



## Bijelo Polje - Cultural Route

1. The Church of St Peter the Apostle
2. The Town Mosque
3. The Homeland Museum
4. The Park of Poets
5. The House of Risto Ratković
6. The Main Town Square
7. The Church of St Nicholas in Nikoljac
8. The Bridge and Church in Voljavac
9. The Village of Bistrica
10. The Podvrh Monastery

## The Church of St Peter the Apostle



The centre around which a settlement first started to develop and expand 800 years ago is situated right here, in the place where Miroslav, the Duke of Hum built the Church of St Peter in 1196. A typical example of interwoven Romanesque and Byzantine architecture, the church was repaired and enlarged several times, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was turned into a mosque. Duke Miroslav ordered the creation of a special church service book for his memorial church. Luxuriously decorated and gilded, this manuscript, made at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is the oldest preserved Cyrillic manuscript in the Serbian language. Unique in the history of world culture, Miroslav's Gospel has been listed on UNESCO's *Memory of the World Register*.

## The Town Mosque

According to folk tradition, the Town Mosque in Bijelo Polje was once located in the nearby village of Jabučino. Fearing that it would be left to crumble after the retreat of the Turkish Army from that area, the locals relocated it with their hands, stone by stone, along a ten-kilometre-long line over a period of two days. The mosque, the only one within the town centre itself, has been situated at the present location since 1741. Right in the centre of the town there also was once a mosque with a wooden minaret which was destroyed during the Allied bombing of Bijelo Polje.



## Homeland Museum

Walking through the Homeland Museum you will gradually uncover the history of the region of Bijelo Polje. A stone axe from the Neolithic period, a Roman ploughshare, a medieval mace evoke a picture what life looked like in these areas from the time of prehistoric settlements. A Brskovo coin, the first silver money minted in this region,

which even found its way into Dante's *Divine Comedy*, is kept there as well. The treasures of this numismatic, archaeological, historical, ethnological and artistic collection are housed in a building which is itself a unique monument of culture.

## The Park of Poets

If a literary map of Montenegro were to be made, the region of Bijelo Polje, the home of many famous writers, would have a special place. Tribute has been paid to some of these writers in one of the most beautiful town parks, the Park of Poets. Risto Ratković – the first Montenegrin novelist and one of the country's best poets; Čamil Sijarić – a writer who first introduced Sandžak to the literary scene of post-war Yugoslavia; and Miodrag Bulatović – the creator of the modernist poetic movement in post-war literature translated into more than twenty languages are all immortalised here. Lacking in the park is Avdo Mededović, one of the most significant folk poet-singers in this region whose works have been studied at Harvard University.



## The House of Risto Ratković

In front of you is one of the most beautiful houses in Bijelo Polje and one of only a few preserved examples of Middle Eastern architecture from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Risto Ratković, the author of the first modern novel in Montenegro, grew up in this house. Probably right here, when he was only a little boy, he wrote in his notebook *"reality does not satisfy me, it is not everything"*. He was looking for answers in poetry and when poetry was not able to ease his life's misfortunes, he cried out: *"Poetry, shame on you!"*



## The Main Town Square

If legend is to be believed, an endless field of daisies was once situated here. The town was named Bijelo Polje (White Field), or in Turkish – Akovo, after this

flower. Today there is a memorial monument which reminds of World War II and the fatalities that this area suffered in the struggle against fascism. Another reminder, large five-point star weighing five tonnes is best seen from the main town square. In the immediate proximity there are numerous restaurants, cake shops and bakeries where you can try some of Bijelo Polje's famous specialities, such as mantije, heljdija (different types of pies), lamb in milk, urmasioe and tulumbe (sweets).



## The Church of St Nicholas in Nikoljac



The Church of St Nicholas, famous for the beauty of its frescoes and iconostasis, is located on the other side of the River Lim, in the settlement of Nikoljac. It is presumed that the church was built at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a memorial church of King Milutin. Widely known for its copyist work, in its treasury are preserved some of the most significant manuscripts and printed books from the period between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as icons by masters from the prominent Lazović family of priests and fresco painters from Bijelo Polje.

## The Bridge and Church in Voljavac

On the road from Bijelo Polje to the village of Bistrica you will cross over an old stone bridge. It has been said that this bridge, is the oldest monument from this region's Ottoman period. The old bridge has kept the secret of its construction to itself, and around it many legends have been woven. One legend says that it was built of mortar made out of highland milk and eggs. One of the oldest churches in this area is also situated in the proximity of the



bridge. The Church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Voljavac, built at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, is one of the first memorial churches that Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja built in this region.

## Bistrica Village

The first light bulb in the whole region glowed right here. After it the first radio devices arrived here as well, and many people from Bijelo Polje used to come to Bistrica for dinner sessions to listen to the news. Numerous watermills were built on the river, and beside them, as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first taverns (kahve) were opened as well, and the village used to be called Kahve after these. Bistrica is also well-known for the centuries-old pavilion of the Hasaribegović family knocked down in the nineteen-seventies. This three-storey pavilion was the only one which managed to survive all the uprisings and wars because two families of different religions lived in harmony inside it.



## Podvrh Monastery

For centuries the Đalovića Gorge has hidden one of the most unusual religious buildings in this region, the Church of St Nicholas in Podvrh. Due to its inconspicuous exterior which resembles a rural cottage rather than a church, it is difficult to believe that one of the most beautiful examples of post-Byzantine art in the Balkans, a gilded iconostasis, the work of the famous masters Kozma and Radule, is situated there. The walls of the church were painted at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by a priest, Strahinja from Budimlje, the best fresco painter of that time and Divoš's Gospel, one of the oldest Cyrillic manuscripts on parchment, was discovered in its treasury.



## The Tourist Organisation of Bijelo Polje

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## Hotels

**Hotel Dominus** - Đorđija Stanića br.31  
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www.hoteldominus.com

**Hotel Royal** - Treća sandžacka bb  
Phone: +382 (0) 50 431 900  
E-mail: royal@businesspeople.me  
www.hotel-royal.me

**Hotel Bijela Rada** - Slobode bb  
Phone: +382 (0) 68 866 456  
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**Small hotel MB dvori** - Rakonje bb  
Phone: +382 (0)50 488 571  
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**Motel Durmitor** - Rakonje bb  
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**Motel Ravna Rijeka** - Ravna Rijeka bb  
Phone: +382 (0)50 476 590  
Cell: +382 (0) 69 771 410  
E-mail: slavkofustic@t-com.me

## National Cuisine Restaurants

**Restaurant Regina** - Omladinska bb,  
Phone: +382 (0) 50 431 599

**Restaurant Evropa** - Tršova bb  
Phone: +382 (0) 69 490 327

**Restaurant Centar** - Muniba Kučevića bb  
Phone: +382 (0) 69 135 111

**Restaurant Bon Vivan** - Stari Tržni centar  
Phone: +382 (0) 69 154 356  
www.bonvivan.me

## Heljdija

While you are staying in Bijelo Polje an absolute must is Bijelo Polje's traditional heljdija. The secret of this pie made from buckwheat flour comes from the fresh cheese and clotted cream from the surrounding mountains. It is served as a starter, and it is best to drink a mug of yogurt or sour milk along with it.



## Welcome!

Right now you are standing in Bijelo Polje, in the pleasant and picturesque valley of the River Lim, surrounded by high mountains and clear waters, beside one of the most beautiful and mysterious caves in the world – Đalovića Cave. And while you enjoy the allure of untouched nature, do not forget that you are staying in a town with a rich history, inhabited since as long ago as the Neolithic period. It was built at the crossroads of caravan routes in the place where the winds from the East and West meet and different cultures intersect and overlap.

The Cultural Route of Bijelo Polje leads you around the most interesting places in the town, where you will discover why Bijelo Polje is on the literary world map and how it was named by fairies. You will learn the history of the most significant book in this region which has travelled some fifteen thousand kilometres, guarded by rulers, monks, ministers and soldiers. You will find out how the inhabitants of one village moved a mosque by hand and exactly where the first light bulb in this region glowed.

STEP INTO THE HISTORY OF BIJELO POLJE!



Further information about the Cultural Route and assistance in organising this tour can be obtained at the Tourist Organisation of Bijelo Polje

Working Hours: weekdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
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Although there is no marked mountain bike trail the whole route can be covered by mountain bike.

## The Bridges over the River Lim

The River Lim has always been inextricably linked to the destiny of Bijelo Polje. The bridges over the River Lim were the border, customs area and the entrance gate to the town. Even today a great flood is still remembered, when the swollen River Lim, after eleven days of continuous rain in November 1896 washed away both the bridge and the guardhouse located on it. It took forty days for the River Lim to return to its normal flow, and during that time Nikoljac was cut off from the town. In order to fund a new bridge many people from Bijelo Polje donated money, and some people took it upon themselves to support one worker each until the bridge was finished. Even that was not sufficient however, and due to the lack of financial means a new stone bridge was not built, but the old one was rebuilt and bolstered with stone.

## Mineral Waters

The mineral springs near Bijelo Polje are widely known. As legend has it, fairies from Mount Bjelasica washed their faces in this water, and they owe their eternal youth and beauty to it. A few springs are located in the immediate proximity of Bijelo Polje: Ceoco, Banje Selo and Kisleje Vode I and II. They have been used since ancient times, and it is recorded that the Royal Healing Spring was functioning from 1937. The mineral water from this area is highly carbonised, and is recommended for many chronic diseases of the stomach, liver and gallbladder. These medicinal waters have been used for other purposes as well: it is said that the best wine with soda is made from them, and the secret of a good buckwheat pie is the use of mineral water in its preparation.



## Bijelo Polje – The Town of Festivals

Bijelo Polje is also the town of festivals. The summer is marked with music. In July the White Field International Jazz Festival is held, and the International Festival of Tamburitza Orchestras, which gathers the best orchestras from the region is organised at the beginning of August. The Ratković Evenings of Poetry is the most significant literary festival, and the Festival of Montenegrin Amateur Dramatics which has gathered the most important amateur theatres from around the country for more than forty years also has a long tradition. For twenty years, the arrival of springtime in Bijelo Polje has been welcomed with a major exhibition called the Bijelo Polje Painting Spring at which the works of young artists from Bijelo Polje are presented.



# MONTENEGRO



## CULTURAL ROUTE

Bijelo Polje