

CITY BREAK TOURISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – CASE STUDY OF SARAJEVO AND MOSTAR

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Abstract: Urban tourism in general with multi-functional nature has a long tradition. Culture and its heritage is confirmed as one of the most important motivation for city trips. A large number of tourists are usually attracted by historic city centres. Elements such as the welcoming attitude of locals and market trends are becoming more important for tourists. Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina can offer both culture and an asset of mentioned positive intangible elements. City break travel has become one of the key drivers of the European tourism growth in recent period. Nowadays, city break tourism is a very important part of the tourist market in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, our knowledge of this important market segment remains relatively poor. Little empirical data specifically relating to city break trips currently exists. In order to set the context for the research, this paper first defines city break tourism and analyzes its main characteristics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A case study approach is used, with the tourist offers in Sarajevo and Mostar being the main focus of the research. As a research framework, comparisons between the mentioned cities and a suggestion for the city break itinerary will be given.

Key words: city break tourism, tourist trends, travel patterns, tourism destinations, Sarajevo, Mostar

INTRODUCTION

Demand for travel to cities has greatly increased over the last few decades. World's cities which attract major tourism flows, combining culture, leisure, business are becoming world's greatest tourism destinations. Short-break holidays like city break trips are an expanding global phenomenon, related to more stressful lifestyles. Bosnian cities don't fail to impress visitors by their scope. Sarajevo and Mostar have all the necessary conditions for the development of urban and city break tourism. In this regard, it is necessary to access the development of above mentioned types of tourism adequately, in order to increase profits and minimize the negative consequences of uncontrolled tourism development.

URBAN TOURISM

UNWTO refers to urban tourism as trips taken by travellers to cities or places of high population density. The duration of these trips is usually short (one to three days) therefore it can be said that urban tourism is closely linked to the short – breaks market (Tourism 2020 Vision, UNWTO 2002). Big cities became important tourism destination during the 1980s (Law, 1996). In this period old industrial cities were losing jobs on a large scale and they started to be aware of themselves as tourist attractions. Cities that reacted to tourism

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phenomenon enjoyed significant economic boost. Tourism potential to regenerate old industrial as well as undeveloped areas began to be considered and governments started to recognise its role in urban economic development (Buckley, Witt, 1985, 1989). City break tourism provided different perspective on the cities. People started to view them as destinations rather than just as generators of travel demand. This dynamic growth has been supported by the increase in low-cost flights. Big European cities started to adapt their marketing strategy to attract a new type of tourism and travel product, city breaks.

CITY BREAK TOURISM

Increase of city break travel presents one of the most interesting developments in urban tourism demand over the past decade. European city break trips have been one of the strongest growth sectors of the outbound travel market (Dunne, 2009). City trips has been boom market segment, which have soared by 58% over the five years to reach a 20% market share. According to World Travel Monitor figures, Paris is the world's top metropolitan destination with 18.8 million international arrivals in 2013, followed by New York, London, Bangkok, Barcelona and Singapore.

There is no commonly recognised definition of what constitutes a city break travel. This fact cause difficulties encountered when examining city break tourism phenomenon. Trew & Cockerell (2002, p.86) point out that the most widely used definition of a city break is, "a short leisure trip to one city or town, with no overnight stay at any other destination during the trip." It is generally agreed that city breaks consist of leisure trips, but the issue of whether this should include visiting friends and family is less clear, because they don't involve no commercial accommodation and therefore need to be distinguished from commercial city breaks.

One of the main characteristics of city breaks is the short stay nature of the holidays (usually between one and three nights). However, city breaks are growing in length, with trips of 4-5 nights or longer (Trew & Cockerell 2002). Growth of Internet usage in the tourism industry contributed to the expansion of city break travel. Through the internet, potential tourists can access information and make bookings which facilitated city break travel.

Also, along with the on-line booking option tourist can also choose city break package holidays by tour operators. Diversity of city break travel packages offered by both specialists and the major generalist operators are constantly growing. Unfortunately for tour operators, Individual product providers like, hotels, rail networks and airlines are also offering their own city break packages. Having looked at the characteristics of city break travel and the main reasons for its growth, the attention now turns to a specific destination – namely Sarajevo and Mostar – to examine the city break phenomenon in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SARAJEVO AND MOSTAR AS A PART OF CITY BREAK TOURS

Sarajevo and Mostar are relatively small when compared to other European cities. Over the past decade, these cities prospered as the city has become increasingly connected into the global flows of technology, capital and people. The main reasons for including Sarajevo and Mostar in city break tours are as it follows:

1. Good geographic position

Geographic positions of Sarajevo and Mostar are perfect for city break tours, as they make an excellent starting point when taking in the entire region of Southeastern Europe or Balkan peninsula. Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia, settled in its central region and it's only 125 km further from Mostar – whose symbol, the Old Bridge, is included on UNESCO's list of protected cultural monuments. Both cities are just a few hundred kilometers away from Dubrovnik and Split, the living museums on the Adriatic coast. All regional capital cities (Zagreb, Belgrade and Podgorica) are only a few hours of ride away.

2. Crossroads of eastern and western culture

For several hundred years, the borders of two great empires, the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian, which represented the two poles of the world at that time – East and West, Islamic and Christian – met in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This left a big mark on architecture and the lifestyle of Sarajevo and Mostar, as the places where Orient met Occident in the heart of the Balkans.

3. Great value for the money

Both cities offer visitors a great value for their money. Whether it's accommodation, visiting attractions, dining, shopping, purchasing souvenirs, taking tours around town etc., tourists can enjoy the superb quality for very reasonable prices.

4. An ideal size for city break tours

Sarajevo and Mostar have an ideal size for city break tours, as they are characterized by a short walk distance between main tourist attractions. Both cities are large enough to provide visitors a lot to see and experience, yet also small and compact enough to get wherever they want on foot. For example, during a ten-minute walk, tourists can visit places of worship for the world's biggest monotheistic religions: mosques, synagogues as well as the Orthodox and Catholic churches. With all of the advantages of urban milieu of Sarajevo and Mostar, visitors have a chance to visit various protected areas with springs, waterfalls, rivers, lakes and beautiful nature landscapes within a 10 minute drive or less than an hour's walk on foot from the city centers.

5. Hospitable and kind people

If the beauty of a city is determined by its inhabitants, then Sarajevo and Mostar definitely rank among the most beautiful cities in the world. The hospitality and kindness of their residents are something that these cities are known for, and their inhabitants will do their best to make a visitor's stay in their town special.

Tourist traffic in Sarajevo and Mostar

The development of urban tourism in Sarajevo and Mostar can be clearly evident from the statistical indicators referred to the number of tourists arrivals and overnight stays, presented in Tab. 1. and Tab. 2..

Tab.1. Tourists traffic in Sarajevo in the period of 2011-2014

Year	Tourists arrivals	Overnight stays of tourists
2011	127.620	249.619
2012	139.796	281.315
2013	170.597	338.877
2014	169.895	334.819

Source: Federal Office of Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015

By analyzing the data listed in the Tab.1., it can be concluded that the number of tourists arrivals and overnight stays in Sarajevo has a tendency to increase in the period 2011-2013. This is especially emphasized in 2013 with the increase of tourists arrivals of 22%, in comparison to the year 2012. In the year 2014, there has been a slight decline of cca. 1% in the number of tourists arrivals and overnight stays, compared to the previous year. The primary reason for this decrease are anti-government demonstrations that took place in February 2014, which had a negative impact on the tourists image of Sarajevo. However, for the first nine months of 2015, the arrival of 162.274 tourists and 322.512 overnight stays has been recorded, with an increase of 27,3% compared to the first nine months of the previous year, indicating that the number of tourists increases again.

Tab.2. Tourists traffic in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton in the period of 2011-2014

Year	Tourists arrivals	Overnight stays of tourists
2011	103.651	251.686
2012	111.676	260.291
2013	123.715	274.640
2014	135.538	277.859

Source: Federal Office of Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015

Data listed in Tab.2. refers to the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. However, Mostar is the carrier of the tourism development of this Canton and therefore, the listed data is considered relevant for the analysis of tourism in this city. The number of arrivals and overnight stays in Mostar is constantly increasing. An annual increase in the number of tourist arrivals has averaged about 8.7%, while the number of overnight stays is slightly smaller, amounting to average of 3%. In order to increase the number of overnight stays, it is necessary to enrich the offer with the additional amenities, and the potential for that is outstandingly well in this area. Some suggestions will be given in the next chapter.

AN EXAMPLE OF CITY BREAK ARRANGEMENTS

Sarajevo city break arrangement

Day 1 - SARAJEVO – arrival

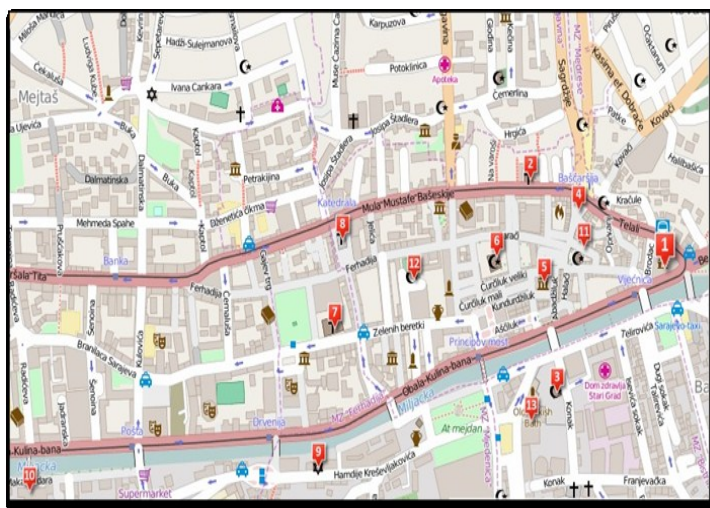
Arrival to Sarajevo. Transfer from the Sarajevo international airport to the hotel. Depending on arrival, refreshment in the hotel and panoramic sightseeing of Sarajevo will be provided. Overnight.

Day 2 - SARAJEVO – loco

After breakfast the group will visit all of Sarajevo famous places starting with the Sarajevo war tunnel museum (800 m. long and 5 m. deep digged with hand tools in 1993. – Sarajevo gate); Vrelo Bosne: The Spring of Bosna, with its natural beauty, emerges at the gate of Sarajevo. A three kilometer long avenue, bordered by plants and sweet chestnuts leads from Ilidža to the source of Bosna. The rest of the tour includes the visit to old Baščarsija Square, Old Orthodox Church, Gazi Husrev-Bey's Mosque, Old Sephardic Synagogue, Catholic Cathedral, Old City hall, Kazandziluk street, Sebilj, Old Jewish Synagogue, Bosnian writers park, Latin Bridge (World War I starting point). Duration of the tour is cca 4 – 5 hours. Lunch or dinner at some of the attractive restaurants, or in a typical Bosnian restaurant with an oriental ambience. Sightseeing of Sarajevo during the sunset and evening is recommended, as well as shopping in and other activities that visitors would like to implement.

Day 3 - SARAJEVO – departure

Breakfast. After breakfast and checking out in the hotel, depending on the timing of departure, transfer from the hotel to the Sarajevo Airport. In the case of having some spare time, some additional attractions that might be interesting for visitors would be offered.



- 1 Vijećnica National Library
- 2 Old Orthodox Church
- 3 Emperors Mosque
- 4 Sebilj
- 5 Brusa Bezistan Museum
- 6 Gazhusrev-bey's Mosque
- 7 Orthodox Cathedral
- 8 Catholic Cathedral of Sacred Heart
- 9 Sepahrdic Synagogue
- 10 Academy of Fine Arts
- 11 Kazandziluk Street
- 12 Ferhadija Mosque
- 13 Turskih Hammam

Fig.1. Top-rated tourist attractions in Sarajevo

Mostar city break arrangement

Day 1 - MOSTAR – arrival

Arrival to Mostar. Transfer from the Mostar international airport to the hotel. Depending on arrival, refreshment in the hotel and panoramic sightseeing of Mostar will be provided. Dinner by the Old Bridge. Overnight.

Day 2 - MOSTAR – loco – BLAGAJ – STOLAC – MOSTAR

Visiting all important cultural and historical landmarks in Mostar downtown, such as The Old Bridge, Bišćevića corner, Koskin Mehmed-Pasha Mosque, Old part of Mostar, Kujundžilik street, Kajtaž house, Karadoz -Bey's mosque, The Museum of Hercegovina and much more. Visit to Blagaj, which is 12 km away from Mostar. After the visit to Blagaj, visit to Radimlja necropolis, recognized as one of the most ornate cemeteries in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Free time. Dinner with live music. Overnight. Duration of the tour is cca 5 – 6 hours.

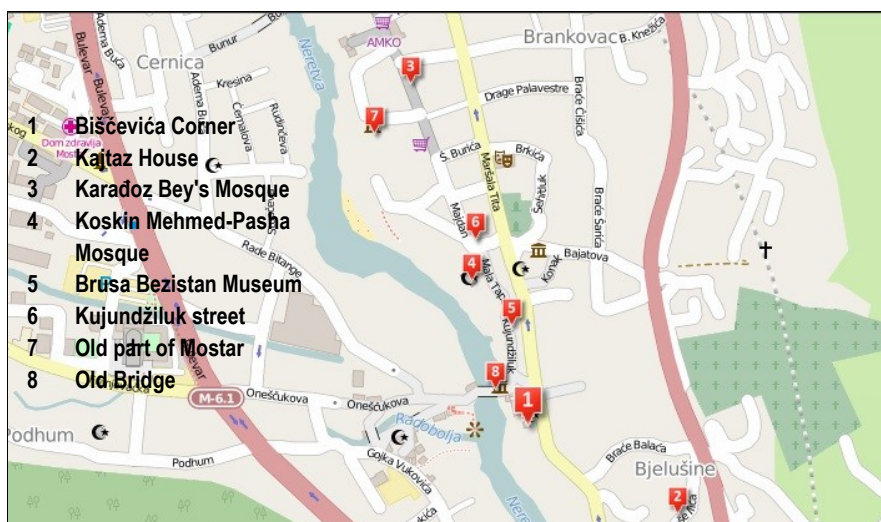


Fig. 2. Top-rated tourist attractions in Mostar

Day 3 – MOSTAR – POČITELJ – HUTOVO BLATO – ETNO VILLAGE HERCEG – MEĐUGORJE – KRAVICE – MOSTAR

Visit to Počitelj - Fortress and the Old Town. Visit to Hutovo blato, a nature reserve of wading birds, with boat ride included. Afterwards, visit to Međugorje, one of the most famous Roman Catholic shrines in the world. After Međugorje, visit to Kravice Waterfalls, stretching over 100m across and tumbling down from the height of 25 meters. Kravice is one of the largest waterfalls in Herzegovina and certainly the most impressive one. The waterfalls have a natural ool dug out at the base of the falls from the constant rush of water. Drive back to Mostar, dinner; Overnight stay. Duration of the tour is cca 6 – 7 hours.

Day 4 - MOSTAR – departure

Breakfast. After breakfast and checking out in the hotel, depending on the timing of departure, transfer from the hotel to the Mostar Airport. In the case of having some spare time, some additional attractions that might be interesting for visitors would be offered.

CONCLUSION

City break tourism has recorded an increasing growth in the global tourism market. An involvement of a number of cities in city break arrangements guarantees a revenue growth, both for the development of tourism and the development of cities in general. The inclusion of cities in city break arrangements should certainly be in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, and access to them should be planned in such manner in order to minimize the negative consequences of touristic development. Sarajevo and Mostar have exceptional conditions for the development of this type of tourism. In fact, both cities have elements of attractiveness (in the field of rich historical and natural heritage), receptiveness (numerous capacities for the accommodation of tourists), and communications (good road network and international airports). In addition, advantageous geographical position allows the inclusion of Sarajevo and Mostar in the international tourist routes. The number of tourists in these cities is constantly growing. However, Sarajevo and Mostar haven't so far capitalised on their significant potential as they combine a very rich historic heritage with all the trappings of pulsating, youthful cities. Since both cities have all necessary conditions for better development, their better valorisation and terms of city break tourism is an imperative in the future period.

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