



Sustainable Tourism Offer 3

Title:	BELASITSA IN THREE COUNTRIES
Partner:	<i>Association of South Western Municipalities, PP9</i>
Overview	
Country:	<i>Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM)</i>
Region:	<i>Southwest (BG), Southeast (MK), Northwest (GR)</i>
Short description:	<i>Have a one-week biking tour of three different countries with visits to attractive local sites. For groups of 15-20 people aged 12-55, experienced bikers. All services locally provided.</i>
Objectives	<i>Demonstrate the best of this well preserved border mountain of three countries. Make use of the unique marketing advantage to visit three countries in a few 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>Groups (15 to 20 people) of admirers of biking aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests, from Blagoevgrad, Sofia or other bigger towns in Bulgaria.</p> <p>Groups (15 to 20 people) of admirers of biking aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests, from Strumica, Skopje or other bigger towns in Macedonia.</p> <p>Groups (15 to 20 people) of admirers of biking aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests, from Serres, Thessaloniki or other bigger towns in Greece.</p> <p>Groups (15 to 20 people) of admirers of biking aged 12 to 55, with or without specialized interests, from other European states.</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.</p> <p>THE OFFER IS TARGETED AT EXPERIENCED BIKERS BRINGING THEIR OWN BIKES AND EQUIPMENT (WITH AN OPTION TO HIRE BIKES IN THE REGION IF NO OTHER OPPORTUNITY).</p>



Phase	<i>100% readiness.</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. 11500 EUR (based on 4 groups per year, 15 people per group).</i>

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Marketing Analysis I.	
“Product” - detailed description of the services	<p>Day 1 During the whole day and up to the evening: Arrive in the area of Belasitsa Nature Park, Bulgaria. Overnight: hotels of various categories in the town of Petrich. Dinner in a recommended restaurant in Petrich. Option for those arriving earlier in the day: the biking trail called The Health Alley developed by the Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate. It is a circular trail starting at the Youth House in Petrich. The trail is signed and marked by info boards; its total duration is about 45 minutes by bike. It offers great views of the Petrich fields and the valley of Strumeshnitsa River.</p> <p>Day 2 Not later than 09 AM: Start from Pertich to Kolarovo Village along the Old Road Biking Trail also developed by the Belasitsa Nature Park Directorate, signed and marked by info boards.</p> <p>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. Visit to the interpretative exposition called “In the Chestnut Forest” at the Belasitsa Visitor Center with a guide from the Belasitsa NPD.</p>



	<p>Options at the Visitor Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Not later than 12 AM:</p> <p>Depart the building of Belasitsa NPD with the bikes. The group 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.</p> <p>1 PM:</p> <p>Picnic lunch at the White Fountain; optional: packed sandwiches, barbecue cooked on spot or local dishes supplied by the local people.</p> <p>Options at the White Fountain: organize interactive games from the nearby themed trail, e.g.:</p> <p>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Not later than 3 PM:</p> <p>Return to Kolarovo Village using the same track. Leave the bikes at Belasitsa NPD.</p> <p>4 PM:</p> <p>Options for the end of the day, depending on the available transport, the interests and condition of the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Rupite locality at the crater of the former volcano of Kozhuh, a natural landmark. Within the crater, one can see: the
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	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). <p>Evening: Stay overnight in rural guesthouses in the villages of Belasitsa. Dinner – local dishes prepared by the hosts.</p> <p>Day 3 Not later than 09 AM: Start for the region of Belasitsa in Macedonia. Biking route: Belasitsa villages (BG) – Zlatarevo Border Checkpoint – Novo Selo (MK) – Smolari Village; all asphalt roads.</p> <p>Around noon: Take a signed trail to the Smolarski Waterfall, the highest one in that part of Belasitsa. Time for photos and go back to Smolari. Lunch at the yard of a rural house: sandwiches or local dishes prepared by the hosts.</p> <p>Not later than 3 PM: Start for the village of Koleshino via Mokrino Village. The trail is partly covered with asphalt, partly a track, with a total length of about 20 km. A good place to rest are the Mokrino Springs located amidst a beautiful deciduous forest with special zones arranged for picnic.</p> <p>Evening: Arrive at Podgorski An Motel in the village of Koleshino. Dinner (local dishes), stay overnight. 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).</p> <p>Day 4 Not later than 09 AM: Start for the neighbouring village of Bansko (asphalt road); visit the Roman Baths.</p> <p>10 AM: Bike from Bansko to the town of Strumica using the asphalt road. In Strumica, visit to (optional):</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church complex of St. 15 Tiveriopolski Machenitsi • Church of St. St. Kiril and Metodii • Church of St. Dimitar and St. Grigori Palomiiski <p>Around noon: Lunch at a recommended restaurant in Strumica. Start for Doiran Lake along the asphalt road. Option: visit the old medieval fortress of Tsarevi Kuli (King's Towers). It is located on a deviation of the road Strumica – Doiran; the road is quite steep and may present a challenge to even the skillful bikers. Around 4 PM: Arrive at the town of Stari Doiran. If the season is suitable, there are various options for swimming in the lake or sunbathing, or taking a boat tour... Evening: Accommodation in hotel(s) near the lake. Dinner at a recommended restaurant at the lake; local fish is truly delicious!</p> <p>Day 5 Not later than 09 AM: Start for the Border Checkpoint of Doiran and enter Greece (asphalt roads) towards the lake of Kerkini on the south side of Belasitsa Mountain which is called Belles here. Around noon: Arrive at the village of Kerkini; lunch at a recommended restaurant. Not later than 2 PM: Visit the Kerkini National Park Directorate and their Visitor Center; look at the interactive expositions. 4 PM: Guided tour around the lake for bird-watching. The Kerkini Lake is a site of tremendous importance for the birds, both for their migration routes and as a nesting ground. The region offers great opportunities for the lovers of bird-watching. Evening: Stay overnight at the lake; dinner at a recommended local restaurant.</p> <p>Day 6 Not later than 09.30 AM: Biking tour of Kerkini Lake, with or without local guide from Kerkini NP Directorate. Time for photos. Around noon: Lunch at a recommended restaurant near the lake. Not later than 2 PM: Boat tour of the lake with a guide from the National park Authority; opportunity to see the newly built platforms for feeding and</p>
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	<p>nesting of various bird species; time for photos.</p> <p>Evening: Farewell dinner for the group; stay overnight at a hotel by the lake.</p> <p>Day 7 Start along the asphalt road to Kulata Border Checkpoint. Return to Petrich and departure of the participants.</p>
"Place" – market analysis	<i>The product is placed as an attractive short vacation for biking fans with the attractive option to see three different countries in one week.</i>

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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>2 overnights with breakfast and dinner in Bulgaria (cheaper options): 400 EUR</i> <i>2 overnights with breakfast and dinner in Macedonia</i>



	<p><i>(cheaper options): 400 EUR</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2 overnights with breakfast and dinner in Greece (cheaper options): 800 EUR</i> • <i>Guides throughout the programme: 700 EUR</i> • <i>Module: welcome to Belasitsa Nature park Directorate with refreshments and sweets and presentation of the interactive exposition at the Visitor Center: 100 EUR</i> • <i>Module: picnic lunch at the White Fountain: 200 EUR</i> • <i>Module: lunch at a rural house in Smolari: 200 EUR</i> • <i>Module: lunch at a recommended restaurant in Strumica: 200 EUR</i> • <i>Module: lunch at a recommended restaurant in Kerkini (twice): 600 EUR</i> • <i>Module: visit to the Visitor Center of Kerkini NP: 100 EUR</i> • <i>Module: boat trip on Kerkini Lake: 140 EUR</i> <p><i>Minimum package price: 192 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>Via tour operators who are specialized in alternative forms of tourism.</i></p> <p><i>Via web-site(s) offering the product. It is possible to use existing sites such as www.belasitsa.net or www.belasitsa.com , or to develop a new one specifically offering the Iron Curtain Trail. It is important that the sites are in Bulgarian and English as a minimum (preferably Greek too) and to give opportunities or at least contacts for bookings.</i></p> <p><i>Through contacts with biking clubs around Europe.</i></p>
Promotion	<p><i>Promote the product to tour operators specialized in alternative forms of tourism - 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 specialized media for</i></p>



	<i>alternative / biking tourism.</i>
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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, Kerkini National Park Management Authority, local service providers.</i>