of their revival has started. They are being rebuilt and refurbished with the mountaineers and visitors in mind as places that, while relying on their history, seek to create new traditions.

Understanding and support of the local government provide a pivotal point for revival to happen and thrive.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

1. Monument of Nature Skakavac

One of the preconditions that contributed to the revitalisation of the mountaineering culture and tradition has been the interest and readiness of the Sarajevo Canton government to protect the area. The protection enabled the area's development with the focus on sustainable development and protection of nature.





2. *Good Story Solutions*

The area of the MoN Skakavac always attracted mountaineers and hiking tours, the nature lovers. Despite the events that marked the start of the 1990ies, this love and tradition was not destroyed and now, new generations of mountaineers continue the legacy.

New blood brings new solutions. Private home is rebuilt to open its doors to visitors and mountaineers, it provides refreshment from local produce (garden, milk, cheese, bees) and promotes local cuisine and shelter from night and weather. Mountain house Skakavac offers opportunities for new income generation where they did not exist before. And all the while preserving the centuries old tradition.

Achievements and Results:

Revitalisation of the mountaineering spirit, the tradition and culture has started some time ago at the MoN Skaakvac. But establishing new offers and creating new capacities provides a completely new outlook for the Skakavac area.

While local mountaineers have an opportunity to continue their tradition, more and more visitors that come to Skakavac are now able to learn of the local culture, ways of socialising and celebrating nature and life through immersing themselves right into it, together with the locals. And through having an opportunity to stay overnight, they can stay longer at Skakavac. More people can visit.

Return of the local people to their ancestral land, is stating to turn and “abandoned” space into local community again. With rebuilding done in line with the strict protected area requirements, and applying green solutions, their return enables them to create income while securing the protection for the nature around them.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

Skakavac, that attracted hikers and visitors through history, is noe protected which ensures survival of the natural and cultural and historic values. Even with the protection the area continues to serve the mountaineers, individuals and mountaineering clubs and associations.

Although mountaineering was somewhat neglected for even decades, the Covid 19 pandemic brought recognition for the beauty of the Sarajevo mountains, including Skakavac waterfall area.

The needs of the new mountaineers have been recognised, as has the need for accommodation wihtin the MoN Skakavac. The new mountain house Skakavac has been established, and so that it is synchronised with nature to the best of its ability. It also holds a historical value as it was rebuilt with construction elements native to the area, in its entirety its design resembles a house built in the mountains at the beginning of the XIX century. It offers its guests cuisine from the produce that is grown on site.

Although it was intended only as a mountain house, as it opened its door it now represents a kind of an open museum allowing a glance into history.





Recommendations for other destinations:

Preserving traditions and culture is one of the core principles that ensure and maintain the identity of the place. The tradition and culture of mountaineering was adopted in Sarajevo with the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. But it continued even after the Monarchy departed as the citizens of Sarajevo understood and embraced that the simplicity of mountaineers life hides in itself the simplicity of living and the elixir for longevity.

Revitalisation of, what seems, lost traditions is a reminder of our existence in this place, and is therefore an important element of our identification as citizens of that place.

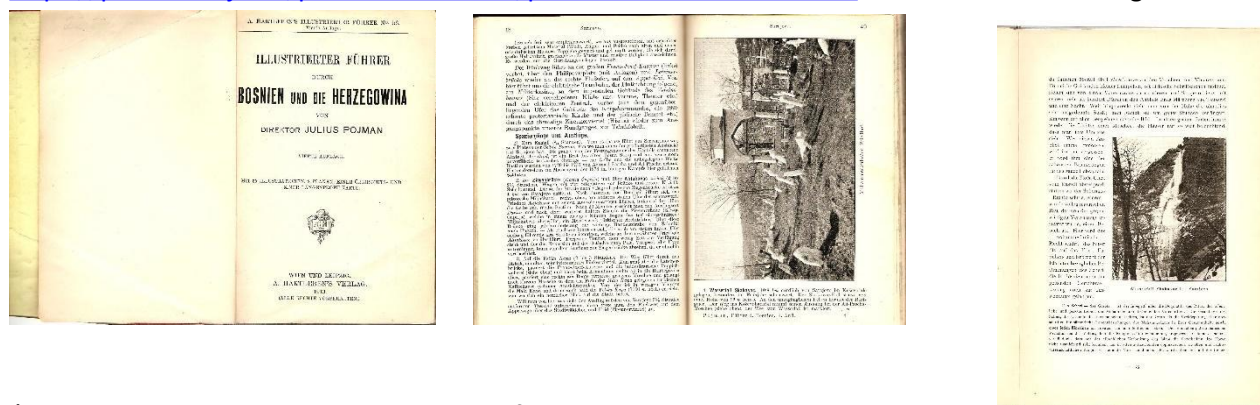
Recognitions and Additional References

https://zppks.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/zak.skakavac_0.pdf - Proclamation Act

<https://mapio.net/pic/p-8952883/> - The picture of the old mountain hut in MoN Skakavac

http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=9&lang=1&action=view&id=3140 - The decision that the old Skakavac hiking lodge did not meet the conditions to be a monument for the history of hiking in MoN Skakavac

<https://planinareneje.ba/planinarski-imenik/planinarska-drustva?start=0> - list of mountaineering societies in B&H



**The picture above are scan Illustrated guide from 1913.*





****The picture under where are visible hikers in the beginning**



*****The pictures under are The mountain house Skakavac and the hikers**



1

¹¹ Illustrated hiking guide from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1913

²More on the history of mountaineering can be found in Hiking guide, published in 2006 by Foundation for protection of Bjelašnica, Igman, Treskavica and the canyon of Rakitnica river “pro BITR-a” Sarajevo & Cantonal Forest Economic Association for Management of State-owned forests “Sarajevo-šume” d.o.o. Sarajevo