Stari Most

**Stari Most** ([Bosnian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_language): *Stari most / Стари мост*; lit. 'Old Bridge'), also known as **Mostar Bridge** ([Turkish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_language): *Mostar Köprüsü*), is a rebuilt 16th-century [Ottoman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) bridge in the city of [Mostar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mostar) in [Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina) that crosses the river [Neretva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neretva) and connects the two parts of the city. The Old Bridge stood for 427 years, until it was destroyed on 9 November 1993 by [Croatian Defence Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian_Defence_Council) during the [Croat–Bosniak War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croat%E2%80%93Bosniak_War). Subsequently, a project was set in motion to reconstruct it; the rebuilt bridge opened on 23 July 2004.

The bridge is considered an exemplary piece of [Balkan Islamic architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_architecture) and was commissioned by [Suleiman the Magnificent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suleiman_the_Magnificent) in 1557. It was designed by [Mimar Hayruddin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimar_Hayruddin" \o "Mimar Hayruddin), a student and apprentice of architect [Mimar Sinan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimar_Sinan" \o "Mimar Sinan) who built many of the Sultan's key buildings in Istanbul and around the empire.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Stratton-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-5)

Characteristics[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Stari_Most&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Characteristics)]

The bridge spans the Neretva river in the old town of Mostar, the city to which it gave the name. The city is the fifth-largest in the country; it is the center of the [Herzegovina-Neretva Canton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herzegovina-Neretva_Canton) of the [Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina), and the unofficial capital of [Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herzegovina). The Stari Most is hump-backed, 4 metres (13 ft 1 in) wide and 30 metres (98 ft 5 in) long, and dominates the river from a height of 24 m (78 ft 9 in). Two fortified towers protect it: the Halebija tower on the northeast and the Tara tower on the southwest, called "the bridge keepers" (natively *mostari*).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Stari-Most-old.kons.gov.ba-1)

Instead of foundations, the bridge has abutments of [limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone) linked to wing walls along the waterside cliffs. Measuring from the summer water level of 40.05 m (131 ft 5 in), abutments are erected to a height of 6.53 metres (21 ft 5 in), from which the arch springs to its high point. The start of the arch is emphasized by a [molding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molding_(decorative)) 0.32 metres (1 ft 1 in) in height. The rise of the arch is 12.02 metres (39 ft 5 in).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Stari-Most-old.kons.gov.ba-1)

History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Stari_Most&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: History)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mostar_The_Old_Bridge_-_Stari_most_1979_g_-_panoramio.jpg)

Stari Most in 1979

The original bridge replaced an older wooden suspension bridge of dubious stability. Construction began in 1557 and took nine years: according to the inscription the bridge was completed in 974 [AH](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anno_Hegirae), corresponding to the period between 19 July 1566 [[1]](https://web.archive.org/web/20120610194828/http:/archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=8902) and 7 July 1567. Little is known of the construction of the bridge, thought to have been made from mortar made with egg whites,[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most" \l "cite_note-6) and all that has been preserved in writing are memories and legends and the name of the builder, Mimar Hayruddin. Charged under pain of death to construct a bridge of such unprecedented dimensions, Hayruddin reportedly prepared for his own funeral on the day the scaffolding was finally removed from the completed structure. Upon its completion it was the widest man-made arch in the world.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

The 17th Century Ottoman explorer [Evliya Çelebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evliya_%C3%87elebi" \o "Evliya Çelebi) wrote that the bridge "is like a rainbow arch soaring up to the skies, extending from one cliff to the other... I, a poor and miserable slave of Allah, have passed through 16 countries, but I have never seen such a high bridge. It is thrown from rock to rock as high as the sky."[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-saudiaramcoworld-7)

As Mostar's economic and administrative importance grew with the growing presence of [Ottoman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) rule, the precarious wooden suspension bridge over the [Neretva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neretva) gorge required replacement. The old bridge on the river "...was made of wood and hung on chains," wrote the Ottoman geographer [Katip Çelebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katip_%C3%87elebi" \o "Katip Çelebi), and it "...swayed so much that people crossing it did so in mortal fear".[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] In 1566, Mimar Hayruddin designed the bridge, which was said to have cost 300,000 Drams (silver coins) to build. The two-year construction project was supervised by Karagoz Mehmet Bey, Sultan Suleiman's son-in-law and the patron of Mostar's most important mosque complex, the Hadzi Mehmed Karadzozbeg Mosque.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

**Destruction**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Stari_Most&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Destruction)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stari_Most_temporary_cable_bridge_1997.jpg)

The temporary cable bridge in 1997

The Old Bridge was destroyed on November 9, 1993 in the [War in Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina), in a standoff that lasted about 24 hours.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-dupre-8) The first temporary bridge on the traces of the Old Bridge was open on December 30, 1993; built in only three days by [Spanish military engineers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Army) assigned to the [United Nations Protection Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Protection_Force) (UNPROFOR) mission.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:0-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:1-11) The temporary structure was subsequently upgraded three times, to eventually link the shores with a more secure [cable-stayed bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cable-stayed_bridge) until the proper reconstruction of the Old Bridge.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-12)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:1-11)

Newspapers based in Sarajevo reported that more than 60 shells hit the bridge before it collapsed.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Coward-13) Croatian General and sentenced war-criminal, [Slobodan Praljak](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slobodan_Praljak), in attempt to absolve himself and his military units from responsibility and prosecution for the destruction of the bridge and other crimes committed during the war, published a document, "How the Old Bridge Was Destroyed", where he argues that there was supposedly an explosive charge or mine placed at the center of the bridge underneath and detonated remotely, in addition to the shelling, which caused the collapse. Most historians dismiss these claims, and disagree with its conclusions.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-14)

After the destruction of the Stari Most, a spokesman for the Croats said that they deliberately destroyed it, because it was of strategic importance.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Borowitz-15) Academics have argued that the bridge held little strategic value and that its shelling was an example of deliberate [cultural property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_property) destruction. Given that mosques, synagogues, and churches in Mostar were in proximity, the Old Bridge was targeted for the symbolic significance it served in connecting diverse communities.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-dupre-8) Andras Riedlmayer terms the destruction an act of "killing memory", in which evidence of a shared cultural heritage and peaceful co-existence were deliberately destroyed.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Coward-13)

**Reconstruction**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Stari_Most&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Reconstruction)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bosnia,_Mostar,_old_bridge_2.JPG)

Stari Most undergoing reconstruction in 2003.

After the end of the war, plans were raised to reconstruct the bridge. The [World Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Bank), the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Educational,_Scientific_and_Cultural_Organization) (UNESCO), the [Aga Khan Trust for Culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aga_Khan_Trust_for_Culture) and the [World Monuments Fund](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Monuments_Fund) formed a coalition to oversee the reconstruction of the Stari Most and the historic city centre of Mostar.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16) Additional funding was provided by Italy, the Netherlands, [Turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey), [Croatia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatia) and the [Council of Europe Development Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Europe_Development_Bank), as well as the Government of BiH.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16) In October 1998, UNESCO established an international committee of experts to oversee the design and reconstruction work.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16) It was decided to build a bridge as similar as possible to the original, using the same technology and materials.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16)

The bridge was re-built in two phases: the first one being led by [Hungarian army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Ground_Forces) engineers, consisting in the lifting of submerged material for its repurpose; and the second one being the removal of the temporary bridge —task assigned to Spanish army engineers— and the reconstruction of the Old Bridge with Ottoman construction techniques by a partnership of civil engineering companies led by the Turkish Er-Bu.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:2-17)[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-18)[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-19) Tenelia, a fine-grained limestone, sourced from local quarries was used and Hungarian army divers recovered stones from the original bridge from the river below, although most were too damaged to reuse.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-dupre-8)[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:2-17)

Reconstruction commenced on 7 June 2001. The reconstructed bridge was inaugurated on 23 July 2004, with the cost estimated to be 15.5 million US dollars.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Armaly-16)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Stari-Most-old.kons.gov.ba-1)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-:0-9)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stari_Most_viewed_from_North.jpg)

Stari Most in 2019

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stari Most** | |
| [Stari Most22.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stari_Most22.jpg)  Stari Most in 2006 | |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[43°20′13.56″N 17°48′53.46″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Stari_Most&params=43_20_13.56_N_17_48_53.46_E_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[43°20′13.56″N 17°48′53.46″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Stari_Most&params=43_20_13.56_N_17_48_53.46_E_type:landmark) |
| **Carries** | [Pedestrians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footbridge) |
| **Crosses** | [Neretva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neretva) |
| **Locale** | [Mostar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mostar), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina) |
| **Official name** | Stari most |
| **Heritage status** | [KONS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commission_to_preserve_national_monuments_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#cite_note-Stari-Most-old.kons.gov.ba-1) |
| **Characteristics** | |
| **Design** | [Arch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_bridge) |
| **Material** | Stone |
| **Total length** | 29 metres (95 ft) |
| **Width** | 4 metres (13 ft) |
| **No. of spans** | 1 |
| [**Clearance below**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_draft#Clearance_below) | ca.20 metres (66 ft) at mid-span depending on river water-level |
| **History** | |
| **Architect** | [Mimar Hayruddin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimar_Hayruddin) (concept could originate from [Mimar Sinan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimar_Sinan" \o "Mimar Sinan)′s idea) |
| **Constructed by** | Mimar Hayruddin, apprentice of [Mimar Sinan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimar_Sinan" \o "Mimar Sinan) |
| **Construction start** | 1557 |
| **Construction end** | 1566 |
| **Opened** | 1566; 456 years ago |
| **Rebuilt** | 7 June 2001 – 23 July 2004 |
| **Destroyed** | 9 November 1993 |
| [**UNESCO World Heritage Site**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) | |
| **Official name** | Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar |
| **Type** | Cultural |
| **Criteria** | vi |
| **Designated** | 2005 (29th [session](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Committee)) |
| **Reference no.** | [946](https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/946) |
| **State Party** | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/bf/Flag_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.svg/23px-Flag_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.svg.png [Bosnia and Herzegovina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina) |
| **Region** | [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_Europe) |
| **Location** | |
| [https://maps.wikimedia.org/img/osm-intl,10,43.3371,17.81485,270x200.png?lang=en&domain=en.wikipedia.org&title=Stari+Most&groups=_b9e7795cd90381dec350484abac8a66a226bd090](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stari_Most#/map/0) | |