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BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA – A TINY LAND WITH BIG LOVE

It is a heart shaped land that lies in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula in South-eastern of Europe, a former Republic of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia. An area with only 51,233 km², a little wider than East Java Province in Indonesia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is always part of the history of Yugoslavia which was established in 1918. Muslim becomes the majority population in the land of 1,149 mosques, but no religion becomes dominant. It is a land where eastern and western civilizations met; in sometimes clashes, but more often enriched and reinforced each other in one chain throughout its very long and fascinating history since centuries.

Bosnia name is derived from Bosana, an old Indo-European word meaning water, which Bosnia is abundant of. Three main people live in this multi-religious land; Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs. Traditions and culture are more similar from one to another, despite the different religious/ethnic background of their language.

Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It was in 1914, where the city witnessed the murder of Franz Ferdinand, the Austrian crown prince, and 70 years later precisely in 1984 Sarajevo gained its positive history as the organizer of Annual Winter Olympics. In 1992, Sarajevo and some other cities in the country became the battleground inter-ethnics who fought over the city when Yugoslavia

broke out as a state and the war took innocent civilians, especially from the Bosnian Muslim.

Mostar is a city in the Southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and situated in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton in addition to its location straddling the Neretva River. It is known for the iconic Stari Most or the famous Old Bridge, a reconstructed medieval arched bridge. The nearby alleys are full of shops and market stalls, and the Old Bridge Museum explores the bridge's long history. A narrow staircase leads up to the Koski Mehmed-Pasha Mosque's minaret for the panoramic city views.

It is formerly one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the country, and at the present time, suffering geographical division of ethnic groups. The city was the most heavily bombed of any Bosnian city during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the breakup of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the war, air strikes destroyed many important buildings and structures, damaging the city historical core. The Old Bridge, a symbol of Mostar was damaged first by JNA forces during 1992, and on 9th November 1993 utterly destroyed by Croatian Defence Council tanks positioned on the hill after two days of heavy shooting.

Mostar is the symbol of the greatest master pieces under the rule of Ottoman in Bosnia and Herzegovina showing the most beautiful historic Ottoman-style Bridge. Through combined efforts with the international community, rebuilding of The Old Bridge has been completed in 2004, almost 11 years after its destruction, using some of its original pieces recovered from the Neretva River. A significant portion of the city has been rebuilt and visitors might be surprised to see that this formerly war-torn city looked vivid like nothing had happened and a must destination to be visited, particularly the area within and around the old town.

Travnik, a town and municipality and the administrative center of Central Bosnia Canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was known as the župa Lašva province of the medieval Bosnian Kingdom in the medieval period. The area is first mentioned by Bela IV of Hungary in 1244. Situated 90 kilometers from Sarajevo, historically was the capital city of the governors of Bosnia from 1699 to 1850 and Travnik was one of a number of fortified towns in the region, with its

fortress Kaštel becoming today's old town sector. The city itself is first mentioned by the Ottomans during their conquest of nearby Jajce city.

It was after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in the 15th century, much of the local population converted to Islam. The city quickly grew into one of the more important settlements in the region, as authorities constructed mosques, marketplaces, and various infrastructure. From 1929 to 1941, and Travnik was part of the Drina Banovina of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

During the Bosnian War, the town mostly escaped damage from conflict with extreme part of Serbian people - Serbian forces, hosting refugees from nearby Jajce, but the area experienced fighting between local Bosniak and Croat factions before the Washington Agreement was signed in 1994. After the war, Travnik was made the capital of the Central Bosnia Canton.

Sanski Most, with a pre-war population of about 60,000 in the town and outlying villages, already was well-known to human rights investigators and aid workers. Through his own eyes, Abaz tries to describe the tragedy during the war in that spring 1992 when Muslim Bosnian and Croats endured some of the worst inhumane acts at the hands of Serbian rebels.

It was in Sanski that the extreme part of Serbian people first made their policy of "ethnic cleansing", first by taking or rounding up for detention the Muslims and Croats known as political leaders and intellectuals, then forced the men for military service simply because they were at their right age. Along the way, thousands of Muslim and Croatian women were treated very inhumanely.

It was really a nightmare for the civilians and Abaz Besic (52) was one of the victims. Abaz was 27 years old that time and he was pulled in the war against the extreme part of Serbian people - Serbian army and with other Bosnian Muslim, as he was captured and taken into Konzentrations Lager Manjaca nearby Banja Luka for 211 days. On December 4th, 1992 he was released by the help of the International Red Cross and brought to Switzerland as refugee.



Abaz was born in Sanski Most, a city in northwestern Bosnia and Herzegovina about 169 km from the capital Sarajevo by vehicle. It is located on the Sana River in Bosanska Krajina, between Prijedor and Ključ. It is administratively part of Una-Sana Canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Abaz flashes back the history of his home town. In 1878 the little town of Sanski Most was described as Muslim city by Croatian historian Vjekoslav Klaić. From 1929 to 1941, Sanski Most was part of the Vrbas Banovina of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and was part of the Axis Independent State of Croatia during the World War II. The middle age man who loves arts and culture prefers to talk about the history of some important Islamic monuments in Sanski Most rather than returns to the nightmare of his beautiful homeland.

About 500 years ago, the Ottoman had arrived in Balkan, Mehmet II is commonly known as Muhammad al-Fatih the Conqueror (Sultan Mehmet Fatih), was an Ottoman Sultan who ruled first for a short time from August 1444 to September 1446, then later from February 1451 to May 1481. At the age of 21, he conquered Constantinople (now is Istanbul) and brought an end to the Byzantine Empire. Mehmet II continued his conquests in Anatolia with its reunification and in Southeast Europe as far west as Bosnia. After some battles during the 15th century,

Bosnia fell in 1463 and became tributary kingdom of the Western most province to the Ottoman and he was considered as hero in his homeland and parts of the wider Muslim world.

Sanski Most is a tiny calm city with total area of 781 km² for its 50.421 inhabitants according to the last Census in 2014. It is home to many different types of stores, cafes that serve you with tasty Bosnian Cevapivivi a traditional grilled Bosnian sandwich or kebab looks filled with beef and garnished with lettuce and tomato. Bosniaks or Muslim Bosnian dominate the city about 82.78% of the total population.

18th of May 2018 becomes the celebration of the 103rd anniversary of the crucial battle for the survival of the Turkish people in Sanski Most. Battle of Canakkale was celebrated at the site of the monument to Turkish Shekhids in Donji Kamengrad near Sanski Most, one of the most important places in the history of Turkey in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sultan Mehmet Fatih as the ruler of Ottoman in that period considered as the respectful man who had come to hike to Bosnia to spread Islam by the means of all the lands he had conquered and Sanski Most, was traditionally the city that has close relations with the Turkish. The Battle of Canakkale, is the Day of the Shekhids and a large number of thousands of Bosniaks in Sanski Most who had participated in this battle and had laid their lives. The history of 5 centuries ago is still alive in the memory of every citizen in Sanski Most, for mutual relations with the Turkish in particular and with the Muslim community in the world for the future historical tourism projects of the remaining monument of Sultan Mehmet Fatih. Three of the 1,149 oldest mosques throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina were built in Sanski Most namely; Džamija Sultana Mehmet built in 1463, Hamza-begova džamija built in 1557 and was destroyed during the war in 1992 and re-opened in 2000 after the restoration, while the third is Trnova Mosque that was built in 1895 by Austro-Hungarian and was destroyed in 1991 and opened again for the community in 2009.

The rest of the beauty sites of the tiny city that has amazing nature panoramic from water to water; from rivers to the nearby island which is captured the city in its bright sky and the smiling people in the village you will encounter, will ask you to have a cup of local coffee or tea in their home, then followed by an offer of

cigarettes. Bosnian hospitality is a true feeling coming from the heart, they will go out of their way to just help you finding something, and Abaz has done it by connecting with the local journalist in Sanski Most to get more information about the history of the city.

Life goes on, and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina would disseminate their friendly feeling to their guests who come and enjoy the old remaining cities as well as beautiful panoramic, down the flowing blue water and stay in the warmth of country houses, sharing stories about the old days, whilst learning to make delicious Cevapčići, and listening to the traditional music and dancing. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a precious jewel that has a perfect beauty of all God's creation in Eastern Europe; from the ancient kingdom to the Ottoman Empire and the present identity. Bosnia and Herzegovina has big love for you.

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