



# THE LEADERS OF RESPONSIBLE INNOVATIONS

in Agriculture and Tourism

the Region of Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije



This Project is funded by the EU







## CONTENT

Introduction	4
Maja and Milan Kljajić, Agro-Tourism Household „Kuća Kljajića“	8
Gordana and Dragan Dulović, Agro- Tourism Household „Veliki Lug“	12
Slobodanka and Ranko Bulatović, Eko Katun „Goleš“	16
Vesna and Rade Đurišić, Eko Oaza – Suza Evrope Camp Site	20
Dragan Damjanović, Organic Agro-Producer	24
Avdul Adrović, Vrbica Farming Cooperative	28
Janko Šćepanović, Specialised Tourist Guide	32
Ivica Rajković, Specialised Tourist Guide	36
Željko Madžgalj, Caver and Specialised Tourist Guide	40
Saša Jeknić, National Park Biogradska Gora	44
Sabina and Musa Ramović, RAMS Travel Agency	48
Luka Bulatović, Explorer Travel Agency	52



## INTRODUCTION

Montenegro, with an area of 13,800 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 620,000, is a small country. Most of the country consists of mountainous terrain, with some central plains and a narrow strip of coast on the Adriatic Sea. Its north-eastern, mountainous region is divided into seven municipalities: Berane, Bijelo Polje, Kolašin, Mojkovac, Andrijevica, Plav and Rožaje and has two national parks: Biogradska gora and Prokletije. Historically rural, the region saw a migration of the population from the mountainous to the central parts of the country in the sixties, due to increased industrial development. In the nineties, following the collapse of these heavy industries and the onset of the economic crisis, many residents who used to live in, or originated from this region, lost their jobs without being offered any perspective or support to return to the then abandoned agricultural land. The region still remains mostly undeveloped today, and suffers from a high rate of depopulation. The situation has slowly begun to change for the better over the past decade, by the opening up of opportunities for the development of agriculture and tourism and by the adoption of two crucial national documents: the Master Plan and the Regional Development Strategy.

### What are responsible innovations?

Innovation can be viewed as the application of novel or improved ideas, procedures, goods, and services, processes, which bring with them new benefits or quality. In a broader sense, it is any activity that reduces the cost of production and administration, while increasing productivity and efficiency, improving the quality of products or services, increasing safety, improving the placement of the offered goods and services and the like. In short, any action which leads to increased competitiveness.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of social responsibility is recognized by the International Organization for Standardization, the ISO, which issues the internationally recognised standard, ISO 26000.<sup>2</sup> Corporate social responsibility is a concept by which all the factors in the economy take responsibility towards the community and the

environment in their operations. Being socially responsible implies not only active compliance with the spirit of the law, but beyond that, investing in human capital, the environment and the relations with stakeholders.

Responsible innovations are transparent, an interactive process in which societal actors and innovators become mutually responsive to each other with a view on the ethical acceptability, sustainability and social desirability of the innovation process and its marketable products resulting from the process.<sup>3</sup> Innovative companies are companies in a constant process of self-assessment and change, the economy of which is creative, transparent and constantly striving to improve their knowledge, expertise, industry, market and the other factors of development.

### Active, “green” tourism and organic farming in the northeast of Montenegro

Over a fairly long period of time there has been an upward trend in tourism of people wishing to experience holidays involving outdoor activities, and cultural and recreational contents. Most tourists today avoid destinations in over developed resorts which cause damage to the environment. The responsible development concept of “soft” or green tourism is seen as an alternative to mass tourism. One of the prerequisites for the product development of active tourism is the ecological balance. Sustainable tourism in its purest form is friendly to the natural and cultural heritage, with any negative effects on the environment and the local community reduced to a minimum. At the same time, it is able to generate income, and create jobs, without violating the local ecosystem. The development of sustainable tourism is only possible in a local community which understands and supports its principles.

Organic farming is also an opportunity for development in the north-eastern region of Montenegro. The basic preconditions for its development are in place, when one considers the non-contaminated land, the lack of intensive agricultural production and the fact that conventional farming can hardly be competitive against the products from other markets. Organic agriculture in Montenegro has been developing for less than a decade, and has the opportunity to become better placed and enhanced through tourism. The target groups in Montenegro are those tourists who prefer quality and traditional products which are typical of this region, which is why the development potential lies in connecting organic farming and tourism through agro-tourism.

### Socially responsible innovation in the northeast of Montenegro

Each Municipality in north-east of the country possesses the formal requirements necessary for development: already adopted local strategies based on the concept of sustainable development; established institutional support to the SME sector; the fully preserved ecosystem of the region with the management structures of protected areas fully in place. Yet today, the region still has an undeveloped status, and according to official figures only 11.5% of the total economically active population of Montenegro in the area, is currently employed. The mainstays of development should find a way to overcome the situation and bring about a system of long-term development, while breaking with the “the system of survival” in which the region finds itself today. To achieve a more intensive form of development, particularly of the strategic sectors such as the agriculture and tourism, it is necessary to work on the weaknesses of all stakeholders, which are reflected both at the structural and the functional levels. Some of them are the underdeveloped capacities of local governments and tourism organizations; weak entrepreneurial awareness; poor inter-connections and the lack of many professional associations; insufficient use of information technologies and so on.

In Montenegro, the concept of the responsible business practice of innovation is relatively new and unknown. The purpose of this brochure is to present individ-

uals, small family firms, micro and small businesses and public institutions of the north-eastern region of Montenegro, who may be examples to their communities of how to convert development opportunities into successful businesses. They are also examples of good practice of responsible innovation in tourism and organic agriculture. The selected entrepreneurs boast a healthy self-confidence and ambition, which form the basis for the positive perception of their own capabilities and resources and how to turn them into opportunities for the development of both new and existing businesses. In the process of innovation, in both the day-to-day operations and at the strategic level, these prominent entrepreneurs cooperate with many institutions and organizations responsible for the development at the local and national levels. In parallel, they are constantly working on improving their own business skills and the application of information necessary to achieve the quality standards of innovation to which they aspire. In addition to these features, their hard work, years of operation, dedication to what they do, ethics and understanding of market needs, make these individuals extremely productive. According to the results achieved and together with all these other reasons, they may be regarded as leaders in the areas of employment and in a much broader sense, future development.

1 <http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inovacija>

2 <http://www.odraz.hr/media/21845/dop.pdf>

3 FaRIIn brochure, [www.farinn.eu](http://www.farinn.eu), p. 2



## Maja and Milan Kljajić

Agro-Tourism Household “Kuća Kljajića”

*“I cannot imagine a family home without children, honey and raspberries.”*

**Maja Kljajić**, a housewife from Lubnice

The Kljajićs, Maja and Milan, and their four children live in Lubnice, an old picturesque village some ten kilometers from Berane. If there is a place where Montenegrin village tradition continues hand in hand with our modern times, then it is to be found here in this family. When you first meet them, you discover that they emanate something almost biblical. Milan is a beekeeper and a carpenter and he is hardworking, astute and witty. Maja is a housewife, always smiling and filling every corner of their home with her intense energy and profound love. She grows organic fruit and vegetable in the garden for their children, and she takes anything left over to the market for sale. When she talks about preparing food, and the different dishes she likes to make, it is easy to see that her love for her children is embodied in everything she cooks. She is in love with her small raspberry plot as well. During the conversation, the Kljajićs happily reveal that each of them carries out a traditional role. Thus, when Maja spoke about herself she said: “I know what is like for us women, so, when I draw for my children, I always sketch a woman, her apron and pans, soups and pies”.

However, what is striking with this family and what can be immediately noticed is their open-mindedness towards change. Anyone who is familiar with the mentality of the Montenegrin village knows that change is not always easily accepted. Milan and Maja are partners in a project arranged by the Bjelasica, Komovi, and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency. Milan is involved in a project aimed at the branding of regional agricultural products, in the capacity of an organic beekeeper. He first learned beekeeping from his grandfather and has some 100 hives at present. As



soon as organic beekeeping started to be recognized as important, he did not oppose the introduction of that new practice and is now one of three newly certified organic beekeepers. He proudly explains that even more such beekeepers will emerge very soon, as there are others who are making the transition and are about to receive their certificates.

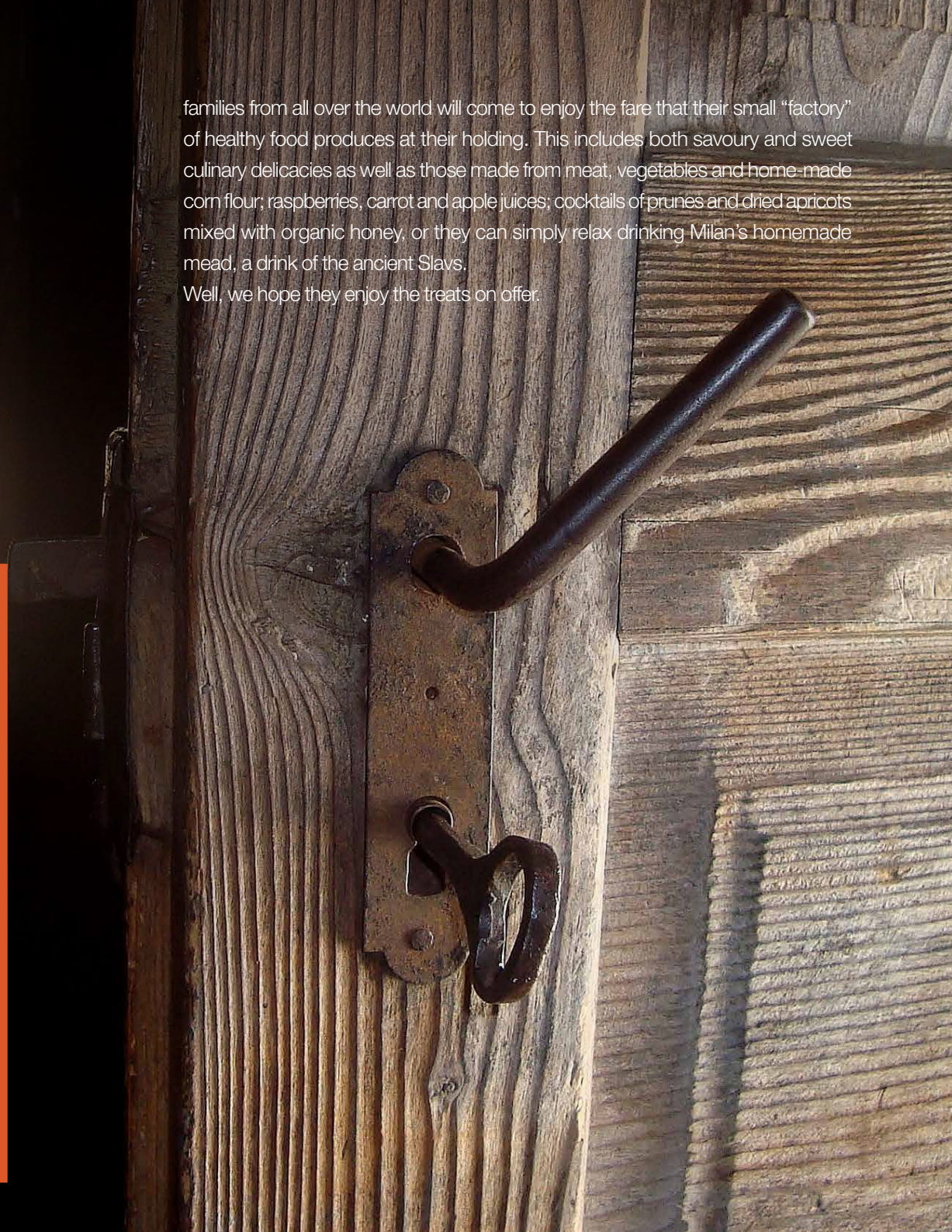
Owing to the unpolluted soil, and the scarcity of industry and intensive agricultural production, organic honey-producing has a realistic future within the development of agriculture in Montenegro. It indeed requires extensive preparations and know-how on the part of keepers involved in the certification process – and many have not yet prepared themselves for this. Therefore, Milan has an almost missionary role in this process, as an example of good and successful practice.





The Kljajics' holding is sheltered by a hill and a river, just like the traditional rural holdings we see in children's drawings. In the yard next to the house where they live, there is the preserved old family house that has been converted into an ethnographic museum this year. In it, one can find a kitchen with its old wooden dining table and chairs made long ago by Milan's father, and the children's cradle and the sheet-metal wood burning stove, the beds are covered by woven bedcovers and the bed linen embroidered with small smiling angels. Recently, and with the support of the Regional Development Agency's Agro Tourism Project, the house has been opened up to tourists. Its reconstruction was based on Milan's own vision, one that he originally proposed as the Project for Providing Lodgings in Authentic Rural Houses for Eco-tourists, through the National Forum for Green Ideas of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The Project granted them its premier award, a grant that made it possible for them to reconstruct the house according to their own ideas. Now, when Maja thinks about the future, she speaks of Lubnice as a place where

families from all over the world will come to enjoy the fare that their small "factory" of healthy food produces at their holding. This includes both savoury and sweet culinary delicacies as well as those made from meat, vegetables and home-made corn flour; raspberries, carrot and apple juices; cocktails of prunes and dried apricots mixed with organic honey, or they can simply relax drinking Milan's homemade mead, a drink of the ancient Slavs. Well, we hope they enjoy the treats on offer.





## Gordana and Dragan Dulović

Agro- Tourism Household “Veliki Lug”

*“Even though we have our holding and there is always so much work to be done, whenever I am invited, I am ready to attend a training event because I know it will, one way or the other, be useful for me in the tourism business that we have started here.”*

**Gordana Dulović**, a housewife from Gornje Lipovo, Kolašin




In the opinion of many, Gornje Lipovo is one of the most beautiful Montenegrin villages and consists of only some thirty households. It is situated on the edge of the Lipovo Valley, alongside the road that runs next to the Plašnica River and is surrounded by the high Sinjajevina, Morača, Vučje and Bjelasica mountain ranges. Why is this village so beautiful? Well, there are few places like this which are so blessed by mountain ranges that are endowed with such gorgeous natural beauty which during a sunny day, makes the Valley look like a large glittering amphitheatre. The village has preserved its old-time feel, intertwined with traditional Montenegrin architecture and, for those who really appreciate this, traveling through the village is nothing but a delight. Gornje Lipovo is almost empty during the winter time; however, during the summer, when the families from the Valley return, it is very lively, echoing with the laughter of children playing. This has always been a hardworking place, populated by people living on the fruits of their labour. Just like many villages in Montenegro, it has had to face considerable population migration to the nearby towns and cities. Although crowded with children in the past, the one-hundred-year-old school building now educates only a few pupils. In the fields around, the for-sale advertisements clearly show that many do not wish to come back again.

This is not the case when it comes to the Dulovići. At their large family holding positioned at the very end of the village, their old family home stands firm as the guardian of the property. Every summer, Dragan and Gordana and their five kids come back there. Gordana cannot stand the year-round restraints of urban living, while Dragan is relaxed back home as he like others, is skilled in wood processing and constructing roofs from shingles. Every day, they both have a lot to do, since life in the countryside is laborious.





A scenic mountain landscape with a wooden planter box in the foreground. The planter box is filled with vibrant orange and yellow nasturtiums and tall pink flowers. The background features a lush green valley, dense forests, and rugged mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The potentials for tourism related activities are abundant in this area. The mountain paths leading to Jablanov Peak, Vučje all pass through the village, as do the growing number of cycling tours. Therefore, the Dulovićs, supported by the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency's Agro Tourism Project, have adapted their old house and its rooms to be suitable as accommodation for guests who, in addition to lodgings, are always offered delicious home-cooked meals. Gordana, who always works as hard as a bee in a beehive, never missing any opportunity to enrich her knowledge and to develop the family business. She is constantly motivating the members of her family to make good use of their knowledge of the English Language and their computer literacy to attract even more tourists to their happy home.



## Slobodanka and Ranko Bulatović

Eko katun "Goleš"

*"Families come, take some sandwiches and ask if they can rest for a moment or two in front of the house and have some tea. I have never turned anybody away from my doorstep. I offer them fresh home-made tea and sit with them for a while until it is time for them to leave. Of course, I do not charge them for the tea; each guest who comes to my home can drink as much as tea as they like."*

**Ranko Bulatović**, a farmer from Goleš, a summer hamlet (katun)



For a very long period of time, throughout the mountainous areas of Montenegro, most of the population was involved in cattle breeding. In order to find better pastures in the hot summer, it was customary in that season to take the cattle to the high plateaus that have an abundance of grass. Each clan used to have its own place high up in the mountains, where they built small huts which were enough for a simple way of life and for sleeping, and during the day they would take care of their livestock. Around the main building they constructed a number of outhouses for a range of activities such as boiling the milk and then pouring it into shallow wooden milk-setting bowls to make cheese and later skimming the cream to make kaymak. These places gradually grew into small settlements, or summer hamlets. It is known that some of them had been constructed as early as the 12th century. These hamlets were left uninhabited during the winter, and the families from the valleys would bring them back to life at the start of the next summer and remain there until its end. "The idyllic way of life in the summer hamlet, full of joy and delight, was very familiar to those who lived it. The children used to play together, while the adults used to have frequent evening gatherings in one of the huts. During those gatherings, the women would knit, spin some wool and

then comb it, while the young were playing their games, and there was singing, dancing and story telling until dawn."

On the slopes of Bjelasica mountain there are summer hamlets that are still alive, which continue the way of life from the past, all without electricity and the many other technological devices that we are now accustomed to in the towns and cities. One of these summer hamlets is Goleš, where several families live. One of them is the family of Ranko Bulatović, a farmer who is, in his village called Trebaljevo, where he has lived for most of his life, well known for the quality of his potatoes. In the summer, as is the custom, he and his family go up to the summer hamlet. This is the place where his ancestors have been coming to for centuries. His family is a hardworking one and is much appreciated for the quality and purity of the food they produce.





If while hiking around Biograsko Lake, you, as a lover of nature, find yourself walking along one of the well marked hiking trails leading uphill, it will take you some two hours to reach the idyllic plateau that is the location of his hamlet set at an altitude of some 1,600 metres above sea level. From there, the marked hiking tracks go further on in only two directions, either to the Vranjak summer hamlet or to the Crni Vrh mountain top. Goleš is perfect for a relaxing break and it is a chance to regain your strength by tasting the delicious home-made food prepared by Ranko's wife Slobodanka, such as baked and boiled-in-milk lamb, porridge (called cicvara), bread-mash (popara), and a local speciality named kachamak, home made cream, home-made cheeses, blueberry juice, and honey. If you wish to stay overnight, they have five eco-huts with two beds each and one eco-hut with five beds. Despite having no connection to the electricity grid in the area, their huts are illuminated by energy saving electric bulbs that are fed by solar-powered cells. The same cells ensure that hot water is always available. Ranko was the first person in the summer hamlet to embrace this energy supply innovation, and now the other villagers have followed his lead.

The development of tourism in this area of the north of Montenegro, based on the principles of sustainable development, has been ongoing thanks to enterprising householders like Ranko, on the one hand, and to donor support from Austria and the USA on the other. The Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency has launched projects that have stimulated the beginnings of the revitalization of these mountain areas. These projects adopt the same integrated approach to rural development that brought the National park Biogradska Gora back to life, initially by constructing a network of hiking trails and their accompanying sign posts. The future for the summer hamlets looks bright





## Vesna and Rade Đurišić

Eko Oaza – Suza Evrope Camp Site

*„When I originally started this business, I thought I would not be able to cope with so many bureaucratic obstacles. But I told myself that God knew I was a decent man and I was confident in his power.”*

**Rade Đurišić**, the owner of the Eko oaza - Suza Evrope, camp site



Rade Đurišić worked repairing and maintaining the Mojkovac-Žabljak regional road linking the two National Parks situated in the north of Montenegro, namely Biogradska gora and Durmitor with the River Tara Canyon (protected by UNESCO). In one of the large fields next to the road, right by the River Tara, at a distance of some twenty-five kilometers from Mojkovac and forty-three kilometers from Žabljak, there is his home where he lives with his family, his wife Vesna and their two children. Even as a small boy, he used to see campers stopping here and pitching their tents to stay for a couple of days. This was the origin of his idea to set up a small business and open an eco-camp. But while striving to obtain a license to operate, he had to endure everything between the bureaucratic hammer and the official anvil.

Camping is among the latest tourism products offered on the tourist menu of Montenegro's northern region. Nowadays, well developed campsites are on offer for the majority of tourist categories and, recently, scenic route guides have been made available for Montenegro, which are intended for both caravan owners and for other motorized nomads.

(<http://www.montenegro.travel/me/panoramskim-putevima-crne-gore>)

However, when it comes to attractive privately owned camp sites situated within National Parks, the application regulations have not yet been harmonized and

effectively regulated and the owners must frequently overcome numerous obstacles in order to obtain a license to operate.

The Eko oaza - suza Evrope, camp is situated in a large mountain field very near to the banks of the River Tara. It is able to accommodate different categories of tents and caravans and features four en-suite Eko oaza - suza Evrope, bungalows. From the camp it is an 8 kilometer hike to the stunning Zabojsko Lake, or they can tour Crne Pode, a unique rainforest reserve, which is under the protection of UNESCO. The camp's services include local dishes prepared and produced at their family holding. When you search for in one of the Internet browsers, the first link to appear will be Lonely Planet. This renowned publishing house has classified the camp into the group of their favourites. It is also on the ADAC List of recommended camp sites for caravan tourists. What makes this eco-camp so special? The secret is in





Rade and Vesna's hospitality, openheartedness and kindness to all visitors. They consider tourism as a meeting - and making - friends opportunity. That is how, as Rade says, Europe and the whole world have come to his beloved home. For him it is the usual practice to sit with his guests on the terrace, drinking coffee and home-made brandy, or the whole family will join their guests in sitting around the camp fire. He says that he is always humbled when checking his "Inbox" during the Christmas and New Year season as he often finds more than five hundred seasonal greetings sending him and his family best wishes and recalling fond memories of both their hospitality and the special time spent in their camp.



## Dragan Damjanović

### Organic Agro-Producer

*"I have been producing healthy food for my own use and for my friends forever. I love organic food. The key is in spending time with nature, these are unbreakable ties"*

**Dragan Damjanović**, a farmer from Mojkovac

You cannot get to know our host, Dragan Damjanović, without the broader story of the development of organic agriculture in Montenegro. A former military chemist, he turned an important page in his career by returning to his hometown, Potrk, on the family farm located in the "Centre of the world - Svevide", surrounded by the mountains of Bjelasica, Pešter and Komovi. At 1,034 metres above sea level and on 7 acres of unspoiled land, clean air and water, Dragan grows organic fruit and vegetables of superior quality. Using these raw materials he produces dried and candied fruits, fruit brandy, jams, sweets, marmalade and much more.

The world organic food market is worth about 50 billion dollars. The greatest demand for this food is in Europe and North America. This food does not contain any pesticides, has a lower content of nitrates, heavy metals and unwanted substances and is full of much more desirable ingredients; essential amino acids, enzymes, vitamins, minerals, unsaturated fatty acids and, as a result enhances the vitality of the body.

While 0.4% of the total agricultural area has been given over to organic food production in Montenegro, the average in the EU is 4.5 percent. It is estimated that Montenegro has the potential to develop fully organic farming on 114,000 hectares of clean land. Ten years ago, its development began in small farms that were operating in a relatively well-preserved environment. Organic production is not



merely a return to the agriculture of our grandparents but a strictly legally controlled product, right across the stages of preparation and distribution, which includes a number of controls and inspections before the award of the final certificate. Agricultural producers in Montenegro now receive the maximum level of support for the development of organic agriculture, at the municipal, national and EU levels. Apart from the annual subsidy to producers who have started production, all the farmers who want to become certified by the authorized body, Monteorganica, can undergo the full licensing process for free. But, regardless of all the support and expectations, the interest from farmers is still not so great. Is it because of the traditional conservatism, or because of the overlong and for some complicated procedures, prescribed by the EU? Until today, only one hundred and eighty producers have applied, while twenty have obtained full certification.







Dragan Damjanović was recently elected as the President of the National Association of Organic Farmers in Montenegro. For this kind of trust from the members of the Association, he can thank his twenty years of experience in dealing with organic farming, and his great knowledge and exploring spirit, which have led him through this field. He shows his farm to friends and interested parties with the passion of a dedicated man, proud of the results of many years of effort. Any man who loves what he does never keeps that knowledge to himself, but would rather share it selflessly. So it is with Dragan, who does not hide the fact that one of his missions in life is to expand and strengthen organic farming.



Today, while it is still hard to break through the barriers and export to the EU, excellent opportunities for the marketing of organic products in the domestic market are in to be found in specialized distribution channels and tourism. Dragan's family has accepted this opportunity and have built tourist apartments with a swimming pool in Svevide, in addition to their organic agriculture. His products are now available to all consumers via the Internet and in all the specialty health food stores throughout Montenegro. There is no problem at all with sale or inventories, Dragan says.



## Avdul Adrović

### Vrbica Farming Cooperative

*"We hope for the better times, when we will be able to export our products, as the Montenegrin market is too small for us. The crisis has taken its toll; otherwise we would already have set off to conquer the neighboring markets by now"*

**Avdul Adrović, a farmer from Petnjica**

**A**vdul Adrović is one of the few Montenegrin business leaders who can boast of thirty years as the head of a successful company. He is employed at the farming cooperative Vrbica, from Petnjica. It was established in 1984 by fifty farmers. In the nineties, the cooperative had to go through a series of crises caused by hyper-inflation, war and the emigration of the local population, to start again from scratch in 2000, with two hectares of land and a tractor. Today it brings together a hundred and twenty members, and has now more than 150 hectares in the Municipalities of Bijelo Polje, Petnjica, Berane and Rožaje, Koritska Visoravan and part of the Pešterska Visoravan. The efforts of the cooperative are centred on the production of seed potatoes, cabbage, onions, corn, wheat and a series of alternating crops: buckwheat, barley, oats and rye.

Avdul Adrović, after graduating in agriculture, returned to the village of Vrbica, his home, which is located in the Municipality of Petnjica, popularly known as Gornji Bihor. When you meet him, you get the impression that you have met a real country gentleman, as he possesses the characteristics of a man whose actions stem from his good will, and sense of civility, someone who does not boast or brag about his possessions and achievements, and for whom action speaks louder than words. He says he always is sorry to see his countrymen leaving their homes as he believes



that the land there is God-given, unpolluted and fertile, and the clean air and the altitude of 850m above sea-level, perfect for organic production.

In 2007, the Cooperative, Vrbica, was among the first to be entered into the Register of Organic Producers in Montenegro. Ten years ago they began the serious production of buckwheat and today they are well-known producers of this cereal, popular as a very healthy food. Their flours have been exhibited at most agricultural shows in the region and in the city of Nuremberg in Germany. Every year the cooperative comes back with special prizes and recognitions of its high quality produce, awarded by experts from the Biotechnical Faculty in Podgorica. Farms in the cooperative provide regular summer work experience to students from that Faculty and to local students from Petnjica, who following their curriculum, are required to attend practical classes twice a week.





The market for the products of the cooperative is now well developed and they can be found both in the growing number of specialized health food stores and the large supermarket chains of Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo. They have received great support in the marketing of their products from the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency during the implementation of the Best of our mountains project. The project dealt with the branding of regional agricultural products. In addition to packaging design and logos, the farmers also received support in marketing and promotion in the markets of Podgorica, Budva and Tivat. The cooperative has been technically supported by USAID and the Danish Government, through a project aimed at strengthening organic food production in Montenegro.

Avdul's plans to further improve the operations of the cooperative speak volumes to his creative fervor and desire. They are waiting for the IPARD certification to be able to expand into final processing, as EU firms are already demanding finished organic products from them. Avdul plans to open new mills on the waters in his homeland, next to which he would build restaurants, where tourists would be served only domestic specialties, and pasta and pastries made of buckwheat.

If only there were more such leaders and zealous workers in Montenegro....





## Janko Šćepanović

### Specialised Tourist Guide

*„While guiding a group, I always give priority to the presentation and energy I deliver to the tourists. I would send this message to young tour guides, they are not to be afraid either of departing from the usual guiding practice and monotonous texts, or, of giving their work a personal touch, improvising or being creative and interesting“.*

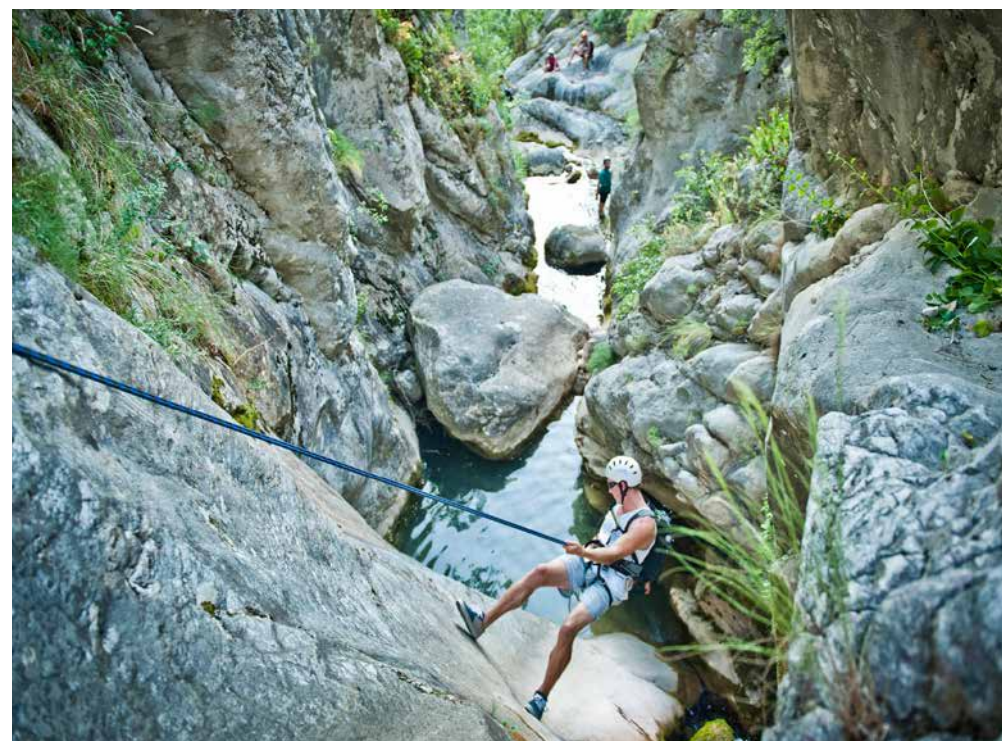
**Janko Šćepanović**, a tourist guide from Kolašin



This open-minded young man from Kolašin, a prospective teacher of history and geography, carries within himself a combination of the urban and highland elements of Montenegro. He grew up within the milieu of the mountain villages and he began walking on skis. Like a large number of his peers from the northern region, he has made good use of the last ten years of tourism development.

In 2005, when Janko started working, tourism in the northern region was rather undeveloped. The gorgeous intact nature including the high mountain ranges of Durmitor, Sinjajevina, Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, with their white water mountain rivers remained largely untouched. The generation of young people who grew up after the great crises of the end of the last century was in search of an opportunity different to what had been available to their fathers. What the majority of the young people of this region had in common was their love of winter sports, mountain climbing and rafting on the River Tara. During these years, two parallel movements were taking place in Europe, both capable of impacting on the tourism market. One was the return to healthy lifestyles and the other was the industry of extreme adrenaline sports. Tourists who had earlier just come to Montenegrin beaches from the West and from Russia began to change their habits and, consequently, they started demanding active holidays featuring a variety of activities.

The tourism actors at that time did not have the skills to meet their demands. In order to respond to the situation, the competent institutions in charge of tourism development, in cooperation with donor and non-governmental organizations from Austria, Germany, Italy, Holland, Luxembourg and the USA, began during the following decade to implement a number of brand new development projects. Despite the fact that there were organized sport associations in each town, there was a shortage of efficient local partners well enough trained to put into practice the diverse active and adventure tourism projects. At that time the lack of local tourism organizations and basic tourism infrastructure was obvious, as was the absence of tourist signs of all kinds to help ensure the safe movements of tourists through the mountains. A network of well-trained tourist guides and specialised travel agencies did not exist. Over the next decade, the Northern Region began to awake from its slumber.





Almost from day one, Janko Šćepanović has been involved in a variety of specialised training courses designed to strengthening the abilities of the local population to deliver services in active outdoor tourism. He has completed more than fifteen courses, among which some organized by the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency tailored to train mountain guides. He is an excellent English speaker as well. He is relentless and innovative in seeking out new tours to offer; he guides hiking and mountain climbing tours, mountain cycling, free climbing, rafting, kayaking, canyoning, and adventure tours. During the winter, he works as a guide for snowshoeing, Nordic and Telemark skiing, cross-country skiing and snowboarding. Over the last few years he has also been guiding water sport tours. As a result, he now guides tourists from the seaside to the mountains and is helping to shape Montenegro as a unique tourism destination.

Janko is very aware of the need for sustainable development and promotes his vision of Montenegro, in which the tourism product will never become standardised and alienated from real life and in which the level of professionalism will never undermine the authenticity and honesty of the citizens. He loves his home town of Kolašin, in which he and his friends have made the artificial rock situated in the center of the town suitable for free climbing.



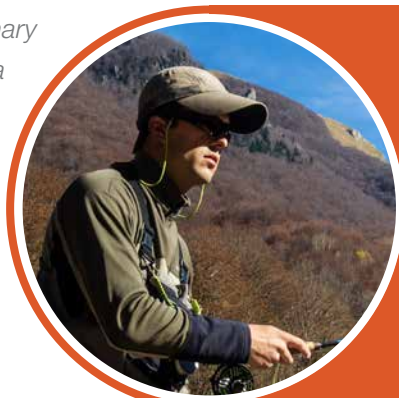


## Ivica Rajković

### Specialised Tourist Guide

*„Fly Fishing” has nothing to do with ordinary fishing. It’s all about feeling like you are a part of nature while fighting with the fish you are trying to catch. It is about trying to outwit each other – if you catch it, you will let it go in order to start a new round of battles.”*

**Ivica Rajković**, a member of the national fly fishing team from Kolašin



It is special and complex that relationship between a man and the fish. From the earliest times in the history of the world, our survival has been dependent on them; like mythical beings, they were painted on ancient stone walls; they symbolized Jesus Christ in Early Christianity; this relationship has been described on the pages of literature; it is an archetypal symbol of spirituality, and, according to certain interpretations, we are living in the Age of Pisces. In order to understand a fisherman who is prepared to stand in his waders in cold water and waits for hours for a fish to bite, you have to bear in mind the following.

Ivica Rajković is a gentle young man radiating calm and he speaks kindly and in a sophisticated manner. He grew up in Kolašin, where he used to go fishing on the River Tara with his father. He is representative of the new generation of Montenegrins who respect nature and have a holistic attitude towards it. His dream is to bring fly-fishermen from all over the world to his home town, since he believes that, like Slovenia, Montenegro can generate a decent income from these anglers that belong to the higher income class of guests and who, through their behavior towards nature and their awareness of the significance of protecting it, make up a significant portion of sustainable tourism.

In order to present the potential of fly fishing tourism, Ivica regularly participates in regional and international Internet Forums in which he details, in his fluent English, to all the other enthusiasts like him, the beauties of the mountain rivers of his home. There are many opportunities here for this type of business. If only our townspeople and the competent authorities had a higher level of awareness of the importance of preserving the waters and if the fish stock enjoyed better protection against poachers, then the members of his Fishing Association and all of those managing the waters of Montenegro would have to make less efforts to protect the fishing areas intended only for fly-fishing.

Nowadays Montenegro has several clubs that gather fly fishermen together and the best-known fly-fishing areas are to be found in Plav, Berane, Andrijevica, Kolašin







and Mojkovac. The first fly fishing area in Montenegro was established at the initiative of the Kolašin Sport Fishing Club. In cooperation with, and within the territory of the Biogradska Gora, National Park, and supported by the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency, a new 5 km long fly fishing-area has been established, which is a perfect place for year-round fly fishing. It now only needs a small investment in basic infrastructure such as pathways, access to rivers and the unavoidable rubbish bins, along with a marketing campaign, to place this fly fishing area among the best at the regional level. The area also has well maintained roads and a camp site nearby.



## Željko Madžgalj

### Caver And Specialised Tourist Guide

*"Nowadays, only cavers know how the olden European seafarers used to feel when, in the Middle Ages, they were discovering new continents, since involvement with caving is the easiest and best way to feel that passion of explorers."*

**Željko Madžgalj**, a journalist and a caver from Bijelo Polje



It is twelve years since Željko Madžgalj, a journalist from Bijelo Polje entered by chance and without any experience into the Cave above Vražji Firovi, which is near his home town. From being purely an amateur who had accidentally discovered one of the passions of his life to becoming a professional, was not a long journey. So far, he has explored and described in his caving diary more than 45 kilometers of caves in Montenegro.

Due to the topography of the limestone terrain on which it is situated, Montenegro has a large number of caves with horizontal and vertical passages and caverns. Until now, several thousand have been explored, while the number that is thought to exist is much greater and it is widely considered that there are more than ten thousand. Some of them, like Đalovića Klisura together with the Cave above Vražji Firovi and Novaković's Cave have already been proclaimed as protected natural monuments. Numerous caving expeditions from Europe and the rest of the world have been exploring Montenegro for a very long time. Regardless of such a large number of caves, there are not a great number of enthusiasts from within the country. So far, only eight caving clubs have been registered, situated in Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Nikšić, Podgorica, Kotor and Herceg Novi, Berane and Mojkovac respectively, with some thirty active members in total.

Caves are ancient treasures preserving data from the most distant history of the

Earth and of its geological composition and origins. They are the most vulnerable elements of natural systems and, for that reason they should be protected by special environmental protection measures. The fact that, until recently, caving was almost completely marginalized by the broader social community makes Željko's efforts very important and pioneering. In recent years, in cooperation with his caving colleagues, Željko has systematically organised the manner of dealing with this branch of science. After many years of research he has succeeded in completing a full description of the caves in the Regional Caving Sites Register for the Municipalities of Berane, Petnjica, Kolašin, Mojkovac and Bijelo Polje (with the assistance of the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, Regional Development Agency). The database now includes a total of 330 regional sites. These explorers who compiled the register were the first to explore almost half of these caves. The Register was created using a model that is usual in the EU, in both hard

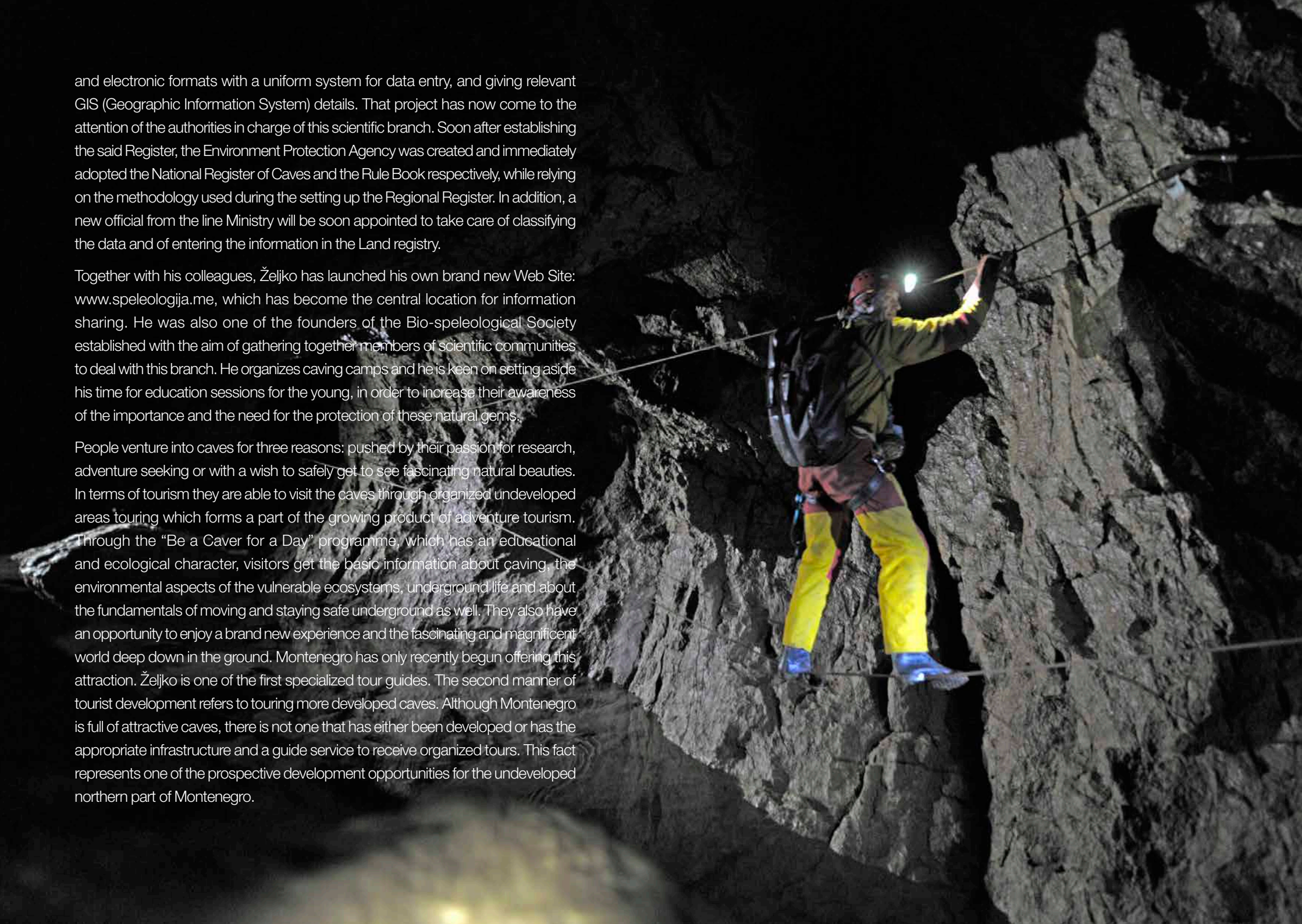




and electronic formats with a uniform system for data entry, and giving relevant GIS (Geographic Information System) details. That project has now come to the attention of the authorities in charge of this scientific branch. Soon after establishing the said Register, the Environment Protection Agency was created and immediately adopted the National Register of Caves and the Rule Book respectively, while relying on the methodology used during the setting up the Regional Register. In addition, a new official from the line Ministry will be soon appointed to take care of classifying the data and of entering the information in the Land registry.

Together with his colleagues, Željko has launched his own brand new Web Site: [www.speleologija.me](http://www.speleologija.me), which has become the central location for information sharing. He was also one of the founders of the Bio-speleological Society established with the aim of gathering together members of scientific communities to deal with this branch. He organizes caving camps and he is keen on setting aside his time for education sessions for the young, in order to increase their awareness of the importance and the need for the protection of these natural gems.

People venture into caves for three reasons: pushed by their passion for research, adventure seeking or with a wish to safely get to see fascinating natural beauties. In terms of tourism they are able to visit the caves through organized undeveloped areas touring which forms a part of the growing product of adventure tourism. Through the "Be a Caver for a Day" programme, which has an educational and ecological character, visitors get the basic information about caving, the environmental aspects of the vulnerable ecosystems, underground life and about the fundamentals of moving and staying safe underground as well. They also have an opportunity to enjoy a brand new experience and the fascinating and magnificent world deep down in the ground. Montenegro has only recently begun offering this attraction. Željko is one of the first specialized tour guides. The second manner of tourist development refers to touring more developed caves. Although Montenegro is full of attractive caves, there is not one that has either been developed or has the appropriate infrastructure and a guide service to receive organized tours. This fact represents one of the prospective development opportunities for the undeveloped northern part of Montenegro.





## Saša Jeknić

National Park Biogradska Gora

*"I could not be like an office clerk and just run the National Park on a daily basis. I want to be remembered as a manager who fostered the work and introduced innovations,"*

**Saša Jeknić**, the Director of the National Park, Biogradska Gora, Kolašin.

**"**It's not easy to find the right balance between economy and ecology," says Saša Jeknić, reflecting on his three-year experience as the Director of the NP „Biogradska Gora“, an institution with twenty-four employees, and in charge of the protection and conservation of this area, covering 5,400 hectares. He's still young, and apart for this primary function of running the park, he also wants to develop the full potential of the National Park by the end of his tenure. The idea of protecting this area dates back to 1878. The National Park, Biogradska Gora, is located in the central part of the Bjelasica massif and in addition to Lake Biograd, its greatest value lies in the primeval rainforest reserve featuring a number of trees over four hundred years old.

Speaking about his accomplishments as Director, Saša is most proud of the good relationships established with partners and the local population, especially those landowners who own parcels within the boundaries of the park. He shares information with them about the benefits that they can enjoy from the park and provides them licenses for tourism activities (in the manner determined by the laws governing this area). He also buys local agricultural products for the Park's Restaurant, and handmade souvenirs and other items of handicrafts are for sale in the gift shop.


Most of the tourism and educational programs in the park are provided through collaboration and participation in the development projects implemented by inter-



national organizations, among which the most prominent are the Austrian-Montenegrin Partnership and the RDA, Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije. On the shore of Lake Biograd is a visitors' centre, equipped with interactive presentations and exhibits of natural and cultural value. In terms of tourist facilities, at the entrance to Biogradska Gora there is a car park for recreational vehicles, and next to the lake there is a national restaurant and bungalows side by side with space for tents. In the summer, the park is visited by many tourists, all looking for an active leisure time: walking along the well marked trails, renting boats, and harvesting and collecting the abundant wild fruits. Thanks to excellent cooperation with over fifteen tourist agencies, the park is also able to offer them: jeep safaris, fly fishing, canyoning, rafting, paragliding, hiking, and biking trails with local guides, team building events and so on. Unfortunately, during the winter it is not possible to enjoy active holidays next to Biograd Lake, so the park management is currently overhauling the







Kolašin is home to plenty of events and festivals, both in the winter and summer, some of which are organized at the National Park. Many of them have an educational character, such as the School of Survival in nature, intended for children. During this programme, school children are taught the basics of map reading; compass reading; pitching tents; and general orientation in nature. What Saša Jeknić has in mind and desires to do is to turn this project into part of a compulsory education programme in the countryside for elementary school students, and to organize visits by children from all parts of Montenegro so that they could be introduced to the Park and discover the magic of living in nature, through play.

accommodation and catering facilities by introducing heating and more modern equipment in the buildings, to make the lake available in the other tourism seasons. So, the guests will soon be able to enjoy the snow, the charms of Nordic skiing and snowshoe walking around the lake.

The National Park "Biogradska Gora" currently offers several marked hiking trails up to twelve kilometers in length, leading to the mountain tops and summer pastures. The entire shore of Lake Biograd offers an educational path of over three kilometers, equipped with interactive equipment, and information points explaining the flora and fauna of the area. The development of this product, entailing the identification of paths, their marking, the training of tour guides and the development of marketing products, such as maps and printed guides, has been done in collaboration with the donor organizations from Austria and the RDA, Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije.



## Sabina and Musa Ramović

### RAMS Travel Agency

*„I am involved in tourism because it is the only activity in which I have been working so far and in which any stress can be compensated for by an equal quantity of job satisfaction. Operating a private business and being useful to other people in the community we live in is what I always imagined my career would be.”*

**Sabina Ramović**, co-owner of RAMS, Travel Agency




**R**AMS is a breath of fresh air coming from the north of Montenegro, a travel agency established in 2005 in Bijelo Polje, a family business managed by Musa and Sabina Ramović. Nowadays, the agency employs four staff on a full-time basis and a large number of seasonal employees many of whom are completing their professional competence training. Their business has been flourishing so far, while adjusting to the current tourism development trends in Montenegro.

In the time when RAMS started operating, the tourism product in Montenegro was characterised by reasonably well developed beach tourism in the summer months in the country's south and a real lack of development the other regions of the country. At that time, the institutions in charge of tourism development, in cooperation with donor organizations, started implementing numerous active tourism development projects in the central and northern regions of the country. There was, however, a scarcity of local partners who were capable of competently implementing the new activities of hiking, mountain biking, canyoning, ecological tourism, free climbing and winter sports projects in the field. It was only after the second stage of the global economic crisis, when Montenegro began to experience stronger international cooperation and improved networking, which included Montenegro twinning with European regions that things began to pick up. During those years, representatives from Beton Montenegro came from France to Bijelo Polje, with their desire to attract French tourists to Montenegro. RAMS was in charge of the arrangements for the

said visit, wishing to present the authentic values of the Montenegrin village, its customs, hospitality and home-made traditional food. Officially, that was their first rural tourism tour. Until that time, Montenegro had not been involved in the development of rural tourism as an independent tourism product. Since then, RAMS has become the new trademark and the leader of rural tourism and its further development. RAMS has now arranged tours of the north of Montenegro for numerous tourists, aged from 5 months to 86 years old, and who arrived from twenty countries from all over the world. Their tours are all accompanied by trained English, German, Russian, French and Italian speaking guides. They have also built up a strong network with their counterparts from many other countries such as France, Greece, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Turkey, and the countries of the region. They are active members of two associations, namely of the CTU (Montenegrin Tourism Association) and the MOA (Montenegro Outdoor Agencies Association).







As a result of its outstanding performance, RAMS won the Wild Beauty Award in 2011, in an event organised by the National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro where the best tourism actors receive awards for their performance during the year. How have they managed to achieve all of this?

“That was not the first time we won the first prize here where we live, and we have always been successful in staying competitive on the market. If you really desire something and invest all of your efforts in it, success will be inevitable,” Sabina said.

As for being transformed from novices in tourism to becoming renowned professionals, their development has been marked both by their great desire to succeed and their willingness to cooperate with all the other partners in tourism. They have participated continuously in training programmes to gain new knowledge and been helped by a bit of luck that has followed them on their way to success and that has pleasantly surprised them several times. One of these surprises took place during a tourism fair held in Köln, Germany, in which they made contact with the Dutch organization, the CBI (the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries) that has worked through them extensively in the following years, in a huge EU project (Export Coaching Program for Tourism). The cooperation in this Project has enabled RAMS, for the purpose of improving their operations, to enjoy mentorship delivered by the said Centre, as well as organised visits to tourism fairs throughout Europe, and ongoing training courses – which they do not miss even today.

All their know-how has been shared from day one with their local partners, with whom they have close cooperation in preparing tours. Sabina and Musa have spent countless hours with rural householders, teaching them how to respond to tourists' demands. Over the years, they have created a network of numerous local partners such as rural households, sport clubs, tourism organisations, and caterers. With their great awareness of the principles of sustainable development and drive to improve the standard of living in their community, they have arranged international youth eco camps, organised student exchange visits, and searched for donors to support training events for new tourist guides in the northern region of Montenegro. Their work in the community has been recognised by their international partners as well, who nominated them for this-year National Geographic “Engaging Communities” Award.

As they freely admit, they have learned the most from the tourists. Sabina and Musa accompany their guests while they are touring Montenegro, they make friends with them, listen to them when they express their needs and expectations and when they give their impressions of their visit. “Profit does not matter as much as preventing your guests from leaving Montenegro in any way dissatisfied with their holiday”



## Luka Bulatović

Explorer Travel Agency

*"We should not copy Europe. Montenegro should be preserved as it is now – as a place where you can have adventures in untouched nature and to show it as such."*

**Luka Bulatović**, the owner of the Explorer, Travel Agency from Kolašin

The energy emanating from Luka Bulatović, the owner of Explorer Travel Agency from Kolašin, is catching. Some ten years ago, he started his private business. Prior to that, he was a national skiing team member and a winter sports and rafting instructor. He has now passed through all the stages of business development, starting from a novice's fear of defaulting on the first loan to reaching the stage of constructing a hotel and being the co-owner of another company involved in nautical tourism. His Travel Agency, called Explorer, is one of the leading actors in outdoor tourism in Montenegro.

He proudly showed off the Agency's brochures including long lists of activities offered. In both winter sports and summer activities, Luka is an innovator and is involved in rafting, canyoning, jeep safaris, hiking, mountain biking, fly fishing, camping, eco-tourism, kayaking, helicopter tours, diving, caving, free climbing, horse riding, and paragliding. The winter adventure programmes include a variety of skiing activities, snowboarding, and several-day long motor sledge tours. Depending on the choice and wishes of the tourists, there is the opportunity for them to spend up to thirty days enjoying an active holiday. The Agency offers accommodation, and rent-a-car and shuttle services. Almost 90% of the activities are arranged independently by the Agency. Nowadays, Explorer promotes Montenegro as a unique active tourism destination.

Luka has never left Kolašin - described in the Agency's brochure as "a small town at 960 meters above sea level, whose sky is shadowed by the blueness of the Bjelasica,



Sinjajevina and Komovi mountain ranges" - to find a job somewhere else, as many of the townspeople have done over the years. The focus of Luka's business is still on his hometown. However, the reality is entirely different for most people in the north of Montenegro. Despite the numerous opportunities for the development of agriculture and tourism, this region is still facing a pronounced level of depopulation. People who have stayed home are waiting for investments to arrive or they are longing for stable jobs in the public sector. "The entrepreneurial spirit is absent" said Luka. "Northern municipalities face a scarcity of managers who love their respective towns and who are ready to create an environment for the townspeople to develop their businesses. It would be enough to encourage small initiatives, to bring life back to public open spaces – for example, by issuing permits for renting equipment for children's leisure activities like biking, kayaking, pony riding, fly fishing - and to support, with the provision of equipment, those who wish to be self-reliant and start their own businesses. It would





be wise to arrange skiing classes for primary school pupils, within the framework of the regular school curriculum. Thus, educational institutions would be able to generate future skilled human resources and the future promoters of tourism.

In their day-to-day operations, the Explorer Agency employs a large number of people from this region of Montenegro, starting from those delivering seasonal tourism services, renting equipment, arranging folklore dance performances, all the way to those earning their living by selling local agriculture products, and renting out short- or long-

term summer hamlet accommodation. Many of Luka's partners did not go through any formal education, nor do they have any working experience in tourism. In order to overcome this situation, a lot of energy has been invested in training and raising the quality of the services and products that are demanded by contemporary tourism.

Luka Bulatović learned about the love and respect for nature from his secondary school teachers. Nowadays, when the welfare of his family and of his employees' families depends on the using of natural resources, he still considers that nature should be preserved as it is. "It is important to look at winter tourism in a new way, to have an integrated approach to northern towns and at the same time to see each tourism destination as unique, one in which each and every mountain would offer something very specific. In order to bring life back to the northern region, we do not need huge investments in infrastructure. We should upgrade our mountaineering refuges and accommodation capacities. We should not copy Europe. We cannot be competition to, let us say, Austria that has thousands of kilometers of cableways. Montenegro must not urbanize its mountains, but it should offer something entirely different. Europe should be interested in us, as we are now. As they do it in Canada, we should offer wilderness touring. The tourist should get something that is impossible to find elsewhere in Europe over the winter season - such as staying in wild and completely untouched nature. Let's say, for example, we could offer them a package of two-days sailing through Boka Bay, followed by a two-day motor sledge tour through the mountains stretching from Kolašin to Durmitor and two days of skiing or snowboarding. In this way we could attract great interest in visiting us."





# The Leaders of Responsible Innovations

in Agriculture and Tourism

the Region of Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije

## Production:

Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije  
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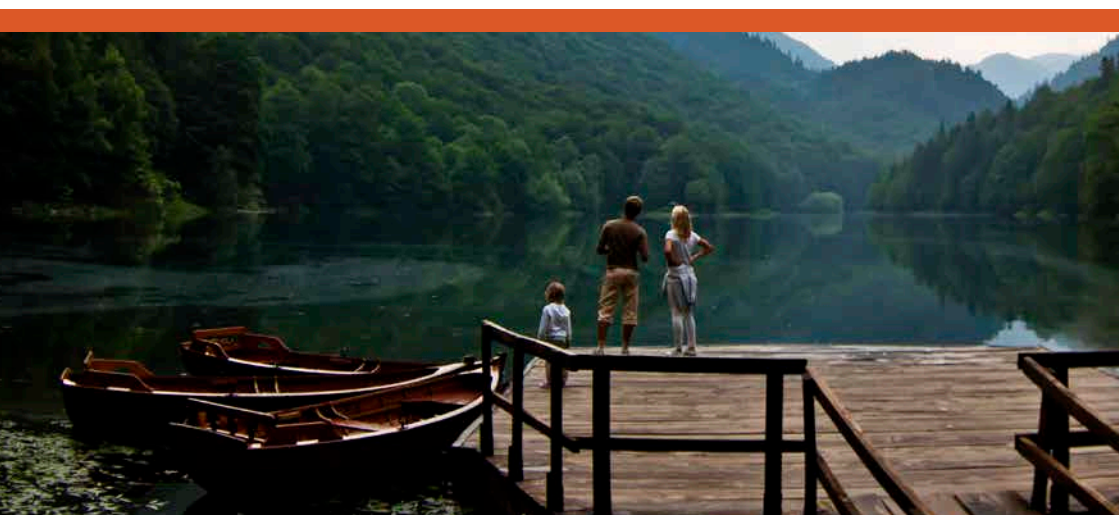
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## Design and printing:

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Montenegro







This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.