

STARA PLANINA

Sunny side of Serbia



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- Turistička geografija, Prof. dr. Jovan Dinić, Beograd, 1993.g.
- Sajt JP "Srbija šume", www.srbijasume.rs

EXPERIENCE STARA PLANINA AND VISOK

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT STARA PLANINA

Stara Planina stretches its south slopes in throughout north-eastern part of Pirot Municipality, on the border with Bulgaria and it is the biggest Natural resort in Serbia. Stara Planina is reachable from many directions, but the best accessible way is from Pirot area, and that part is also one of the most attractive ones. This is the reason why Stara Planina is a real challenge for mountain climbers, nature lovers, other passers-by and travellers who like to vacation in a domestic environment. The highest peak of Stara Planina - Midžor (2170 m altitude), which makes this mountain one of the highest in Serbia and on Balkan Peninsula is on the territory of Pirot Municipality. There are also other distinct peaks like: Babin Zub, Vražja Glava, Tri Čuke and Krvave bare.

Midžor (2170m) Is the highest peak on the mountain and presents the best way to conquer Stara Planina from the direction of Pirot, particularly from Topli Do and over to the Babin Zub peak. The other direction is via Zavoj Lake, across Topli Do and then over the Babin Zub peak and the third direction is through Gornji Visok and village Dojkinci.

Vražja Glava (1934m)-Stretches towards the





northeast from Midzor and it is on the main part of the mountain ridge. This mountain peak is accessible from the direction of village Dojkinci although the ascend is very steep. The Nature Reserve „Vrazja Glava“ is just below the peak.

Kopren (1963m) - This is the peak with the base that encompasses the Strict Natural Reserve „Kopren“ (it has marked mountain paths)

Tri Čuke (1933m) - This peak is located southeast from Midžor and it is partially located in the Strict Natural Reserve „Tri cuke“.

Bratkova Strana (1943m) The Strict Natural Reserve is on this peak and it contains marked mountain paths.

Krvave Bare (1810m) - The peak contains marked mountain paths.

2. VACATION AREAS

A number of vacation areas on Stara Planina dominate the landscape with the beauty of their ambient, so the local residents are very frequent during the summer period.

PLANINARSKI DOM

Vacation area on **Planinarski Dom** is on 12 km from Pirot, it is at 1080 m altitude accompanied with the Hotel „Stara“ in its vicinity. The vacation area is on the slopes of Stara Planina and



therefore it has rich flora and fauna, at the same time it represents extraordinary ambient for vacation and recreation, the best confirmation for that is a number of well arranged country houses.

VRELO

Vacation area **Vrelo** is located 33 km from Piroć and set in a beautiful environment on 730 m altitude, dominated by Dojkinačka and Jelovička rivers. This vacation area is reachable within 40 minute drive by asphalt road. What makes this vacation area attractive is the possibility for various activities, especially regarding Visočica river gorge with its additional environmental elements. What characterizes this vacation area is opportunity for hiking, relaxation, recreation, hunting and fishing. This area is named after a nearby spring located in a part of the vacation area in the vicinity of village Jelovica. This spring is specific because once a year, more specifically in August, it dries up in approximately the same time for only a few hours.





3.BATHING RESORTS

The bathing resort on the **Zavojsko Lake** is located 17 km from Pirot. You can reach this lake by asphalt road in a 20 minute drive. The most beautiful beaches on this lake in the summer time are near the former village Mala Lukanja, as well as in the other parts of the lake where conditions for swimming are similar. This lake is characteristic for its transparency and purity of water and therefore it provides excellent refreshment during the hot summer period.

As for the accommodation facilities on the coast of the Zavojsko Lake, there is the facility of the diving club “Pirot”, facility of HPP „Kladovo” section Pirot near the dam and worker resorts of the Public Utility Company “Water supply and sewerage” near Velika Lukanja settlement.



4. CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

The wider surroundings of Stara Planina encompass many cultural-historical sites of this area represented by medieval monasteries and churches, built in the period between XIV and XIX century, alongside with many localities with religious characteristics from the period of early Christianity.

Churches and monasteries on Stara Planina:

- St. Peter and Paul Church, also known as the Cave Church, XIII century, village Rsovci
- Monastery of St. George, XIV century- village Temska
- The Holy Trinity Church, XIX century, village Rudinje
- St. Parascheva Church, XIX century, village Brlog
- St. Nicholas Church, XV century, village Dojkinci
- Monastery of St. George, XIV century, village Temska
- Monastery of St. Ilia, XIX century, village Rsovci
- Monastery of St. Mary the Virgin, XVIII century, village Visočka Ržana
- St. John the Baptist Church, built in 1935, village Gostuša
- St. Michael the Archangel Church, XIX century, village Pakleštica
- St. Nicholas Church, built in 1854, village Bela
- St. George Church, restored in 1844, village Slavinja
- St. Parascheva Church, XV century, village Temska
- The Holy Trinity Church, XIX century, village Jelovica
- St. Parascheva Church, XIX century, village Topli Do
- St. George Church, XIX century, village Zaskovci
- St. John Church, formerly Ascension of the Lord, built 1849. village Dobri Do
- St. George Church, built in the late XIX century and early XX century, village Nišor





FORTIFICATIONS CASTLES

- Fortress on Crni Vrh is built in 1892 for defensive purposes from the conquerors, but was never used for that purpose.

5. ETHNOGRAPHIC-TOURISM VALUES (OLD CRAFTS)

Ethnographic Tourism values add to Stara Planina offers and make it even more attractive. This area is characterized by specific customs, language, music, special way of preparing food, folklore, folk costumes, architecture, cultural and historical monuments from different periods, handicrafts, legends and other.

This area is well known for producing rugs, made of wool from sheep bred on Stara Planina Mountain. Rugs are characteristic for their unique patterns, interesting colour range and weaving method. Stara Planina is a place of origin for yellow cheese made in Piroć, white cheese, vurdica, Poglana sausage and some other less known food specialties. Pottery is also among the old crafts connected with the area of Stara Planina and surroundings. In order to promote and improve the ethnographic tourism values of this area a festival "Food from Stara Planina" is held every year in July in village Temska.



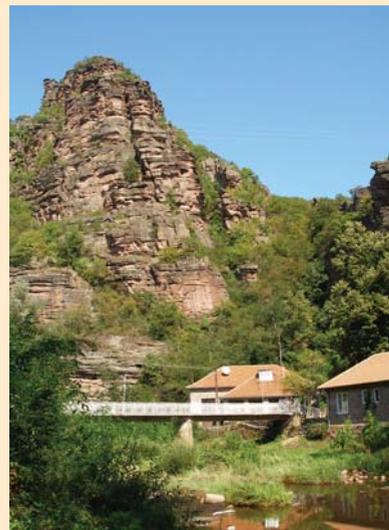
6.CANYONS, GORGES, CAVES

RIVER VISOČICA CANYON

This is one of the most impressive canyons in this part of Serbia with river Visočica flowing through it, as one of Serbian rivers with the greatest drop. The Canyon is very attractive and picturesque, and since it is very hard to describe in just a few words it leaves no other option but to visit and experience it firsthand. The canyon itself is surrounded with inaccessible cliffs reaching a couple of hundred meters in height at some points. This canyon represents a sanctuary for the heart and the soul of any traveller or passer-by.

VLADIKINA PLOČA GORGE

Vladikina Ploca Gorge is located 2.5 km far from village Rsovci. This gorge is very attractive, but at the same time very inaccessible, it stretches all the way to village Pakleštica. The deepest and the longest part of this gorge is called Vladikina ploča, in that part the gorge reaches the dept of 200 m, with extremely steep cliffs. This gorge is rich in flora and fauna. It is reachable only on foot. Every visitor experiences both splendour and awe upon entering this area.





GORGE OF GRADAŠNICA RIVER

Very attractive gorge of this river is over 1 km long with extreme and steep canyon cuts. This gorge is located 4 km far from town, nearby village Gradašnica which is reachable by car, and the rest of the way on foot. A hot spring Dag-Banjica is situated in the very gorge, it is said to have therapeutic effects on skin diseases, stomach illnesses and wounds. There are a few hot springs with the range of water temperature from 12 to 29 C° in the gorge itself and that is the reason why this river never freezes during severe winter. Until now the canyon and hot water are little or not at all exploited both concerning recreation and the development of spa tourism. On one of the hot springs, Public Utility Company "Water supply and sewerage", built a small indoor swimming pool enabling bathing in all weather conditions.



GORGE OF THE ROSOMAČKA RIVER AND „SLAVINJSKO GRLO“

This gorge is made by Rosomačka River which belongs to Visočica river basin. From village Slavinja you can reach this gorge on foot in 15 minutes and the entrance of the gorge hides a rare and attractive natural beauty of otherwise very steep and inaccessible gorge. This gorge is characterized by small round dents - whirlpools that make it even more beautiful. In the vicinity

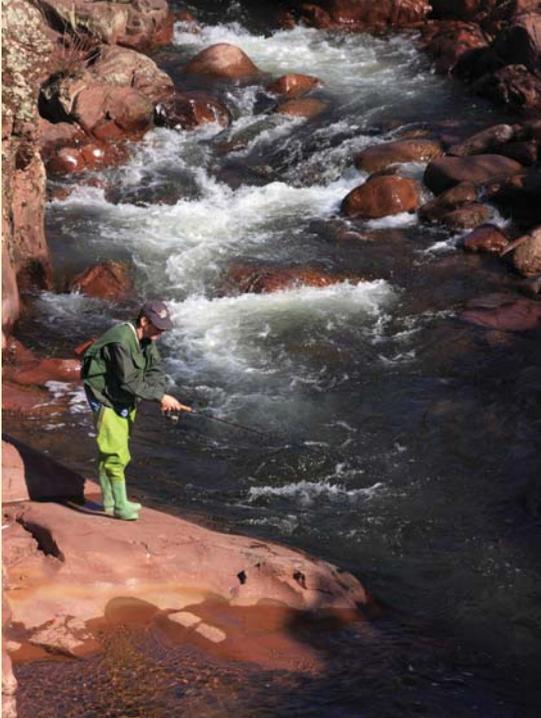
of the gorge there is an old mill which complements the surrounding, and 30m from it is a cave entrance resounding with the flow of the underground river. This cave and the underground water have never been explored. One part of this gorge is accessible only through the river.

TEMAČKA GORGE

The most attractive gorge in this part of Pirot municipality is Temačka Gorge, also called „Little Colorado“. River Temštica runs through this gorge creating cuts and stiff cliffs that are sometimes up to 200 m high. You can reach the entrance of this gorge by car in 30 minutes through an asphalt road. There is a hydro power plant „Temač“ in the gorge itself, built in 1939 together with a workers resort. The area around „Temač“ is also known as a good vacation area.

CAVES VLADIKINE PLOČE

These caves are located in the gorge with the same name between the villages Pakleštica and Rsovci. They are visible above the river bank at the height of 86 m. These caves are reachable only on foot, the names of the caves are: Vladikina Ploča 660 m long, Mišja cave (83m), Vodena cave (63m), cave at the Linden (60m), Toplica cave (35m), Vatrema cave





(22m), Ladna cave (17m), Trifunova pecina cave (15m) and Potpec cave (14m). This cave system is interesting because of the remnants that show evidence of prehistoric man living in them. Most of these caves are unexplored.

7. RIVERS, LAKES, WATERFALLS

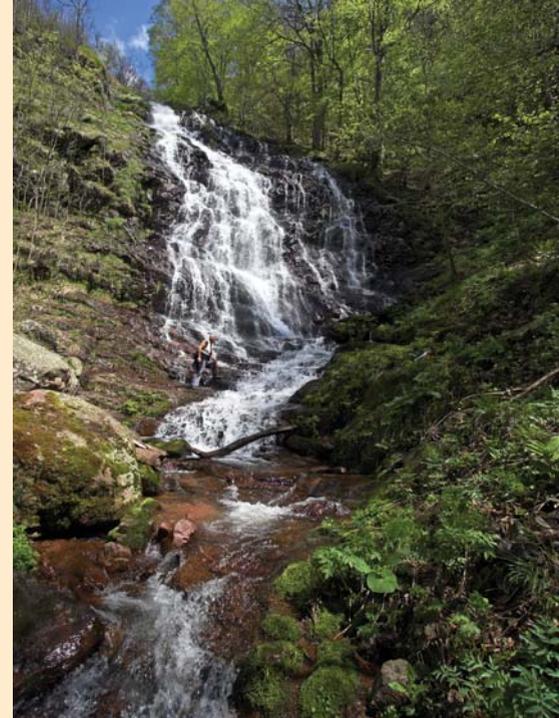
RIVERS

Stara Planina is rich with rivers that provide possibility for development of various forms of tourism, especially fishing and vocational tourism. Power and the roaring noise of these waters in early spring leave no one indifferent; some rivers give the opportunity for rafting, canoeing and spinning. The most important river is Visočica, the mountain tear of Stara Planina, it flows on the south edge of the mountain and it is made of Dojkinačka and Jelovička rivers. River Slavinja flows into river Visočica at about 4 km from Vrelo. From the estuary of Toplodolska River into Visočica it is named Temštica all the way to the estuary with river Nišava. It is one of the richest watercourses on the territory of Pirot municipality since it has a large number of tributaries on its right side.



LAKES

Zavojsko Lake is the only lake on the Stara Planina that belongs to the territory of Pirot municipality, which is not exploited regarding tourism, but it is very attractive for nature lovers and sport fishing. This lake is a product of a landslide that happened near village Zavojsko in 1963 when village Mala Lukanja was evacuated because of the flood. The accumulation of the lake was created as a product of great efforts of numerous people and technology. The lake is 17 km long with average width of 300m and biggest depth of 70m with dam height of 86 m. Zavojsko Lake meets the majority of power supply needs of Pirot area, it is also a beautiful vacation area, a favourite spot for fisherman, and a beautiful beach situated nearby the former village Mala Lukanja is utilized during the summer.



WATERFALLS

Waterfalls are natural attractions, and as such they deserve special attention, it is possible to visit them with the guidance of mountaineering clubs. Some of these waterfalls are: Tupavica near village Dojkinci (about 15m high), Kurtulski skok (27m), Cunguljski skok (42m), Piljski waterfall (64m) that forms cascades (near village Topli Do), and also a number of smaller waterfalls which are even larger during the spring time of the year.





8. FLORA AND FAUNA

According to the Regulation of 1997 Stara Planina Mountain is under protection of the state, and was declared Park of Nature, classified in the first category of protection. All this area has many plant species (1190) or 34% of national flora, including 40 protected plant species that are natural rarities, 18 species under strict protection and many animal species, especially those endemic, that are interesting from the aspect of tourism. Typical endemic plant species are: sundews plant, edelweiss, gentian, white water lily, Pančić wormwood, as well as the smallest pine in Europe, dwarf pine, spruce, white oak, black pine and others.

Stara Planina Mountain has 40% of the total butterfly fauna in the Balkans, 26 species of fish, 6 species of amphibians, 12 species of reptiles, 203 species of birds (grouse, white eagle, golden eagle, bustard, owl) and more than 30 species of mammals. Species present on Stara Planina Mountain are: bear, doe, wild boar, fallow deer, otters, chamois, mole rat, pine marten, wolf and fox.

The following sites are present in the area of Stara Planina Mountain, which belongs to the municipality of Pirot territory:

Strict natural reserves:

- Location "Arbinje" is protected since 1985

under the name of "Smrča", it is the habitat of the mountain spruce

- Location "Tri Čuke", is the habitat of the dwarf pine, spruce, low juniper and blueberry, protected since 1985.

- Location "Bratkova Strana", habitat of grouse, alpine spruce, low juniper and blueberry, protected since 1985.

- Location "Vražja Glava", the habitat of beech tree and mountain maple, protected since 1985

- Location "Kopren" habitat of sundews, protected since 1985.

Natural monument:

-Rsovci - black pine tree, protected since 1985.

9.HIKING, HUNTING AND FISHING

Stara Planina Mountain provides many opportunities for hiking, fishing and hunting. Mountaineering club „Vidlič“ in cooperation with Mountaineering Union of Serbia invests great efforts to facilitate hiking by marking and identification of routes-tracks and paths that allow many lovers of hiking to experience the mountain in the right way. Some of those paths are:

- E4 Topli Do - Pakleštica - Slavinja - Smilovci - Gradina E4

- E4 Topli Do - Pakleštica - Slavinja - Smilovci Gradina

- Piroć - Basarski kamen - Vzganica Pakleštica

- Ponor - Strazna Čuka Tupavica





The exceptional richness of flora and fauna in the area of Stara Planina Mountain provides opportunities for hunting and fishing tourism. Hunting grounds "Old Mountain 2", covering the area of 40,804 ha provide possibilities for hunting: wild boar, deer and roe deer, wolf, jackal, fox, marten, bobcat, skunk, pheasant, grey partridge, pine marten, stone marten, wild goose, wild duck, wild dove, woodcock, quail, etc.

There is possibility for fishing the brown trout, chub, gudgeon, and other species of fish in the fishing area of Stara Planina.

ASSOCIATIONS

PE "Srbija sume", Forest Estate Pirot, 6 Srpskih Vladara St., 18300 Pirot, phone +381 10 342-474, 342-475, 313-801

Mountaineering club "Vidlič", 22 Danila Kiša St., 18300 Pirot, phone 060/345-7893, e-mail: pdvidlic@yahoo.com

Hunters association "Ponišavlje", Trg pirotskih oslobodilaca bb, 18300 Pirot, phone +381 010 321-706

Municipal Organization of sport fishermen „Pastrmka“, (OOSR „Pastrmka“), Ul. Save Kovačevića bb, tel. +381 10 321-006, 18300 Pirot, e-mail: pastrmkapirot@yahoo.com

CSF "Bistro", Nišavski odred section B loc. 28, 18300 Pirot,

10. TRAFFIC CONNECTIONS

Pirot is located in the heart of the Balkans, and connects Central and Mid Europe with the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. One of the branches of the international road route to Serbia - Corridor 10 goes towards Pirot and Dimitrovgrad. The road routes are:

PIROT - BELA PALANKA - NIŠ- BEOGRAD - BUDIMPEŠTA BEČ From Niš E-75 highway engages

PIROT - DIMITROVGRAD - SOFIJA ISTANBUL E-80

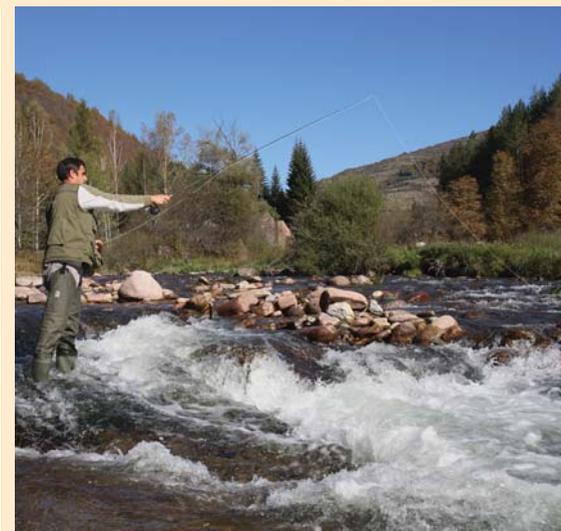
PIROT - BABUŠNICA LESKOVAC M-9 (E-75 highway is from Leskovac)

You can reach Stara Planina Mountain from 3 directions coming from Pirot;

Pirot- Planinarski dom and then through the villages of Mid and High Visok (Rsovc, Visočka Ržana, Slavinja, Vrelo, Brlog, Dojkinci, Jelovica and other)

Pirot- Nišor-Koprivštica- Zavojsko Lake (one direction goes to the dam and the other to the villages Gostuša and Pakleštica).

Pirot-Temska-Topli Do





11.ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

Stara Planina represents one of the most important tourist destinations in Serbia, but there are not enough accommodation facilities. This mountain has a great potential for winter, mountain, recreational, hunt, bicycle, ethno, ecology and rural tourism development, the evaluation and condition improvement of which is currently being implemented with great efforts. There are accommodation facilities in Planinarski dom, Vrelo and some registered households in villages In the area of Stara Planina Mountain, which belongs to Pirot municipality.

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B&B, Konaci " Vrelo"
tel. +381(0)10 2353-453

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