

## **THE TOWN OF BAR**

Like most Montenegrin towns, throughout its history Bar has belonged to various civilizations and cultures. What makes it stand out among Montenegrin towns today is that it is representative of several of the cultures that it belongs to, and in some cases had belonged to for centuries. Here, the heritage of one epoch would become the ground for development of the next. In the new heritage one could always clearly recognize the achievements of its predecessor.

As a city of olives, the sea gate of Montenegro, long-lasting melting-pot of different confessions and nations, Bar represents a mix of modernity, tradition and beauty. It is an important and dynamic economic centre within Montenegro, but is also a town of rich cultural and historical tradition. Some of the highest achievements of Montenegro's civilization originated in Bar. The oldest written documents and the most important work of medieval Montenegrin literature and history can be found here. The town also served as the seat of the oldest religious institution of Montenegro (the Bar archbishopric). One of the world's oldest olive trees grows here, the Old Olive of Mirovica, which is more than 2000 years old.

The rich cultural and historical tradition of the Bar area is combined with the unique gifts of nature, a friendly climate and a remarkable geographical position.

The pleasant Mediterranean climate attracts a large number of tourists each year. With an average of 270 sunny days per year, Bar is one of the Mediterranean's sunniest towns. The 44 kilometre-long sea coast, including over 9 kilometres of beaches, the 67 kilometre-long shore of Lake Skadar and the mountain range dividing these two large bodies of water make Bar an ideal destination for tourists who wish to relax on lovely beaches and enjoy the unspoilt environment, as well as for those wanting to visit the numerous cultural and religious sites or to spend their holidays engaged in various sports activities.

## **BAR OLD TOWN**

Any visitor to the long-since dilapidated ruins of Bar Old Town, one of the world's largest fortified archaeological sites, will be impressed by the beauty of the natural surroundings into which it blends, dignifying the majestic Mount Rumija which towers above it. This contrast of nature and Mediterranean heritage represents one of the most important cultural and historical sites in Montenegro.

In this unique monument the remnants of many past civilizations and states that used to rule the region as can be recognized in the traces of everyday life from times past. In the town, there are churches and buildings from different epochs, squares, medieval palaces

and houses that once were abundant with life. In the present day, life in Bar Old Town begins the moment the visitor enters it. Unlike other Montenegrin medieval towns, this place was not inhabited continually, so new times did not bring changes to affect its earlier ambience.

What is bound to fascinate you when you encounter Bar Old Town is its monumental size, the scale of its fortress and the variety of culturally significant heritage. This variety is unmatched by any other Montenegrin town.

## **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS**

The rich cultural and historical heritage of Bar belongs to different epochs and civilizations. It would be very difficult to list all the remarkable monuments in Bar, so we will mention only some of them.

One of the oldest monuments in this area and the oldest Christian religious building in Montenegro is the Bar Triconch Church dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, whose remnants are located in the centre of the town. This is where the “Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja” (“Ljetopis popa Dukljanina”) was created in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is the region’s most important medieval work of literature and history. Just a few kilometres away from the town centre, on Ratac peninsula, situated between Bar and Sutomore, there are the remnants of Our Lady of Ratac (Bogorodica Ratačka) monastery complex which belonged to the Benedictine order, and it is presumed to have been established in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Near the small seaside town of Sutomore, there is the partially preserved fortress of Nehaj, used by both Venetians and Ottoman Turks. As a Venetian fortified town, Nehaj was first documented in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the Fortezza dei Spizi. The Bar municipality also contains beautiful churches and monasteries erected during the time of the Balšić family (14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> century) on the islands of Lake Skadar: Beška, Moračnik, Starčevo, etc.

Bar is one of the few towns which can boast several churches representing a rare religious and social phenomenon. Namely, these churches were used by both Christian confessions existing in the region – Orthodox and Catholic.

Of all the cultural and historical monuments in Bar, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century King Nikola’s palace is the one that attracts the most attention. Built right beside the sea, it houses the County Museum which contains all the most significant archaeological finds from this region. Within this residential complex, beside the palace, there are two watchtowers called “gvardije”, a court chapel called the “small palace” and an orangerie. These facilities, surrounded by a beautiful park where very rare tree species and exotic plants were planted back in the time of King Nikola, create a unique historical and environmental ambience

The Old Olive of Mirovica is a trademark natural feature of Bar. It is believed to be more than 2000 years old and it is one of the oldest olive trees in the world. Because of its natural, morphological, environmental, aesthetic and historical significance, this exceptional natural monument was put under State protection in 1957. Numerous legends and traditions are associated with the Old Olive of Mirovica. One of them has it that at one time families that had a dispute would come here to make peace under this olive tree. Thus it earned its name - Mirovica (the root of the name is "mir", meaning peace).

## **GODINJE VILLAGE**

A village which used to be the seat of rulers! This is Godinje, a village next to Lake Skadar, four kilometres northwest of Virpazar. According to a document dating back to 1408, the last ruler of the Balšić dynasty, Balša III had a residence in this village. When he stayed in Godinje, this village was the capital of Montenegro. Undoubtedly it was the wonderful nature and mild climate that moved the Montenegrin ruler to build his residence here.

Godinje is a village of extraordinary architecture. On an inlet gently sloping towards Lake Skadar, houses made of dressed stone are stacked together, separated by narrow passages. Looking from afar, the centre of the village appears to be a medieval fortress dominating Lake Skadar. Such architecture was a product of restless times, when settlements needed to be safe and capable of being defended by their residents. The oldest examples of Godinje's architecture have retained their beauty and unusual appearance to this day.

Near Godinje (in Mijeće), a large prehistoric archaeological site containing Iron Age artefacts has been discovered. There is another historical site near the village – Grmožur - an island hosting an Ottoman 19<sup>th</sup> -century fortress that was used as a prison in the time of King Nikola.

## **LAKE SKADAR**

Lake Skadar is a gathering point for lovers of nature, cruises, game hunting, fishing and cultural and historical sites. It offers unique joys for each of these groups.

It is the largest lake in the Balkans and one of the most complex ecosystems in Montenegro. Encircled by the mountains of Lovćen, Sozina, Sutorman, Rumija, Taraboš and Prokletije, the surface area of Lake Skadar fluctuates from one season to the next, reaching 540 km<sup>2</sup> at its highest water level. Tectonic processes have made it a cryptodepression, meaning that its surface is above sea level, while its bottom is below sea level. Nature and man have made it a focal point of Montenegro.

There are more than 50 islands on the lake which are home to many churches and monasteries that have been centres of both religious and cultural life throughout history. They cannot be categorized under any of the construction styles known at that time as they represent a unique blend of eastern and western styles.

Owing to its natural, cultural and historical value, Lake Skadar has been declared a national park. Lake Skadar is known to be one of the largest bird reserves in Europe and host to some endangered species. The rich fauna of Lake Skadar includes some endemic species as well as over 45 fish species. The 67 kilometres of the lake's shore that belong to the Bar municipality are rather indented, with many bays, colourful fishermen's villages and excursion spots that can be only reached by boat.

## **BEACHES**

Bar has over 44 km of sea coast, including more than 20 beaches stretching over 9 km. As soon as you enter the area of the Bar municipality from the direction of Petrovac, you reach Čanj, which has a 1,100 metre-long colourful sandy beach. You can take a boat ride from Čanj to the Queen's Beach (Kraljičina plaža), which can only be reached by sea. It is a true jewel of the Bar Riviera enclosed by a natural wall of sedimentary rocks. Going from Čanj in the direction of Sutomore, you come across the 300 metre-long Maljevik Beach, offering a natural refuge from the hot summer sun in its thick and fragrant pine forest.

For those in search of exciting beaches offering restaurants and bars, Sutomore is the beach of choice. This sandy beach is 1,200 metres long and hosts beach soccer and beach volleyball tournaments throughout the summer.

Near the famous medieval monastery complex of Ratac there is the Red Beach (Crvena plaža), named after the colour of its fine sand. The beach is surrounded by a pine forest and located about a hundred metres from the main road to Bar.

Just before you enter Bar town centre there is the 1,200 metre-long Žukotrlica Beach. It is a gravel beach, surrounded by a pine forest and varied Mediterranean vegetation.

The Town Beach (Gradska plaža) is located in front of the castle of King Nikola and extends over 750 metres. It is made to cater for different tastes – one part of it is covered in fine sand and the other is pebbly. Many tourist facilities, the "Princess" Hotel, sports pitches and King Nikola's castle with a park hundreds of years old offer entertainment to visitors and complete their enjoyment of the charms of this beach.

Some ten kilometres from Bar in the direction of Ulcinj, there is one of the most visited beaches of Bar – Big Sands (Veliki pijesak). It is 380 metres long and located around 250

metres from the main road. It is surrounded by numerous tourist facilities, restaurants and discotheques.

On the border of the Bar and Ulcinj municipalities, in the village of Bušat, is the location of the Olive Wave (Val maslina) Beach, named after the nearby olive groves. It is a 200 metre-long pebbly beach adhering to the highest ecological and technical standards and it is marked by a blue flag, a symbol of a top-quality beach.