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## WHITE DRIN WATERFALL A TOURIST DESTINATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PEJA

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**Abstract:** Drini i Bardhë waterfall is a waterfall in the western part of Kosovo. Which was found on the mountain of Rudavc village, 11 km from the city of Peja. The waterfall is located at the source of the Drini i Bardhë river and is 25 m high. The mountainous landscapes that surround the waterfall make it the most attractive tourist spot in all of Kosovo. The source of Drini Bardhë, which is located in Radavc of Peja, is a special attraction that has great potential for the development of tourism, especially during the summer season with the arrival of expatriates and foreign tourists, the number of tourists increases. This source is located in the region of Radavec in Peja and stands out for its natural beauty, beautiful landscapes and fresh water that supplies Peja and the surrounding area. It starts in the Rusol mountain range, from the rock of the Radavci cave at an altitude of 586 m. Drini i Bardhë meanders 122 km in the north-south direction. It collects the waters of Lumëbardhi of Peja, Erenik and Lumbardhi of Prizren. The source of Drini Bardhë can be developed as an attractive tourist destination that offers a special experience for visitors and contributes to the economic and cultural development of the area. In general, the Drini i Bardhë waterfall is a special place, which deserves protection and attention to preserve its natural beauty and has a positive impact on the development of tourism and raising the standard of living of the local community.

**Keywords:** development, economic, cultural, attractive, tourist etc.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The White Drin Waterfall is one of the most beautiful natural attractions in the municipality of Peja, known for its stunning views and peaceful and relaxing environment. This waterfall, which is known for its clean water and the landscapes around it, offers numerous opportunities for the development of local tourism in the community. Managing and protecting water quality requires rational use, not causing damage to natural ecosystems, which are necessary for our future generations (Dreshaj et al. 2022). At a time when tourism is becoming a key sector for local economies, the White Drin Waterfall represents an extraordinary opportunity to attract local and international visitors to promote the cultural and natural traditions of the region. Community engagement in the development of tourism activities, environmental conservation and providing authentic experiences for visitors are some of the aspects that can increase the tourist value of this area. Around the White Drin Waterfall there are several restaurants offering local and international specialties. Some of them offer traditional Albanian dishes such as fërgesë, tavë kosi and fresh fish from the river. There are also opportunities to try cuisines from other countries, such as pizza, pasta, and specialties from Mediterranean cuisine. With the improvement of infrastructure and the promotion of natural and cultural resources, the White Drin Waterfall has the potential and is becoming an important destination not only for foreign tourists, but also for local ones. This tourist attraction will help strengthen the local economy, preserve traditions and increase sensitivity to the importance of environmental protection. The economic development of a country depends greatly on the natural resources that that country possesses, whether underground or aboveground. (Kuqi & Selimaj 2022). In this regard, the Municipality of Peja can be proud of the natural resources it possesses, because the massif of the "White Drin" also enables it (KK, Peja 2018).

### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of this work will be based on primary and secondary data, research and literature from various local and international authors, who have addressed the topic of tourism, development and tourism prospects from different perspectives. For the preparation of this work, various sources were used, which were used by the competent institutions for tourism. This methodology is with mixed data that derives the description of these phenomena through secondary data obtained from reports and other relevant documentation compiled and promoted

by various governmental and non-governmental actors, to harmonize the data towards the explanation of this controversial topic.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The White Drin Waterfall in Radavc is one of the most beautiful natural attractions in Kosovo. It offers stunning views and is an excellent place to enjoy nature, picnics and various outdoor activities. The waterfall has a special ecological importance and is a place known for relaxation and good food. There, tourists can enjoy various traditional dishes as well as other foods. There, near the waterfall, there is also a cave and with the source of the White Drin River, it was taken under legal protection in 1983, as a natural monument due to its geomorphological, hydrological and touristic values with an area of 89.94 ha (1 km<sup>2</sup>). The Radavc Cave is located near the Waterfall and is one of the most attractive natural attractions in the region. Peja and its surroundings have become a tourist destination with the presentation of its tourist potentials by promoting it (Kuqi & Vishaj 2024). The cave, which is located near the White Drin River, is known for its extraordinary formations, such as stalactites and stalagmites, as well as for the special atmosphere it creates inside with its characteristics.

*Photo 1. The White Drin Waterfall*



*Photo 2. Entrance to the Waterfall*



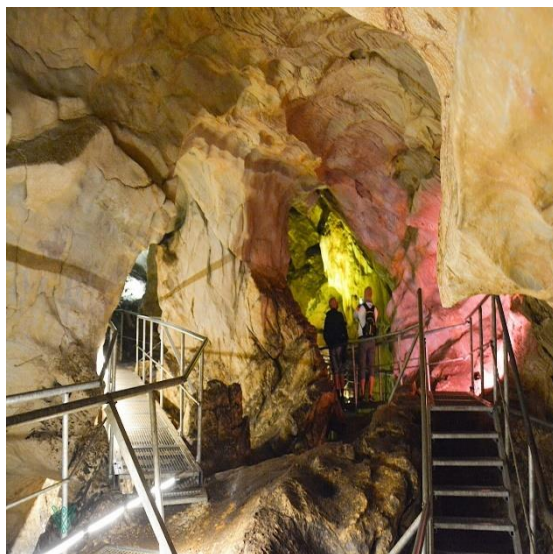
Photo by the Authors. (2024).

Visitors enjoying the wonderful experience at the White Drin Waterfall and the surrounding caves are natural attractions that offer stunning views and opportunities for adventure. Moreover, this culture is an important opportunity that could be discovered and explored in different ways and forms, such as organized visits, various manifestations and events, campaigns and promotions, etc. (UNWTO 2024). International tourists are often accompanied by guides. The activity of tourist guides is regulated within the framework of the Law on Tourism (Krasniqi et al.,2023) . Visitors can enjoy nature walks, explore caves and relax by the water. Weekends and holidays that are filled with visitors provide a lively and energetic atmosphere. Tourists can enjoy various activities, nature walks. This also helps support the local economy of the community. Tourism is one of the main priorities of the Government of the country for the development of tourism, this will bring great benefits to the economy, as well as to the sustainable development of other sectors related to tourism. This commitment will enable the increase of income, the creation of employment opportunities and the development of infrastructure, positioning the country as an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world. (MIET 2024). The source of the White Drin is a very attractive tourist destination for the summer, offering excellent conditions for nature activities, relaxation and exploration. With careful management and investment in tourism infrastructure, this source can be developed into a sustainable tourist attraction, contributing to the economic development of the area and the promotion of nature. The source of the White Drin offers good opportunities for the development of tourism ( Veselaj 2014). It can also provide good income for the community and a good standard of living within the country and contributing to the achievement and promotion of the SDGs (Seraphin, H., & V.G. 2021).

*Photo 3. River flow*



*Photo 4. Sleeping Beauty Cave*



**Photo by the Authors. (2024).**

The flora and fauna near the Drini Bardhë waterfall and cave are undoubtedly another major attraction for tourists. The rich ecosystem offers opportunities for observing various animals and plants, giving visitors a chance to experience nature in a unique way. Nature walks, photography and exploring biodiversity are excellent activities for those who want to connect with nature. The cave consists of four morphological elements: the main galleries, the left galleries, the lower galleries and the vertical channels. In Kosovo, tourists have the opportunity to enjoy them in the IV seasons of the year (Kuqi B. 2018). The total length of all the channels of the Rahavec cave is 1420m, while the horizontal channels are 680m long. A characteristic of this cave is the channel with tubs which is located in the continuation of the central gallery. Its length is 76 m, width 4–8 m and height between 3-5m. Most of the tubs are without water. The large hall belongs to the same gallery, and from this hall the corridors branch off in all directions. It is filled with pillars and multi-colored decorations. Environmental protection is one of the key priorities for every government and society that seeks sustainable development and protection of natural resources for future generations. This includes a continued commitment to balancing the needs of economic development with the protection of nature and natural resources. (AMMK 2021)

*Photo 5. Kiosk at the waterfall*



**Photo by the Authors. (2024).**

These are the Kiosks serving local products that are a great addition to the visitor experience! They offer the opportunity to taste traditional fruits and vegetables, further enriching the cultural experience. Also, providing toys for children makes the place more attractive for children, ensuring that everyone enjoys the visit. This creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere, which is essential for tourism. A destination that can also offer quality to the tourist (Bahri. M & Halil B.212).

**Tabela 1. The Peja region has the highest number of domestic visitors to hotels with 13,439 visitors and 35,466 overnight stays.**

	Visitors			Night stay		
	Agust 2023	Agust 2024	%	Agust 2023	Agust 2024	%
	Agust 2023	Agust 2024	Agust 2024 Agust 2023	Agust 2023	Agust 2024	Agust 2024 Agust 2023
Internal visitors	<b>25521</b>	<b>31400</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>73 294</b>	<b>68 315</b>	<b>-6.8%</b>
Gjakova	619	331	-46.4%	1 377	525	-61.9%
Gjilani	2645	2895	9.4%	15 519	9 410	-39.4%
Mitrovica	2538	1695	-33.2%	3 265	2 255	-30.9%
Peja	8036	13439	67.2%	35 149	35 466	0.9%
Prizereni	4301	4500	4.6%	7 712	6 259	-18.9%
Prishtina	4391	5687	29.5%	7 168	8 967	25.1%
Ferizaj	2992	2853	-4.6%	3 104	5 434	75.1%

Source: ASK 2024

This data is important for assessing tourism trends and understanding which regions are most attractive to domestic tourists, enabling the government and tourism operators to develop appropriate strategies for promoting and improving infrastructure and services. The increase in the number of visitors and overnight stays in the Peja region is a clear indication that the area is becoming increasingly attractive to tourists. Peja offers a beautiful combination of natural, cultural and historical attractions, which can attract a wide range of tourists. Investments in infrastructure and the promotion of local activities can help continue this positive trend. Tourism is an important factor in the economy of any country ( Kadiu E. 2017).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The White Drin Waterfall has tremendous potential as a tourist destination in the municipality of Peja. By focusing on sustainable development, integrating cultural experiences and engaging the community, it can become an important attraction that brings benefits to visitors and residents. Investing in this natural treasure will lead to a developed tourism industry, which will showcase the beauty and heritage of Kosovo. To maximize the benefits from tourism in this area, it is important to have a sustainable management and marketing strategy to promote the White Drin Waterfall effectively. The White Drin Waterfall has tremendous potential to develop as a sustainable tourist destination. With careful management, local community engagement and a well-designed marketing strategy, this natural attraction can bring great benefits to the local economy and contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in Kosovo. This investment will not only promote natural beauty and heritage, but will also help raise awareness of the importance of nature conservation and improve living conditions for local residents.

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