



# Iron Curtain Trail

WP4 Sustainable Tourism Offers

## **Cycling from Sofia to Skopje**

Proposed Transnational Tourism Package: Sofia (Bulgaria) to  
Skopje (FYROM)



19/11/2014

## ***Description***

We envisage a package proposal from the Bulgarian capital, Sofia to Skopje, the capital of FYROM. The distance along the Iron Curtain Trail (ICT) route of this section is approximately 300km long. The duration of the final package should be no longer 9 days.

## ***Selection procedure***

Initially, the proposals were mapped based on the itinerary outlined in the submissions. It was observed that there was a concentration of proposals along this section of the ICT. The diversity of the submissions as well as their geographic distribution means that these proposals present an ideal opportunity for transnational cooperation. A classification of the submissions was made based on whether they constituted a touristic or a transport offer. It was also noted whether the proposals designated a specific operator and whether the proposals were at an idea stage or at a realisation stage.

Subsequently, the proposals were grouped into sections that presented good potential for transnational packages. The criteria for making these sections were recognisability of destinations, feasibility of distances, accessibility of the beginning and end destinations and quality of infrastructure. Together these criteria provided a suitable indication of market appeal.

## ***Level of Cooperation***

Here, we aim to incorporate the various tours that have been proposed into one offer. Modifying the original proposals to maximise complementarity or continuity



can be envisaged. This comes under the third and highest level of cooperation that have been previously outlined.

## **Section Outline**

### Highlights

- Bulgarian cities of Blageovgrad and Kyustendil
- The foothills of western Bulgaria

### Connections

The cities of Skopje and Sofia are both well connected at local level through the national train networks and at international level through international airports. However, there is neither direct trains nor direct flights connecting the two cities.

### The offer

This section features two European capitals and presents good potential for a transnational package. There is currently three tourism proposal that offers guided tours (see table below) and one transport offer. To form a package they will need to combine and form a new offer. There is also a transport offer that can be incorporated into this package (see table). Because of the remoteness of the areas this section goes through, accommodation must be provided, including in both start and end cities and must be full-board for the remotest parts of the ICT. The package must also provide the option of renting bicycles and include transport connecting the ICT to Skopje and Sofia. The package should be priced at around €800. Two possible operators are Penguin Travel (proposal 2) Laguna Travel (proposal 29).

The fact that practically the whole section of the ICT is covered by a proposal between these two destinations is an advantage. It is nonetheless advisable to outline public transport connections between the beginning and end points.

Partner	Name	Start	Stop
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<b>ERDF PP10</b>	1 – Along the Iron Curtain in the Balkan Peninsula	Vidin (BGR)	Blagoevgrad (BGR)
<b>ERDF PP5</b>	13 – Sofia - Dragoman <i>train-bus service</i>	Sofia (BGR)	Dragoman (BGR)
<b>ERDF PP10</b>	2 – Along the Iron Curtain Trail in the Balkan Peninsula (BG-FYROM-GR)	Gotse Delchev (MKD)	Blagoevgrad (BGR)
<b>IPA PP6</b>	29 – Natural Beauties Bike Tour	Delchevo (MKD)	Strumica (MKD)

### Target market

This tour is likely to appeal as much to people who aren't familiar with the region as to those that are from there. Both start and end points are accessible from the rest of Europe via international airports and are well recognised among international travellers.

The main limiting factor to local interest is the lack of transport connections between the cities of Skopje and Sofia. We suggest that the package outline the best available transport options.

### **Next step**

This stage will require a close collaboration between partners. The initial proposals will have to be adapted to fit the format of the transnational proposals. Technical issues should be identified and a common solution should be proposed. The final product should be a coherent, well defined offer that will appeal to a broad range of tourists. Public transport alternatives should be outlined, particularly for parts of the ICT that are not covered by a tourism proposal for a long distance (upwards of 40km).



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