



Sustainable Tourism Offer 2

Title:	BELASITSA IN TWO COUNTRIES
Partner:	<i>Association of South Western Municipalities, PP9</i>
Overview	
Country:	<i>Bulgaria BG4 Bulgaria and Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM)</i>
Region:	<i>Southwest (BG) and Southeast (MK)</i>
Short description:	<i>Visit two countries in two days: the Visitor Center of Belasitsa NP in Kolarovo Village with bike trail to the White Fountain above Samuilovo Village (BG); waterfalls and Mokrino Springs (MK). For small groups aged 12-55, non-specialized. All services locally provided.</i>
Objectives	<i>Demonstrate the best of this well preserved border mountain of three countries (in two of the three). Address the focus of the most popular demand at the moment – short vacations (weekends), making use of the unique marketing advantage to visit two countries in two days. Generate income for local people which – even if not great in volume – might create additional motivation for the development of sustainable tourism.</i>
Target groups	<p><i>Small groups (10 to 15 persons) including families with/without children or groups of friends aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests coming from Blagoevgrad, Sofia and even Plovdiv in Bulgaria. Small groups (10 to 15 persons) including families with/without children or groups of friends aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests coming from Strumica, Skopje or another appropriate town in Macedonia. Small groups (10 to 15 persons) including families with/without children or groups of friends aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests coming from Serres, Thessaloniki or another appropriate town in Greece.</i></p> <p>Note: The age range is set in accordance with the terrain of Belasitsa Mountain which is steep and difficult. Of course, exceptions are possible depending on the physical condition and the experience of the visitors. Exceptions below the lower limit of 12 years at the moment are also related to the standard size of the bikes owned by Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate; there are no children’s models at present.</p>



Phase	<i>Almost 100% readiness to offer the product to groups of 10 (the owner of Podgorski An Motel is ready to purchase 10 bikes if he has some guarantee that the product will be offered at the market). For bigger groups, there is limitation as to the number of bikes available at the Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate. This limitation can be overcome through partnership with local suppliers who may offer additional numbers of bikes, or in case the visitors have their own bikes.</i>
Operator, contact	<i>Pirin Tourism Forum, 2700 Blagoevgrad, 13 Mencha Karnicheva str., tel.: 0887 912950, email: pirin_tourism_forum@abv.bg</i>
Cost and benefits	<i>No investment costs needed; yearly operational costs – approx. 4800 EUR; yearly revenues – approx. 19200 EUR (based on 2 groups per month).</i>

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Marketing Analysis I.	
“Product” - detailed description of the services	<p><i>The offer is described starting from Bulgaria and going into Macedonia. Of course, for visitors coming from Macedonia, the program will need to be ‘reversed’, while visitors from Greece may take any direction.</i></p> <p><i>Day 1 (Friday)</i> <i>Evening time:</i> <i>Arrive in the area of Belasitsa Nature Park, Bulgaria. Overnight: hotels of various categories in the town of Petrich or guesthouses in the villages in the vicinity of Belasitsa Nature Park. Dinner in a recommended restaurant in Petrich or at the guesthouses prepared by the hosts.</i></p> <p><i>(Option starting in Macedonia) Overnight: hotels of various categories in the town of Strumica with a dinner at a recommended restaurant or in rural guesthouses / the Podgorski An Motel in the village of Koleshino, with a dinner prepared by the hosts.</i></p> <p><i>Day 2 (Saturday) for the visitors starting from Bulgaria / Day 3</i></p>



(Sunday) for the visitors starting from Macedonia

Not later than 10 AM:

Arrival of the visitors at the Belasitsa Visitor Center located within the administrative building of Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate, village of Kolarovo, Petrich Municipality, 14, Belasitsa Str. Welcome coffee/tea and sweets.

Visitors should bring along:

- *Comfortable sportswear according to season, incl. waterproof jackets, etc.*
- *Comfortable and firm sports shoes.*
- *Sun protection lotion, sunglasses, anti-insect lotion, etc.*
- *Water / water bottle or similar; personal hygiene materials, etc.*
- *Optimized luggage, easy to carry when riding a bike.*

10.30 AM:

Visit to the interpretative exposition called "In the Chestnut Forest" at the Belasitsa Visitor Center with a guide from the Belasitsa NPD.

Options at the Visitor Center:

- *See the film about Belasitsa NP / interactive presentations about Belasitsa NP.*
- *Organize interactive / educational games for the group, dedicated to the valuable natural heritage of the Park.*
- *Organize a puppet show with the participation of the visitors: the puppets and 'scene' are provided by the NPD, the script may be also provided by them or produced / improvised by the visitors themselves.*
- *Take photos of the visitors in costumes of various plants and animals from Belasitsa NP.*

Not later than 12 AM:

Depart the building of Belasitsa NPD with the bikes provided by the hosts. The groups must head for the neighbouring village of Samuilovo and towards the Bialata Cheshma (White Fountain) locality along a forest track. Parallel to that track, there runs a signed themed trail called A Colourful Tale, developed by the Nature Park Directorate and equipped with the necessary small visitor infrastructure. The overall length of the track is 4 – 4.5 km in a beautiful deciduous forest.

1 PM:

Picnic lunch at the White Fountain; optional: packed sandwiches,



barbecue cooked on spot or local dishes supplied by the local people. Options at the White Fountain: organize interactive games from the nearby themed trail, e.g.:

Search Game: the group splits into teams and each team receives a card with a list of the items they must find in the vicinity of the White Fountain (same number of items for every team). The team who fulfills their list first becomes the winner. An exemplary search list could include:

- 1. Find three different plant species with white blossoms.*
- 2. Find one plant with yellow blossoms.*
- 3. Find one plant whose blossom is longer than 2 cm.*
- 4. Find one liana.*
- 5. Find one plant with scissor leaves.*
- 6. Find one plant with sticky leaves.*
- 7. Find one plant shorter than 20 cm.*
- 8. Find one plant whose leaves are heart-shaped.*
- 9. Find one plant with sophisticated shape.*
- 10. Find a flower that has 5 blossom leaves.*

Not later than 3 PM:

Return to Kolarovo Village using the same track. Leave the bikes at Belasitsa NPD.

4 PM:

Options for the end of the day, depending on the available transport, the interests and condition of the group:

- Visit Rupite locality at the crater of the former volcano of Kozhuh, a natural landmark. Within the crater, one can see: the church of Sveta Petka built by the famous Bulgarian prophet Baba Vanga; the house of Baba Vanga herself located in a well maintained and quite pleasant park; the hot mineral springs with bathing pools; the Roman town of Heraklea Sintica which is being excavated in recent years.*
- Visit the Historical Museum of Petrich in the town center hosting a number of interesting finds from the whole area.*
- Visit the museum house of Baba Vanga in Petrich.*
- Visit the National Park Museum of Samuilova Krepost (Tsar Samuil's Fortress) near the village of Klyuch.*
- Folklore programme in Kolarovo, Yavornitsa or any other of Belasitsa villages (organized by local Community Centers).*

Evening:

Trip to Belasitsa area in Macedonia. Overnight: hotels of various categories in the town of Strumica with a dinner at a recommended restaurant or in rural guesthouses / the Podgorski An Motel in the village of Koleshino, with a dinner prepared by the hosts.



	<p><i>(Option starting in Macedonia) Return trip to the area of Strumica and end of programme.</i></p> <p><i>Day 3 (Sunday) for the visitors starting from Bulgaria / Day 2 (Saturday) for the visitors starting from Macedonia</i></p> <p><i>Not later than 09.30 AM:</i></p> <p><i>Arrive at the Podgorski An Motel in the village of Koleshino (unless the guests have stayed there overnight). Rent bikes and leave for the village of Smolari through the village of Mokrino. The trail goes along asphalt roads and tracks, about 20 km altogether.</i></p> <p><i>A good place to rest are the Mokrino Springs located amidst a beautiful deciduous forest with special zones arranged for picnic.</i></p> <p><i>Around noon:</i></p> <p><i>Arrive at the village of Smolari. Lunch at the yard of a rural house: sandwiches or local dishes prepared by the hosts.</i></p> <p><i>Not later than 1 PM:</i></p> <p><i>Take a signed trail to the Smolarski Waterfall, the highest one in that part of Belasitsa. Time for photos and go back to Smolari. Take the bikes back to Koleshino. Option: if the groups is tired, transport may be arranged to take them back to Koleshino – for the whole group or just for the ones who don't want to use the bikes. For those who have used another transport to Podgorski An Motel, a visit to the nearby Koleshino Waterfall could be arranged (transport to the foothills and about 300 m walk along a signed path).</i></p> <p><i>Late afternoon, if the visitors would like:</i></p> <p><i>Visit to the Roman Baths in the neighbouring village of Bansko.</i></p> <p><i>Evening:</i></p> <p><i>Travel back to Petrich and end of programme.</i></p> <p><i>(Option starting in Macedonia) Travel to the area of Belasitsa Nature Park in Bulgaria. Overnight: hotel in the town of Petrich with dinner at a recommended restaurant or in rural guesthouses with dinner prepared by local hosts.</i></p>
<p>“Place” – market analysis</p>	<p><i>The product is placed as a nice and attractive option to have a small vacation (weekend) for people living not far from the mountain of Belasitsa in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece.</i></p>



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Marketing Analysis II.	
Price	<p><i>Prices: (based on a group of 10, in EUR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Overnight with breakfast and dinner in Bulgaria, cheaper option rural guesthouses: 200 EUR</i> • <i>Overnight with breakfast and dinner in Macedonia, cheaper option Podgorski An Motel: 200 EUR</i> • <i>Module: welcome to Belasitsa Nature park Directorate with refreshments and sweets and presentation of the interactive exposition at the Visitor Center: 50 EUR</i> • <i>Module: rent of bikes for the Kolarovo – White Fountain – Kolarovo trail with a local guide: 50 EUR</i> • <i>Module: picnic lunch at the White Fountain: 100 EUR</i> • <i>Module: rent of bikes for the Koleshino – Smolari – Koleshino Trail with a local guide: 100 EUR</i> • <i>Module: lunch at a rural house in Smolari: 100 EUR</i> <p><i>Minimum package price: 80 EUR per person. (Optional visits to various sites e.g. the Historical Museum of Petrich will be paid by the visitors on the spot.)</i></p>
Sales	<p><i>For organized groups of tourists: by tour operators who organize the programs for the stay in Sandanski, Strumica or Kirkini.</i></p> <p><i>For unorganized groups of tourists: by hotels, restaurants and other places to visit in Sandanski, Strumica or Kirkini. Booking by phone or mail address / web portal.</i></p> <p><i>For groups of pupils / students: either by tour operators who work with children and youth, or by educational institutions in the region Blagoevgrad, Sofia, Strumica and Kirkini.</i></p>



Promotion	<p><i>Promote the product to tour operators selling the region or specialized in work with small groups - in the best case through a familiarization trip for their representatives; if that is not possible – present the product at their offices or at least send letters with the offer by mail or e-mail.</i></p> <p><i>Establish a special web site to offer the product or integrate it in already existing ones with options / contacts for booking.</i></p> <p><i>If there is an opportunity – advertise in local media or through billboard(s) promoting Belasitsa Nature Park on the main roads Petrich – Strumica or Sandanski – Serres, etc.</i></p>
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Implementation plan I.	
Detailed description of the technical solution	<i>All sites and services are already available and operational; no further technical solutions needed</i>
Actions to take	<i>Logistics and promotion.</i>



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Implementation plan II.	
Costs of development and operation	<i>At present, no additional inputs are needed for the program, except for the eventual purchase of additional bikes. If additional services are included in the package, such as games or visits to other sites requiring additional resources, they will be calculated in the cost of the package itself.</i>
Time plan for the realization	<i>Ready to start immediately</i>
Stakeholders and organisation	<i>Organization is in the hands of the Pirin Tourism Forum. Stakeholders: Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate, local service providers from Bulgaria and Macedonia.</i>