

# THE ROLE OF CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALESHEVO MOUNTAINS

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## Abstract:

The cultural and historical heritage belongs to the group of developed, anthropogenic values, which play or may play a major role in the overall tourism development. All objects that are part of the cultural and historical heritage are characterized by different levels of attractiveness, and therefore, are not equally important for tourism development. Those objects of cultural and historical heritage, which are well preserved, have a greater cultural and historical value and are characterized by their greater attractiveness. Accordingly, if the area has a number of such objects, they can represent individual tourist motives. By contrast, there are objects of cultural and historical heritage that are less attractive and they have a lower tourism value, and thus, their function is to complement the tourism offer of the area.

The purpose of this paper is to present the objects of cultural and historical heritage of the Maleshevo Mountains, through recognition of their cultural and historical value as well as tourism objects and attractions. The Maleshevo Mountains include settlements located there that represent attractive tourism destinations in the country. These towns have developed and are developing several tourism forms such as ecotourism, rural tourism, mountain tourism, winter sports tourism *etc.* Taking into account the existing forms of tourism, this paper will identify the opportunities that can be offered by the cultural and historical heritage of the Maleshevo Mountains in order to supplement and enrich the tourism offer and stimulate tourism growth of the area.

## Keywords:

tourism resources, tourism destination, Maleshevo region.

## INTRODUCTION

The cultural and historical heritage can be understood as a characteristic of the featured space and the population living within the given area, with all its characteristics. A certain degree of attractiveness containing attractive tourism attributes arouses a certain amount of interest among visitors and tourists at all destinations. Depending on the characteristics of attractiveness, cultural and historical heritage can be the basic feature or an incentive and an additional element for the tourists within a given destination. The importance of cultural and historical heritage for tourism development and promotion of tourism trends was explained by Vita Koja (2005) "the cultural heritage as part of human life is real evidence of the past and it attracts tourists and encourages tourism movement."

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Cultural and historical heritage can be both tangible and intangible, and it falls into the category of anthropogenic tourism values and as such, can be found under various types and forms of tourism (art, architecture, archeology, ethno - social values, customs, traditional crafts, events, gastronomy *etc.*). When correlated with tourism, the cultural and historical heritage can be associated with travel “Cultural Tourism”, which is actually a special form of alternative tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to consider further clarification of the relationship between cultural and historical heritage and tourism forms from another perspective. Without going into its definition and analysis, cultural tourism and cultural and historical heritage are integral parts of almost all tourism movements, and are part of a modern tourism product, and as such almost all visitors and tourists include some cultural activity during their stay.

For tourism destinations that have the cultural and historical heritage and feature a high historical, cultural and tourism value, we can say that this form of cultural tourism is clean, independent, separate and the basic form of tourism. Such destinations are mostly large European cities, and therefore, cultural tourism and cultural - historical heritage are often mixed or seen as part of urban tourism. Accordingly, Ana Maria Pahos (2010) says that culture is eminently a city industry and more generally, an urban phenomenon. The same authors point out that the European cultural heritage is one of the oldest and most important tourism engines. This statement is quite appropriate considering that large and old European cities have an abundance of forms of the world cultural heritage.

However, it should be taken into account that almost all tourism destinations possess cultural and historical heritage and can become a cultural tourism resource of the given destination. Such cultural - historical tourism resources are very important to complement the tourism offer within the destination such as the Maleshevo Mountains, where the basic motives for tourism include: nature, the mountains, clean air, flora and fauna, so in this area there are other forms of selective tourism that have been developed. The importance of cultural tourism resources in these destinations is highlighted by the Law (2002). According to the same author, most of the cultural resources have been hierarchically placed according to their attractiveness and they can be in the second or third place, which means that they are not the basis for tourist motivation.

When watching tourism from the aspect of spatial determinant, the opposite of urban tourism would be rural tourism, which includes tourist movement in all areas that are not part of the urban area or are outside the city

or urban areas. This means that it is necessary to consider and present the rural-cultural offer of the area of the Maleshevo Mountains, which are part of the rural area. The cultural and historical heritage can be used in order to improve the development of rural tourism by analyzing the trends in contemporary tourism and see where the cultural and historical heritage is highlighted and emphasized in the rural area. Ivanovic and Ivkov-Dzigurski (2013) claim that rich cultural heritage has become a factor that affects the competitiveness viability of the overall tourism product in certain area. The importance of cultural and historical resources for development of rural tourism is highlighted by Vidic (2013) who states that attractive resources in rural areas include natural and cultural resources which affect the profiling for various forms of rural tourism, which tend to increase.

This confirms the importance of the cultural and historical heritage for tourism development in the area of the Maleshevo Mountains and it also justifies and confirms the importance of the topic.

## THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The basic theoretical assumption for writing this paper is that cultural and historical heritage can be found in the Maleshevo Mountains. Cultural-historical heritage could be used to enrich the present tourism product and increase its attractiveness, and trigger the growth of tourist turnover in the area.

To that end, it is necessary to make an inventory of the cultural and historical heritage of the area, its spatial distribution and availability for tourists, the level of visits by tourists and its attractiveness, so it can be used as a secondary and tertiary tourism motive.

The herein used data were gathered from secondary sources, available at the State Statistical Office, the list of objects protected by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, a map of religious buildings in Macedonia, the Action Plan for Tourism Development of the Maleshevo area *etc.* While preparing the paper, the author used the following scientific research methods for data processing: a method of analysis in which the collected data is analyzed, a comparative method for comparing data and a statistical method for presentation of the statistical data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Maleshevo area is located in the eastern part of the Republic of Macedonia. This entire Eastern Macedonia is characterized by a relief whose main features



are mountains and valleys. Large relief forms include mountains, valleys and canyons and they make a puzzle which looks like a chessboard. In the area with its specifics are the Males or Berovo or simply Maleshevo valley and mountain. The specific relief structure and geography of the area indicate that it is an area that has been isolated in the past from the rest of the country. Because of this it has developed its own culture and tradition that is characteristic for the Maleshevo area. It is also an area with the rich and tumultuous historical past, there is tangible and intangible evidence and they are part of the cultural and historical heritage of the Maleshevo area. Since the rural mountain area and cultural and historical heritage is being analyzed herein, it is important to understand the demographic situation. The central town of the Males area is Berovo, which is also the administrative center of the area. Berovo belongs to the group of small towns in the country, with less than 10, 000 inhabitants. Eight villages or rural areas gravitate towards Berovo. This means that Berovo consists of nine towns, of which eight are rural and one is an urban settlement. The following table presents the number of residents in Berovo.

The data from the previous table, presenting demographic data and analysis of the Maleshevo area, indicate that there are rural areas with good demographics in terms of population and these rural areas can be constituted in the so-called “living villages” and they can realistically develop rural tourism as a specific form of tourism.

The relief, spatial and demographic characteristics are mentioned to point out that these features have determined the tourism development in the Maleshevo area, and according to these characteristics, they have been successfully developing or have developed some alternative forms of tourism such as rural tourism, hun-

ting tourism, mountain or mountain and climatic health tourism, weekend tourism *etc.* Previous forms of tourism and the level of tourism development in the Maleshevo area accompany the activation of cultural and historical heritage in the function of tourism development, especially when it comes to cultural and historical tourism resources with secondary impact and it can be easier to put them into operation in tourism such as cultural tourism, in this case, it is already acknowledged as a tourism destination. According to McKercher and du Cros (2002) “cultural tourism as any other specific form of tourism, it is difficult to develop where tourism activity is very weak.”

Considering the above-given remarks, there is a need to represent the cultural and historical heritage in the area, so it can be noted and the motion can be set for the development of rural and cultural tourism as an integral segment of the overall tourism offer and product of the Maleshevo area. The cultural and historical heritage of the area is quite rich, diverse and covers the period from ancient times until today. The cultural and historical heritage of the area consists of the Maleshevo area:

- ◆ Facilities protected by law by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia:
  - Monastery of “Archangel Michael”
  - Archaeological site “Machevski Chuki”
  - Archaeological site “Village”
  - House in Berovo (Kocho Racin Street 11)
  - House in Berovo (M. Tito Street 127)
- ◆ Historic monuments:
  - Centenary school building in Berovo
  - 50<sup>th</sup> Division Monument in the village Mitrashinci

Table 1. Number of population, households in the Berovo area

Item number	Settlement	Total population	Number of households	Number of apartments/houses
1	Berovo	7002	2375	3190
2	Budinarci	682	238	341
3	Vladimirovo	861	318	625
4	Dvorishte	757	208	391
5	Machevo	206	76	109
6	Mitrishinci	729	228	350
7	Ratevo	844	307	438
8	Rusinovo	2095	710	982
9	Smoimirovo	765	255	316
10	Total:	13941	4715	6742

Source: SSO (2015).



- Monument of the leader of the Kresna and Razlog Uprising Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski
- Monument of the executed citizens in World War II
- Memorial plaque for the liberation of Berovo in the World War II
- Plaque of fallen soldiers in the National Liberation War
- Memorial plaque for the formation of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division
- Plaque for the battle at Obozna in the World War II
- Monument in Suvi Laki
- Memorial bust of Jane Sandanski in the village Smojmirovo
- Memorial bust of Dedo Iljo Maleshevski in Berovo
- Memorial bust of Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski in front of the monastery in Berovo
- Memorial bust of Atanas Razdolov
- Memorial bust of Nikola Petrov - Rusinski, Leonid Pecovski, Pante Radinski and Dimitar Pop Mladenov
- Memorial bust of Aco Ruskovski
- Memorial bust of Pola Boshnachka in the village Vladimirovo
- Memorial bust of Jovan Kozovski
- ♦ Religious Objects:
  - Temple "Nativity of the Virgin" - Berovo
  - Temple "St. Todor" Berovo
  - Temple "St. Peter and Paul" - village of Ratevo
  - Temple "St. Paraskeva" - village Rusinovo
  - Temple "St. Prophet Elijah" - village Mitrahinci
  - Temple "St. George" - village Budinarci
  - Temple "Assumption of the Virgin" - village Robovo
- ♦ Historical Museum Berovo (within the monastery "St. Arhangel Michael")
- ♦ House of Culture "Dimitar Berovski" - Berovo, where The Natural History Museum, the National Library "Narodna Prosveta" with its reading room, movie theater and other forms of culture and art such as a cultural ensemble, drama studio, traditional folk orchestra, ethno orchestra, art studio, children's folk club *etc.*, are situated.
- ♦ Cultural events ("Maleshevo area on a palm", "Days of Goce", "Pijanechko Maleshevo wedding", "Bamburci")
- ♦ Traditional gastronomy, traditional crafts, traditional hospitality *etc.*

- ♦ The group of cultural and historical heritage can be expended with the development and enrichment of the tourist offers, which can also be attractive for the visitors like the traditional customs of the population by performing various rituals such as weddings, baptisms *etc.*

Although it is rather small, the Maleshevo area is relatively rich in cultural and historical heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is particularly interesting in the context of the subject as some of the previously mentioned events are characterized by particularly broad appeal and attract a lot of visitors whose primary motives are varied tourism events, such as: carnival - festival "Bamburci" and celebration of the great Christian holiday, where approximately 15,000 pilgrims gather each year on August 28<sup>th</sup>.

Normally, all previously listed items of cultural and historical heritage are of equal historical, cultural and tourism importance, some are featured with more attractiveness while others are marginal as it is confirmed in the survey made during the preparation of the Strategy for Tourism Development of Berovo. In this survey, the respondents were asked the following question: Which cultural and historical monuments are attractive and can be a magnet for tourists? The results were presented in the following graph:

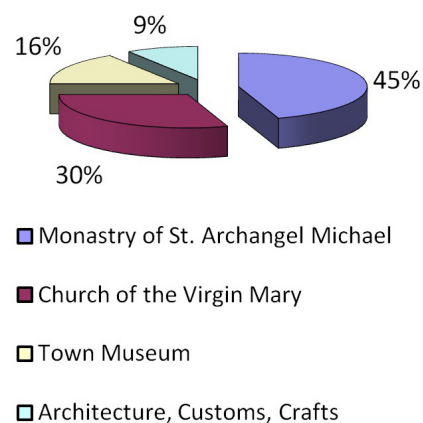


Figure 1. The importance of cultural and historical monuments for tourist motives

The survey results correspond with the actual situation and the attendance of cultural and historical monuments as tourism resources, because the first two buildings are also the most visited buildings of the cultural and historical heritage of the Maleshevo area. There is no precise data on the number of visitors who visit these two religious buildings, primarily because of the lack of evidence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the





absence of ticket selling policy. Nonetheless, we may take as a benchmark the number of followers around 15,000 which attend the Virgin Mary Church every year on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Another indicator that evokes interest in the cultural and historical heritage is the fact that some of its elements such as gastronomy, folklore *etc.*, are part of the tourism offer and package arrangements of the hotel complexes “Manastir” and “Aurora”. The managerial teams of these hotel facilities saw the opportunity to enrich the tourism offer with the cultural and historical heritage, in order to increase the overall guest satisfaction. The area of Maleshevo Mountains is the most developed tourist area in the statistical region of Eastern Macedonia, the level of tourism development of the area is presented in Table 2.

The table presents the number of tourists recorded by the State Statistical Office, but it should be taken into consideration that this figure does not include day-trippers who are not recorded. According to the data from Table 2, it can be noted that the analyzed area in 2015 was visited by a total of 15,372 tourists out of which 9,321 or 60.6% were domestic tourists, while the remaining 6,051 or 39.3% were foreign tourists. For the tourism development of the area in relation to the same region states the fact that a total of 25,907 tourists visited the same region, 59.3% or 15,372 tourists have visited Maleshevo mountains area. In terms of the origin of tourists, 55.6% of domestic tourists in the statistical region of Eastern Macedonia are in the analyzed area, whereas the share of foreign tourists increased and accounted for about 66% of the total number of foreign tourists who visited the same region. These data indicate a high level of tourism development of the area analyzed in relation to other segments presented in the statistical area. If the presented results are compared to the data from the survey presented in Figure 1, we can assume that 45% or 6,917 tourists visited the monastery of St. Archangel Michael, about 30% or 4,611 tourists visited the church St. Mary (Holy Mother of God), 16% or 2,459 tourists visited the city museum, while the remaining 9% or about 1,383 tourists have visited other sights in the area.

According to these data, it is assumed that about 75% of the tourists, or about 11,529 tourists that visit the area, among other attractions also visit the two most important cultural, historical and religious facilities.

## CONCLUSION

The analyzed area of the Maleshevo Mountains, and Maleshevo area, due to its specific relief structure (mostly mountainous area) contributed to isolation of that area in past. Due to that, the population possesses specific culture and customs. This has resulted in the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the Maleshevo area, which was created through a long and tumultuous history and historical developments in the area. Today, such particularity and specificity is manifested in almost all features of the population (language - dialect, special customs, preserved old crafts, specific architecture *etc.*).

The Maleshevo area is a mountainous area that abounds in natural beauty and natural rarities and so far, they have successfully put into operation in tourism and created a brand as a mountainous tourism destination in the Republic of Macedonia in which they have developed or are developing different forms of alternative tourism (summer mountain tourism, winter mountain tourism, rural, eco-tourism, hunting, rural tourism *etc.*). The achieved degree of tourism development has triggered further development of tourism by promoting the rich cultural and historical heritage. These conclusions have been embraced by tourism workers in the hotel industry and culture, and they have incorporated in their hotel tourist offer. In this context, the authors believe that the rich history of the Maleshevo area is represented by cultural and historical heritage, and it must be present in every tourist offer as a secondary and tertiary tourist motive. In some cases, some cultural and historical tourism resources should obtain a higher degree and become primary tourist motives, and these will be the main interest and motivation for the tourists visiting the area. This will not only attract more tourists but make the Maleshevo area a tourism destination offering a variety of selective and specific forms of tourism.

Table 2. Tourist arrivals, overnight stays and average length of stay

	Arrival		Overnights spent		Average length of stay	
	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists
Eastern statistical region	16751	9156	31612	21745	1.88	2.37
Maleshevo mountains area (Municipality Berovo)	9321	6051	22318	16528	2.39	2.74

Source: SSO, 2016.



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