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The magical allure of Bosnia-Herzegovina



Back on the map: after years of conflict, Bosnia is being rediscovered by visitors
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The last century of Bosnian history was tumultuous but it is now more than 20 years since the start of the Balkan War, the multifaceted conflict precipitated by the break-up of the old Yugoslav republic - thankfully times change

Today stability has been restored and Bosnia-Herzegovina is a safe and thoroughly beautiful place now being rediscovered by visitors.

For travellers who like to avoid the hordes, it has some under-the-radar destinations beyond the allure of the lovely, restored cities of Mostar and Sarajevo.

In fact, it is rapidly emerging as one of the top adventure destinations in Europe thanks to its rugged peaks, fast-flowing rivers, dense forest and vast countryside.

[The Bjelasnica Mountains, which hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics, have lofty peaks, rolling hills and pretty villages](#)

By 2012, the country had already made it into National Geographic magazine's top 10 adventure destinations.

The core of its pristine wilderness is the Central Dinaric Alps, the backbone of a country where the Bjelasnica Mountains and Sutjeska National Park offer more of the great outdoors.

The Bjelasnica Mountains, which hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics, have lofty peaks, rolling hills, traditional villages, watermills and Bosnia's highest village, Lukomir.

Sutjeska National Park is home to the highest point in the country, Mount Maglic, at 2,386m (7,828ft).

A few years ago climbers began to realise Bosnia offered some fresh and demanding challenges. Prenj in the Dinarics, dubbed the Bosnian Himalayas, is an untouched alpine jewel with a cluster of 11 summits above 2,000m. One, Windy Peak, was scaled for the first time in 2003.



Thrill seekers: the country is fast becoming a top adventure destination

Čvrsnica, 40 miles north of Mostar, has several plateaus and more than 10 summits above 2,000m, with Plocno the highest at 2,228m, and a rock face 1,300m high.

Climbers will also be impressed by the outstanding quality of the rock, and the choice of more than 80 routes at the Cyclamen Garden Climbing Centre at Drežnica in the Neretva Canyon, 20 miles north of Mostar.

Tijesno Canyon has an abundance of uncharted and mostly unnamed limestone faces, and Drill and Chill will hold its second annual climbing festival there in August.

If the peaks are not high enough you can always get a better view by paragliding from the Visocica peak over the Rakitnica canyon – the upper tributary of the Neretva river and one of the deepest gorges in Europe.

Mountain bikers are also discovering the joys of Bosnia. The Via Dinarica offers some great touring, but Prenj is particularly suited to MTBers, with numerous routes.

Bjelasnica is a major ski resort just an hour from Sarajevo and has perfect slopes for downhillers.

Sarajevo Olympic Bike Park is a developing project that will eventually have 600km of mountain biking trails. Today you can bike from Vrelo Bosna (the source of the Bosna river) in Ilidža, over Mount Igman, all the way to the village of Babin Do.

Banj Brdo is a recreation centre above Banja Luka, the country's second-largest city, with some terrific freeriding.



Away from the crowds: there are plenty of under-the-radar destinations

Bosnia's lofty scenery is complemented by some major rivers, notably the Una and the Neretva, which provide excellent canoeing and rafting opportunities.

The Una, rising in the Strazbenica mountains and flowing 210km (130 miles) along the Croatia border through rugged landscape and dense forest, is a main tributary of the Sava.

Its emerald waters have some very swift sections that transform into widely fanned rapids. The annual four-day Una Regatta in late July attracts more than 500 participants and thousands more spectators every year from all over Europe and even the United States.

The Neretva rises in the Dinaric Mountains and flows 240km (150 miles) under the famous bridge at Mostar and into the Adriatic via Croatia, making it the longest river in the region. The upper canyons between Glavatičevo and Konjic offer some very challenging white water.

For anyone looking for a new thrill, Bosnia-Herzegovina is firmly back on the adventure map.