

MOSTAR

Early history

Founded in the late 15th century, Mostar was the chief administrative city for the Ottoman Empire in the Herzegovina region. The Austro-Hungarian Empire absorbed Mostar in 1878 and then it became part of Yugoslavia in the aftermath of World War I. Since 1881 Mostar has been the seat of the Bishopric of Mostar-Duvno. The city's symbol, The Old Bridge (Stari Most) is one of the most important constructions of Ottoman Era and built by the student of the famous Ottoman Architect Mimar Sinan (Architect Sinan), Mimar Hayrettin. In 1939, Mostar became a part of the Banovina of Croatia, and during the Second World War was an important city in the Independent State of Croatia.

Yugoslav Period

After World War II, Mostar developed a production of tobacco, bauxite, wine and aluminium products. Several dams ("Grabovica", "Salakovac", "Mostar") were built in the region to harness the hydroelectric power of the Neretva. The city was a major industrial and tourist center and prospered during the time of SFRY.

Bosnian war

Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia following Referendum held in February 1992. The Yugoslav National Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija - JNA) first bombarded City of Mostar on April 3rd, 1992 and over the following weeks, gradually established control over large portions of the City. The siege lasted for three months. Yugoslav National Army's shelling damaged or destroyed a number of civilian objects and resulted in a mass killing of thousands of innocent civilians. Amongst destroyed monuments were a Franciscan monastery, the Catholic cathedral and the bishop's palace, with a library of 50,000 books, as well as the Karadžoz-bey mosque, Roznamed-ij-Ibrahim-efendija mosque and twelve other mosques, as well as secular institutions. On June 12th 1992, the ABiH (4th Corps of Army of Bosnia Herzegovina) and HVO (Croatian Military Council supported by HOS - Hrvatske Obrambene Snage/Croatian Defence Forces - paramilitary from Croatia) amassed enough weaponry and manpower to force the JNA troops out of Mostar. Saborna Crkva (Orthodox Cathedral Church) largest and most beautiful Orthodox Church in Bosnia Herzegovina, built between 1863-1873, was destroyed by Hrvatske Obrambene Snage (HOS) forces during the night of June, 15, 1992.

Post Yugoslavia war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

After the Yugoslav National Army were driven out, the heavily armed, Croatia funded Bosnian-Croat forces (HVO) turned their guns at their once allies, the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in hope of capturing the whole city in the light of Bosnian Croat Secessionist campaign. The campaign resulted in the deeply rooted division of the city of Mostar into West Mostar (run by HVO and Army of Republic of Croatia) and the East Mostar (maintained by the Government of Bosnia Herzegovina). HVO forces and forces of Republic of Croatia (especially Splits 114 brigade and Croatian, para military formation Hrvateske Obrambene Snage - HOS) engaged in a mass execution, ethnic cleansing and rape on the Bosniak people of the West Mostar and its surrounds and a fierce siege and shelling campaign on the Bosnian Government run East Mostar. HVO campaign resulted in thousands of injured and killed and this city's Old Town reduction to Rubble. On November 9, 1993 HVO troops destroyed the city's most recognizable landmark an Ottoman era bridge built in 1566, which is the city's namesake. Today, the city is slowly recovering from divisions created by the conflict. Some of the scars of that division still remain today.

Reconstruction

Since the end of the wider war in 1995, great progress is being made in the reconstruction of the city of Mostar. The city was under direct monitoring from a European Union envoy, several elections were held and each nation was accommodated with regard to political control over the city. Over 15 million dollars has been spent on restoration.

A monumental project to rebuild the Old Bridge to the original design, and restore surrounding structures and historic neighbourhoods was initiated in 1999 and mostly completed by Spring 2004. The money for this reconstruction was donated by the United States, Turkey, Italy, the Netherlands, and Croatia. A grand opening was held on July 23, 2004 under heavy security.

In parallel with the restoration of the Old Bridge, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and the World Monuments Fund (WMF) undertook a five-year long restoration and rehabilitation effort in historic Mostar.

Realizing early on that the reconstruction of the bridge without an in-depth rehabilitation of the surrounding historic neighbourhoods would be devoid of context and meaning, they shaped the programme in such a way as to establish a framework of urban conservation schemes and individual restoration projects that would help regenerate the most significant areas of historic Mostar, and particularly the urban tissue around the Old Bridge. The project also resulted in the establishment of the Stari grad Agency which has an important role in overseeing the ongoing implementation of the conservation plan, as well as operating and maintaining a series of restored historic buildings (including the Old Bridge complex) and promoting Mostar

as a cultural and tourist destination. The official inauguration of the Stari grad Agency coincided with the opening ceremony of the Bridge.

In July 2005, UNESCO finally inscribed the Old Bridge and its closest vicinity onto the World Heritage List. Previously, the inscription had been repeatedly deferred on account of poor quality of post-war reconstructions and deplorable use of modern materials in the old town.

Economy

Mostar is home to several of the nation's largest companies including the mail delivery firm Hrvatska pošta Mostar, telecommunication company Hrvatske telekomunikacije Mostar, aluminum manufacturer Aluminij and aircraft manufacturer SOKO.

City government

The City of Mostar has the status of a municipality. The city government is led by the Mayor. The current Mayor of Mostar is Ljubo Bešlić (HDZ).

The City Council is composed of 35 representatives, coming from the following political parties:

- Croatian Coalition 13
 - Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)
 - United Croatian Party of Rights (UHSP)
 - Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)
 - Croatian Christian Democratic Union (HKDU)
 - Croatian People's Union (HNZ)
- Party of Democratic Action (SDA) 10
- Social Democratic Party (SDP) 4
- Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina 4
- People's Party Work for Betterment 1
- Croatian Coalition 1
 - Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)
 - Croatian Pure Party of Rights (HČSP)
- Independent 2

Education and Culture

The oldest single arch stone bridge in Mostar, the Kriva Cuprija (Sloping Bridge), built in 1558 by the Ottoman architect Cejvan Kethoda. It is said that this was to be a test before the major construction of the Stari Most began. The Old Bridge was completed in 1566 and was hailed as one of the greatest architectural achievement in the Ottoman controlled Balkans. No matter how many times one does it, crossing the Stari most (Old Bridge) always seems to be an exciting experience. This single-arch stone bridge is an exact replica of the original bridge that stood for over 400 years and that

was designed by Hajrudin, a student of the great Ottoman architect Sinan. It spans 28.7 meters of the Neretva river, 21 meters above the summer water level. The Halebija and Tara towers have always housed the guardians of the bridge and during Ottoman times were storehouses for ammunition.

Crossing from the west bank to the east you'll also be crossing the ancient point where East and West symbolically met. Up the stairs to the right is the oldest mosque in Mostar: the Cejvan Cehaj Mosque built in 1552. Later a medresa (Islamic school) was built on the same compound. The Old Bazaar, Kujundziluk is named after the goldsmiths who traditionally created and sold their wares on this street, it is the best place in town to find authentic paintings and copper or bronze carvings of the Stari Most, pomegranates (the natural symbol of Herzegovina) or the famed stecaks (medieval tombstones).

The Koski Mehmed pasa Mosque, built in 1617 is open to visitors. Visitors may enter the mosque and take photos free of charge. For those willing to bear the dizzy spiral to the top, the minaret is also open to the public and is accessible from inside the mosque. The view speaks for itself! Just around the corner from the mosque is the Tepa Market. This has been a busy marketplace since Ottoman times. It now sells mostly fresh produce grown in Herzegovina. When in season, the figs and pomegranates can't be beaten. Be sure to look for local honey, organically produced in sunny villages all over Herzegovina.

Kriva cuprija is a stone one-arch bridge of small dimension and closely resembles the Stari Most. The arch is a perfect semicircle 8.56m in width and 4.15m in height. The frontage and vault are made of regular stone cubes incorporated into the horizontal layers all along the vault. The space between vault, frontal walls and footpath is filled with cracked stone. The bridge footpath and the approaching roads are paved with cobblestones, as is the case with the main roads in the town. Stone steps enable people to ascend to the bridge either side. A synagogue was also recently built in the city.

The Catholic Church, which was recently renovated, is nearly impossible to miss. A steeple of over 30m dominates the skyline. The bishop's residence in Mostar marks the more recent Catholic traditions of the region and is built in the Viennese architecture that greatly added to the town's charm. The roundabout by the Rondo on the west side is home to the former Cultural Centre for the City of Mostar. It is now the Croatian Cultural Centre and certainly worth a peek inside. The Partisan Memorial Cemetery commemorates the fallen partisans. It is located off KP Kresimira IV Street on Bijeli Brijeg. This part of town is covered with lots of greenery and is also a nice place for a stroll with a great view of the city.