

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MOUNT RUDNIK AND TOURISM

PATRIMÓNIO CULTURAL DO MONTE RUDNIK E TURISMO

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Abstract

Objectives: This study highlights the rich cultural-historical heritage of Mount Rudnik and examines how it can strengthen Central Serbia's tourism offer. **Theoretical Framework:** Drawing on cultural-tourism theory, heritage valorisation and destination branding, the work situates Rudnik within contemporary debates on mountain destinations in post-transition economies. **Method:** We employed a descriptive-analytical method combining desk research, field surveys and analysis of official tourism statistics between 2000 and 2022. **Results & Discussion:** Rudnik contains dozens of archaeological sites, medieval fortifications, sacral monuments and vernacular structures. Visitor numbers peaked in 2008 but remain seasonal, signalling unexploited capacity and a need for product diversification. **Implications:** Findings guide local authorities and tourism organisations in prioritising conservation, interpretation and event programming to extend stays and balance seasonality. **Originality/Value:** The paper systematises dispersed Serbian-language evidence, providing the first English baseline for further research and destination planning.

Keywords: Mount Rudnik. Cultural Heritage. Cultural Tourism. Central Serbia. Destination Development.

Resumo

Objetivos: Este estudo destaca a rica herança histórico-cultural do Monte Rudnik e examina como ela pode fortalecer a oferta turística da Sérvia Central. **Enquadramento teórico:** Com base na teoria do turismo cultural, na valorização do património e na marcação do destino, o trabalho situa Rudnik nos debates contemporâneos sobre destinos de montanha em economias pós-transição. **Método:** Empregámos um método descritivo-analítico que combina pesquisa documental, inquéritos de campo e análise de estatísticas oficiais de turismo entre 2000 e 2022. **Resultados e discussão:** Rudnik contém dezenas de sítios arqueológicos, fortificações medievais, monumentos sacrais e estruturas vernáculas. O número de visitantes atingiu o pico em 2008, mas continua a ser sazonal, sinalizando uma capacidade inexplorada e uma necessidade de diversificação de produtos. **Implicações:** As conclusões orientam as autoridades locais e as organizações turísticas na priorização da conservação, interpretação e programação de eventos para prolongar as estadias e equilibrar a sazonalidade. **Originalidade/Valor:** O artigo sistematiza evidências dispersas em língua sérvia, fornecendo a primeira base de referência em inglês para pesquisas futuras e planeamento de destinos.

Palavras-chave: Monte Rudnik. Património Cultural. Turismo Cultural. Sérvia Central. Desenvolvimento de Destinos.

1 INTRODUCTION

Modern tourism is conceived on the basis of the growing interest of tourists in culture, which results in greater economic effects.



Mount Rudnik is located in central Serbia. It extends in a northwest-southeast direction for approximately 25 kilometers, between the villages of Kikovi in the northwest and Nevada in the southeast, with an average width of five to seven kilometers.

Throughout its existence, the Rudnik mountain experienced several different periods in history. It has a rich history, which altered the mountain's appearance. In one area, over time, an entire region was created based on cultural and historical heritage, making it a significant tourist destination in Central Serbia.

The objective of the work is to bring attention to the significant cultural and historical heritage of the Rudnik mountain to enhance tourism and the tourist offer of Central Serbia.

Around the world, numerous cultural-historical heritages of both cities and mountains are on offer. They were built in different periods, exposed either to degradation or to improvement (Folić-Kurović, Bazić & Bajić-Brković, 1996).

Almost every country has a rich cultural-historical heritage, and its tourist valorisation depends on the ability of that country to commercialise its value.

According to UNESCO, cultural-historical heritage includes:

- Tangible heritage (movable cultural heritage: paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, coins, etc.).
 - Immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, etc.) and underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, submerged ruins and cities, etc.).
 - Intangible cultural heritage (oral tradition, music, dance, rituals, etc.).
1. • Natural heritage (natural landscapes with cultural motifs, etc.) and the heritage of armed conflicts (Krasojević & Đorđević, 2015).
 2. Mass tourism can have a negative impact on cultural-historical heritage (Filipović, 2018). The development of cultural tourism contributes to its preservation. Cultural tourism is a source of tourism income. It is important for the promotion of cultural-historical heritage and for maintaining the cultures of local communities (Filipović, 2018; Vukolić, 2020).
 3. Serbia's cultural tourism is based on the cultural offer of the local community and is intended not only for residents but also for tourists. Serbia is rich in mountains with cultural-historical heritage. Mount Rudnik is one of them.

4. Today, Mount Rudnik is an important tourist destination in Central Serbia. It covers an area of 743.39 km², with 60 inhabited places and 19,029 inhabitants. It has an extremely favourable geographical position, conditioned by the proximity of Corridor 10, the "Miloš Veliki" motorway, the Ibar Highway and the Belgrade–Bar railway.

Rich in cultural-historical sights, Mount Rudnik has the character of a developed tourist destination. Cultural-historical heritage is one of the essential factors in its tourist offer.

Figure 1

*Mount Rudnik – volcanic cone Ostrovica**



2 MONUMENTS OF MOUNT RUDNIK

Over the course of history, a memorial, cultural-historical whole has been created in one area, consisting of immovable cultural goods (cultural monuments, spatial cultural-historical units, archaeological sites, commemorative places), movable cultural goods (works of art and historical objects, archival material, film material, old and rare books). In the same area there are rare examples of vernacular architecture (old houses and watermills, a mountain lodge and secular architecture). These resources stimulate cultural tourist movements and represent various forms of material and intangible culture that originated in different civilisational epochs.

Gartner distinguishes business, historical, ethnic-cultural, friendly, medical, special events, governmental, park, religious and other built attractions (Gartner, 1996).

Numerous cultural-historical monuments testify to the past of various periods. They are situated at their places of origin or kept in special institutions. Almost all periods of cultural-historical development are represented, showing continuous development from Stone-Age culture, through the remains of ancient settlements and medieval necropolises, to the present day.

Archaeological sites, ranging from the earliest times to the modern age, bear witness to the cultural genesis of the peoples who settled here. Prehistoric sites include: Prljuša – prehistoric mining workings on the slopes of Mali Šturac; Krušica in Blaznava; Koletina in Kotraž; Umka in Dobrača; Humka in Bare; Ostrica peak; Livadice and Velika Bašta in Vujetinci; Ostava in Gornja Vrbava; Ivlje in Gornja Crnuća; Livadčine in Ostra; Mađarsko Groblje, Stacionar and Misa on Rudnik. Metal-age (Bronze and Iron) sites are: Manastirine in Dići – metal age; Milića Gradina in Ljuljaci – Bronze Age; Klik in Bečevica – Iron Age; the fortified site Sokolica – Gradina in Ostra – Iron Age; Kliševac in Gornja Crnuća – Iron Age. Classical (Greek and Roman) period sites are: Kneževa Poljana, Alinac, Drenjak and Siga in Vlakča – from antiquity to the Middle Ages. Medieval sites include cemeteries and roadside crosses in Dići; a settlement with churches on Veliki, Srednji and Mali Šturac and in Rudnik; Gradina in Kotraž; Staro Selo in Vlakča; Crkvina in Kamenica, Konjuša, Ljuljaci and Ostra; Savojevac in Ramaća; Crkvine in Jarmenovci; Ribnik in Blaznava; the cemetery in Bare; Jerinin Grad, Sinkalište, Gradina (Ostava), Kli-sura (18-19 c. necropolis) in Gornja Crnuća; Dizaljka in Lipovac.

Figure 2

*Prljuša site**



Memorial tourist values are the most numerous and comprise the remains of material culture from the ancient period, through the medieval Serbian art, to the monumental heritage of the First and Second World Wars. They include:

- Medieval fortifications: the summer palace of Despot Stefan Lazarević in Belo Polje; Ostrovica in Varnice; Gradina in Kotraž; the town of Sokolica in Ostra; the Rudnik fort; and Srebrenica in Stragari.
 - Old roads located in the Kamenica River valley dating from the Middle Ages (connecting the medieval towns of Rudnik and Borač), and in the valleys of the Brezovica and Jaseni-ca rivers towards Jarmenovci (Rakić, 2010).
 - Churches: Mrnjina Church in Bečevića; St Nicholas in Boljkovci; Dormition of the Mother of God in Vlakča; the medieval church in Dići; Dormition of the Mother of God in Jablanica; Holy Mother of God in Jarmenovci; St John Chrysostom in Ljuljaci; Holy Trinity in Majdan; Holy Trinity in Mutanj; St Petka in Ostra; St Nicholas in Ramaća; Misa (remains of a mosque) and St George's Church in Rudnik; Petkovic in Stragari; St Nicholas in Šilopaj; and the Twelve Apostles in Štavica.
1. • Monasteries: Presentation (Vavedenje) in Vlakča; Vračevšnica in Vračevšnica; Nikolj in Donja Šatornja; Lipovac; Masloševac; Davidovica in Rudnik; Blagoveštenje Rudničko; and Voljavča in Stragari.

Figure 3*Blagoveštenje Rudničko Monastery**

2. Monuments and memorials exist in almost every settlement. They include busts (e.g., in Bečevića to HM King Alexander I Karađorđević; in Vračevšnica to the fighter Sreten Živković; in Donja Šatornja to Živko Tomić and Miodrag Simić-Mika; in Rudnik to the fighters Tadi-ja Popović and Žarko Gemaljević; in Stragari to Julijana Ćatić); roadside stone crosses (**krajputaši**) found in numerous villages; and monuments, memorial fountains and plaques dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle and the First World War throughout the area.
3. Old houses: half-timbered **čatmara** houses can be found in Gornja Crnuća (the house of Miloš Obrenović), Manojlovci (the log house of People's Hero Sofija Ristić) and on Rudnik (the William Herman Forest House); other examples of vernacular architecture are present in many villages. Other traditional structures include a blacksmith's shop in Jarmenovci; household compounds, granaries, dairies, a roadside inn in Ugrinovci; and corn cribs.

Figure 4*Prince Miloš Obrenović's Residence**

4. Watermills can be found in Blaznava, Vlakča, Gornja Šatornja; Grabovica, Jablanica, Kamenica, Kozelj, Lunjevica, Ljubičevac, Majdan, Manojlovci, Nevada, Svračkovci and Stragari.

5. Traditional *vanjavice* bread ovens are preserved in Ljubičevac.

Secular heritage (profane architecture) also includes the school building in Bare, the school and teacher's residence in Bečevića, and the monastery fountain in Donja Šatornja.

6. The mountain lodge "Ratko Kuruzović" is located in the Rudnik settlement and is owned by the Mountaineering Society "PTT" from Belgrade.

7. 3. CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MOUNT RUDNIK AND TOURISM

8. Cultural-historical heritage encompasses historic places, localities, traditions and more.

9. "Serbia's cultural tourism contributes to creating a brand and branding Serbia: Serbian culture, hospitality, warm-hearted people inclined to festivity, Serbian art and literature; passion and pride; a blend of traditional and modern" (Vicentijević, 2011).

The development of cultural tourism has spurred the creation of new jobs and income for the local population. Local self-government and tourism organisations should protect and present both tangible and intangible cultural-historical heritage through numerous events, museums, folklore performances, old and artistic crafts, preparation and tasting of local gastronomic specialities, etc.

An example is Mount Rudnik, where many events are organised, such as *Days of Princess Ljubica* in Vračevšnica, *Šilopaj Panorama* in Šilopaj, *Palm Sunday* in Bare, *Dobričin Dawn* dedicated to Dobrica Erić in Konjuša, an art colony in Lipovac, *Šumadija Plum Days* in Stragari, *Bungurijada* in Vujetinci, *Dobračin Days* in Dobrača, *Vidovdan Encounters* – a festival of folk creativity and traditional songs in Rudnik – as well as museum tourism and visits to archaeological sites.

Since the early 20th century Mount Rudnik has been a significant tourist destination with cultural-historical heritage visited by tourists. Today pupils, students, mountaineers, researchers and others visit Mount Rudnik. The tourism potential of Mount Rudnik has not yet been fully exploited.

3 TOURIST TRAFFIC

Mount Rudnik forms a distinct cultural entity, highlighting the historical, ethnological and artistic values of this part of Serbia. Consequently, the mountain registers considerable visitation.

Over the past two decades, an average of about 6,719 tourists per year has been recorded. Annual visitation varies greatly, ranging from 5,992 in 2000 to 12,262 tourists in 2008 (the peak year), dropping to 968 tourists in 2022 (the lowest). These data indicate oscillations that depend on the season.

From 2000 the number of visitors increased until 2008, then declined until 2011 (9,812). Between 2011 and 2014 the number of visitors fell, rising again in 2016 by 1.3 %. From 2016 to 2022 the number of tourists decreased by 6 %.

Table 1

Tourist traffic on Mount Rudnik (2000–2022)

Year	Tourists (total)			Overnights (total)			Avg. nights domestic	
	5.992	5.992	-	44.284	44.284	-	7,4	-
2000	5.992	5.992	-	44.284	44.284	-	7,4	-
2001	5.299	5.299	-	39.601	39.601	-	7,5	-
2002	5.311	5.311	-	39.564	39.564	-	7,4	-
2003	8.816	8.684	132	58.826	57.825	1.001	6,7	7,6
2004	8.334	8.155	179	55.823	55.506	317	6,8	1,8
2005	8.325	8.162	163	53.186	52.829	357	6,5	2,2

2006	9.385	9.015	370	59.706	58.403	1.303	6,5	3,5
2007	11.322	10.558	764	69.660	65.581	4.079	6,2	5,3
2008	12.262	11.415	847	74.585	69.075	5.510	6,1	6,5
2009	9.752	9.045	707	58.710	55.132	3.578	6,1	5,1
2010	7.814	7.178	636	44.647	40.556	4.091	5,7	6,4
2011	9.812	9.301	511	62.071	58.179	3.892	6,3	7,6
2012	8.289	7.818	471	52.397	48.991	3.406	6,3	7,2
2013	7.214	6.670	544	47.117	42.536	4.581	6,4	8,4
2014	3.684	3.287	397	23.293	20.539	2.754	6,2	6,9
2015	4.417	3.967	450	29.662	25.557	4.105	6,4	9,1
2016	5.853	5.445	408	38.129	34.392	3.737	6,3	9,2
2017	4.816	4.568	248	29.550	27.282	2.268	6,0	9,1
2018	4.423	4.423	-	27.542	27.542	-	6,2	-
2019	4.400	4.400	-	26.357	26.357	-	6,0	-
2020	2.150	2.058	92	14.567	12.804	1.763	6,2	19,2
2021	5.906	5.570	336	33.782	30.201	3.581	5,4	10,7
2022	968	769	199	6.138	4.016	2.122	5,2	10,7

Source: Author

Foreign visitors were recorded from 2003 to 2022 (in 2008 and 2019 there were no foreign visitors). Between 2003 and 2008 the number of foreigners increased, while from 2008 to 2022 fluctuations occurred.

The average number of overnights by domestic tourists from 2000 to 2022 shows a slight decline, whereas that of foreigners rose over the period 2003–2022.

Tourists mainly visit Mount Rudnik in spring and summer, usually in the form of school excursions, seminars, and similar trips.

4 CONCLUSION

The cultural-historical heritage of Mount Rudnik forms the basis for the development of the destination, with positive effects on the local population and links to cultural tourism, local hospitality, the history of the people and the gastronomic offer. Developing cultural tourism influences economic effects in tourism and builds the region's image (brand). Cooperation between tourism organisations, the local self-government and local residents should support the functioning of cultural tourism on Mount Rudnik and throughout the region.

For further tourist valorisation it is necessary to monitor tourism trends. The cultural-historical heritage of Mount Rudnik is of national and regional importance.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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