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**TOURISM  
IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

**Spa Tourism in Serbia and Experiences of Other Countries**



**THEMATIC  
PROCEEDINGS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC  
FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT  
AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPLICA DISTRICT WITH THE FOCUS ON TOURISM

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### Abstract

*Regional development of Toplica district can largely be supported by the development of tourism as an economic activity. In recent years there has been an increase in number of tourists -but insufficiently - so as to significantly contribute to the development of the District. Tourism potential is emphasized by a large number of healing water sources that are not sufficiently exploited. Insufficient development of infrastructure facilities, a small number of hotels, sports and recreational facilities, keep this District still backward compared to larger centers, such as the mountains of Kopaonik, Zlatibor, Tara, Stara Planina. Regional development of the entire Toplica district should move forward in the direction of putting all together of all the advantages and potential of the observed District, which requires additional investments into infrastructure, economy, other accommodation facilities and else.*

**Keywords:** *regional development, tourism, tourist potential.*

### Introduction

Regional development represents an indicator of the commercial and economic power of a particular country. Each national economy should base its economic and commercial development on equal opportunities and the reduction of regional disproportions.

Regional development strategy should be based on research and comprehensive approach by national governments, aimed at detecting strengths and potentials of underdeveloped regions. Regional underdevelopment is not primarily the characteristic of only economic

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and socially underdeveloped countries, but also of so called “developed countries” that have not paid significance attention to this problem.

One of the typical examples of regional underdevelopment and its impact on the socio-economic life is certainly the Republic of Serbia. Looking through the centuries and history, the area of the present-day country has been marked by major events such as wars, disintegration and the formation of new states, the great migration of peoples and interethnic intolerance, which largely determined the pathway of further economic progress and development.

The problem of the regional underdevelopment of Serbia and its southern regions affects the overall development of the country and its economy, which has been re-confirmed for decades through abundance and disappearance of villages south of Belgrade. Migration of young people from countryside to the city, leaving households, undeveloped infrastructure, devastated and regressive agriculture, lack of employment opportunities, represent only a part of factors that will determine the future of Serbian villages and State.

After World War II the former Yugoslav leadership has chosen industrialization as the primary method of regional development of Serbia, which led to the fact that Serbia in late eighties belonged to the group of medium developed countries. The events of the last two decades of the twentieth century led to economic collapse and discontinuing the regional development of Serbia.

After democratic changes, the commencement of transition process aimed to increase production, employment, new forms of organization, new markets and new investments.

The success of the implemented transition is best reflected through regional underdevelopment, unsuccessful privatization of factories and the present state of the economy in certain regions.

The wealth of natural resources make Toplica district suitable for the implementation of development strategies in the field of tourism, investment of funds into spas for treatment and rehabilitation, organic agriculture and promotion of traditional crafts. Toplica district is located in the basin of river Toplica, bounded on all sides by mountains Kopaonik, Radan and Jastrebac. The nearby city of Niš, as a regional

center, makes this area suitable for investment in all areas of the economy, also including tourism.

The subject of the research is the determination of the observed area's regional development and utilization of natural resources, expressed through the tourism sector and offer of tourist conveniences.

The aim of the research is to determine the link between tourism as an economic activity and its impact on the regional development of the observed region.

The historical and normative methods have been used for the purposes of research, as well as the professional literature in the field of regional development, economy of tourism, sociology and encyclopedias.

### **Research results**

Traces of medieval history are recognized in the area Kosanica and Gornje Toplice. This area is rich in rarities, interesting sites, myths, legends, and other values. Many of them have not been explored yet, enlightened in details, nor their importance determined.

These are the foundations of Serbian spirituality from the era of Nemanja's endowment - holy temples of St. Nicholas and St. Virgin, then church monasteries' areas and church forts.

Some are being in traces, some in ruins, while some have been restored. In these homes of spirituality, in a beautiful natural surroundings, monastery brotherhoods have found their gateways with the task to preserve spiritual and national self-recognition, carrying out their sacred mission in the sound of silence of centuries.

Sanctuaries exist, or have existed almost in each of the 90 settlements in Kosanica and Gornja Toplica areas.

In this region, Nemanjići conceived Serbian spirituality and culture, *inter alia*, by raising temples older than Monastery Hilandar and Cathedral NOTRE DAME DE PARIS.

Kuršumljija municipality is located in the central part of the southern Serbia, and city Kuršumljija is located at the confluence of rivers Kosanica

and Banjska into river Toplica, 65 km southwest of Niš. The municipality outreaches an area of 952 km<sup>2</sup> and has about 20,000 inhabitants.

Kuršumlja was known in Roman times, and was called AD FINES. In the Byzantine era it was titled TOPLICE and used to be a seat of the Toplica Episcopacy. It was first mentioned in written documents in the years 1019/20.

In the medieval times it was the first capital of STEFAN NEMANJA. Between 1159 and 1168, he built here his first two monasteries, St. Nicholas and St. Virgin, upon which the place has been called BELE CRKVE (*translation note – „white churches“*).

At the beginning of the Turkish rule, the city was called KURSHUMLI-KILISE, later KURSHUMLIJE and finally, after the liberation from the Turks in 1878, KURŠUMLIJA.

St. Nicholas monastery, the endowment of Stefan Nemanja from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, by the date of construction is older than monastery Hilandar 32 years and from NOTRE DAME DE PARIS, 92 years. It represents the establishment of famous the *Raška Architectural School*. Therefore, this area is called Kosanica Holy Mountain, Kosanica Athos, since it possess so many sacred places as the Holy Mountain Athos.

Nemanja constructed St. Nicholas monastery on a flat plateau (viewpoint) over the confluence of river Banjska to Toplica and endowed it to his son Sava, who, at this place, has blessed the first follower after obtaining autocephaly of Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219.

It used to be a large monastic complex and the seat of Toplica Diocese and Metropolitanate. The architecture is considered a prototype of Raška Architectural School.

It was destroyed after the Austro-Hungarian-Turkish wars (1668-1690). Nemanja's places of worship, with towers and domes, both buildings constructed in by that time named, city Toplice, one of the most important centers of young Raška, were covered with lead plates (legend says that they were cast on Kopaonik, in smelters in villages MRČE and ŠTAVA, in Lukovo area, in the middle age, region known by ores and miners). Towers and domes gleamed in the sun and were seen afar off. Two magnificent temples (near the St. Nicholas church) the Prefect's Palace

was settled, built of timber and surrounded with wooden fence, called by people Bele Crkve, and later the village next to them named the same.

Today's settlement Kuršumlija, named for the fact that in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, settled Turks stripped lead roof from worship temples and made bullets (*translators note: bullet – “kuršum”- by that time in Turkish language*).

In Mikuljano (Gornje), where today stands the church of St. Healers Cosmas and Damian, according to some sources, there was a monastery hospital, which start of construction was emphasized by Sava Nemanjić. Church's building has been renovated with further regulation to be continued.

Holy Mother's Monastery (*Petkovača*) in Kuršumlija is the oldest endowment of Stefan Nemanja. It is located near the confluence of river Kosanica into river Toplica, not far from the fragments of the Byzantine basilica, built on a foundation of Early Byzantine temple, dated in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The building itself is the single nave with trefoil base (characteristic of churches in Constantinople and Holy Mountain Athos) and with stone iconostasis. The monastery church is now in ruins, and since 1979 it is under state protection as a cultural monument of exceptional importance. The monastery is located 800 meters downstream from St. Nicholas monastery. Nemanja endowed it to his wife Anna, who managed it for some time. In the vicinity of the Monastery, there were palaces of Turkish Sultan Murad the Second's wife MARA, the daughter of Serbian duke DESPOT ĐURAĐ BRANKOVIĆ, who has been taking care of the monastery for some time. Locals call this monastery PETKOVAČA, and thousands of them gather every year on Good Friday to pray to God, and lean table with fasting food. In the World War I, Kuršumlija became known after the Second “iron” regiment and Toplica Uprising in 1917. The ninety settlements are located in the municipality of Kuršumlija, situated on the slopes of mountains Kopaonik, Sokolovica and Prepolac. One can find there an old hotel, now a restaurant, “Europe”, built in 1892, in which, according to some authors, the writer Branislav Nušić wrote his novel “Suspicious person” (*Serbian - “Sumnjivo lice”*). In the vicinity there is the St. Trinity church, built in 1902. Important cultural and historical monuments in the city are: The Memorial Ossuary to fallen partisans in the Second World War, Monument to the national hero

Drinka Pavlović, Memorial - Panel to dr Theodore William Melgård (1888-1920), a Danish doctor, volunteer in the Serbian army in the World War I. Within municipality, in other tourist areas there are: St. Mina church in village Štava, St. George church in Lukovo spa, Lazarica Church and St. Petka church in Prolom spa, and the Monument to 17<sup>th</sup> Serbian Brigade, also in Prolom spa. The archaeological site of the late antique basilica is an important cultural and historical monument from the Byzantine period, built during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565). It is located next to the road Niš - Pristine, about 300 meters from the crossroad's turn to Kuršumljia. However, one of the biggest attractions is Pločnik, a Neolithic archeological site 7500 years old. It is believed that Pločnik is the cradle of metallurgy in Europe, because there has been found 47 copper tools, statue of Venus, which proves that it is about Vinča people, who shared and spread the same culture. Forested areas that are rich in forest fruits and medicinal plants, interspersed with flowery meadows, glades, streams and rivers, flora and fauna in very vivid attractive landscapes of picturesque nature, are perfect for the development of rural tourism. Starting with the natural features, and with the traditional hospitality of this place, lately create conditions for the improvement of rural tourism and improvement of offer for tourists in the countryside. Toplica district is located in the south of Serbia and occupies an area of 2,231 km<sup>2</sup>. In its ranks are the municipalities of Prokuplje, Blace, Kuršumljia and Žitorađa. According to the last census, conducted in 2011, the total population was 91,754. The area is named after the river Toplica and part of the South Morava basin. In the river basin there are hot springs: Lukovo spa, Prolom spa, Kuršumljia spa and others. According to historical data, Romans used the healing potential of said baths, too. Toplica District possesses abundant natural rarities that can be "magnet" for domestic and foreign tourists. The most famous tourist cities, and at the same time the potential drivers of regional development are Lukovo spa, Prolom spa, Kuršumljia spa and Đavolja varoš (*transl. Devil's Town*). The synthesis of all these peculiarities of the observed area leads to a conclusion that tourism can be a driver of economic and regional development. However, to use the tourism potential in order to advance the regional prosperity, comprehensive analysis should be conducted and a comprehensive and long-term development strategy developed. In particular, the success of the adopted strategy largely depends on the successful connection of all socio-economic activities, which are of a dominant influence in the observed region. Based on the specifics of particular region, in economic science the following terms are met: developed, underdeveloped regions, deprived regions and

depression. Toplica district, with all its characteristics, is one of the underdeveloped areas, primarily due to unfavorable economic structure, unsuccessful privatization, the high share of agriculture in the total population, low national income, migration from village to town. Emphasized is the rapid development of spas in the direction of tourist destinations, and implementation of modern technical and technological solutions in the construction of accommodation, entertainment, sports, recreational and other spas' facilities, with use of contemporary medical approaches, aimed at preserving the general health of visitors, bringing spas closer to younger visitors, successful business people, managers and all those who lead an active life. Thanks to the chemical composition, temperature, radioactivity and other properties of thermal mineral springs in Serbia, our spas can be used in the treatment and prevention of a wide range of diseases and ailments. Serbia is a country that is rich in mineral and thermal springs, many of which have been turned into spas and health resorts. Particularly notable is the health by the aid of thermal water or balneotherapy. The more and more are present tourist movements, including spas' tourism, not for treatment but in order to preserve and improve the overall physical, spiritual and mental health of visitors. This concept is aimed at such a lifestyle of the individual as to affect the general wellbeing of the body with a healthy lifestyle, while achieving balanced intercourse with the environment. Local communities have become aware of the importance of spa tourism and include it into the offer of spas through the provision of accommodation and food. Spas captured an insight into the needs of modern guests and placing a greater aspect of the entertainment programs, which should attract not only high-paying guests, but also younger people who seek an active holiday. The Serbian spas give accommodation to around 17% of the total number of tourists and achieve about 31% of the total number of overnight stays in the Republic of Serbia. The largest number of tourists in spas are domestic tourists and they make even 90% of all visitors to our spas. This means that spas have their place within the tourism product of Serbia and that their situation may continue to improve by the modernization of services and content therein. This is particularly important within an approach to foreign guests, by offering quality services, which leads to the need to build image and repositioning of our spas on the European tourist market. Our spas can contribute to the promotion and development of cultural tourism, which affects the overall emotional, mental and cognitive development of the individual. Spas also encourage business tourism through individual business trips, conferences, conventions and meetings, exhibitions and fairs, incentive travels, outdoor events and like.

One of the possibilities to improve the economic and social situation of this district is to invest into tourism. The wealth of natural resources makes this area very interesting to domestic and foreign tourists. Toplica district has huge unexploited potential of natural and human resources. In particular, the success of the adopted strategy largely depends on the successful connection of all socio-economic activities, which have a dominant influence in the observed region.

**Table 1:** *Tourist arrivals and overnight stays for the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia*

Year	Arrivals	Overnight Stays	Arrivals		Overnight Stays	
			domestic	foreign	domestic	Foreign
2010	352,553	1,314,707	274,400	78,153	1,185,410	129,297
2011	362,049	1,350,521	285,500	76,549	1,217,103	133,418
2012	353,706	1,315,434	275,073	78,633	1,163,491	151,943
2013	334,809	1,106,177	251,673	83,136	957,431	148,746
2014	329,529	995,948	233,013	96,516	805,322	190,626

**Source:** *BINational Bureau of Statistics Serbia*

In the area of the Municipality of Kuršumljija there are: Prolom spa, Lukovo spa and Kuršumljija spa. **PROLOM SPA** is located at 23 km southeast of Kuršumljija, on the slopes Sokolovica and Radan mountain, at an altitude of 550 to 668 meters. According to some balneological healing waters features (26-31,5 °C) it represents an European and possibly the World rarity. In the hotel "Radan" and annexes there are 440 beds and 700 seats in the restaurant, and in private accommodation there are over 290 registered beds, and in a private restaurant with accommodation "Gurman" - 21 beds and 320 seats. Coffee bar has 150, and "Etno Krčma" 120 seats. Capacity for medical treatment and rehabilitation of the hotel "Radan" is 1,500 patients per day. Prolom spa is enriched by "prolom" water that belongs to the group of highly low in minerals waters (pH 8.8.9,2). Thanks to its unique characteristics, *Prolom Water* aids in the treatment of following: kidneys and urinary tract diseases, disease of the digestive system, while in combination with balneotherapy in Prolom spa, it helps in the treatment of skin diseases and rheumatism. By kidney and urinary tract disease, *Prolom Water* is especially helpful in the treatment of: chronic kidney infections, urinary tract and prostate, stone and sand in the kidney and urinary tract, conditions after urinary system surgery. *Prolom Water* is a gift of nature and best to drink it in the morning, two to three cups, because in that way it comes faster from the stomach into the small intestine and kidneys. One

should drink thirty minutes before lunch and dinner 0.5 liters of *Prolom Water*, and between meals as much as it pleases an individual, but the total intake of water during the day should be between 2.5 and 3 l. As for recreation contents, the Spa has an indoor pool, gym, three sports' courts and six marked "paths of health". In Prolom spa, there are two temples: St. Petka church and St. Lazarus worship temple, latter having in the courtyard the famous curled prunes, still being a vivid, interesting among local people. Prolom spa is one of the youngest balneological centers in Serbia. The present name is derived from the village Prolom, which probably had a homestead known as the Banja and Bačija. Land around the hot springs were named "banja or banjsko" (*transl. – „spa or „from the spa“*). (Stanković, 2009). The seat of the spa is located in Kuršumlija, in one of the most underdeveloped municipalities in southern Serbia. Prolom spa operates within Planinka Joint Stock Company, which also owns a factory for water bottling. The beneficial properties of *Prolom Water* make this spa distinctive in Serbia and in the region. *Prolom Water* is used for drinking, bathing, and in combination with medicinal mud, medical methods and means, for the treatment of kidney and urinary tract, female genital organs, skin, digestive tract, articular rheumatism and ... Maćejka (1998). Given the Prolom spa's potential for tourism, it should be used as a driver of regional development through investments into accommodation facilities and infrastructure, extension of the offer range, employment, connecting local food producers with restaurants and thus stopping further weakening of the economy of southern Serbia.

**Table 2:** *Tourist and overnight stays in Prolom spa*

Year	Tourists	Overnight Stays	Year	Tourists	Overnight Stays
1965	5,108	49,745	1995	12,392	111,182
1970	8,129	86,120	2000	8,496	66,724
1975	9,087	99,140	2005	12,074	80,341
1980	9,905	105,630	2012*	16,712	76,788
1985	9,120	100,233	2013*	12,831	60,655
1990	15,188	145,636	2014*	11,731	58,756

**Source:** *Dr Stevan M. Stanković (2009): Serbian spas, Institute for School Books, Beograd, page 215*

*Source\*:* *Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia*

The largest accommodation capacity has Radan hotel, which was put into operation in 1968. In addition to the hotel, a large number of tourists can be accommodated in private households. For a large number of

households this is the only form of income, especially during summer months, which in addition to accommodation offer a variety of gourmet cuisine, thus complementing touristic offer. However, underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of accommodation capacity, the modest offer of tourist programs, make this area inaccessible to a large number of "potential" tourists. For a tourist destination to be interesting and accessible for tourists, it should had developed road network, to be connected with major regional centers, improve service quality, complete the range, determine the target groups of tourists, and perform promotional activities via television and the Internet. This year the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a decision to encourage the development of domestic tourism, through the distribution of free vouchers for incentive use of accommodation services and catering facilities in the period of at least five nights, outside the municipality or city of residence of vouchers' beneficiaries (<http://mtt.gov.rs/vauceri-za-odmor-u-srbiji/>). This decision contributed for a large number of domestic tourists to spend their money in their own country, which had a positive effect on the economy of the whole country, as well as certain regions. When talking about tourism, its impact on the overall socio-economic development should be noted. Tourism has an impact on the domestic product, national income, balance of payments, employment and living standards, faster development of underdeveloped areas, etc. According to English author Medlik, (1966), for determining the economic importance of tourism in a certain area, it is necessary to take into account the influence of certain groups of factors (Unković, 1995).

- Tourist activity (climate conditions, cultural and historical heritage, natural beauty);
- Accessibility (distance of tourist demand sources, road networks and the like);
- Tourist offer (accommodation, conditions of supply, entertainment, public transport);
- Organization of tourism and political improvements

**LUKOVO SPA** is located on the eastern slopes of Kopaonik and located 36 km west of Kuršumljia. It is known for its 37 mineral springs of thermal mineral waters, yielding more than 100 liters per second, temperature of 35 to 69.5 degrees Celsius. Spa has on its disposal the hotel "Kopaonik" with 160 beds and 160 seats in the restaurant and 80 beds in private accommodation. Medical - rehabilitation capacity of the hotel "Kopaonik" counts 500 patients per day. As for recreation, spa has an indoor swimming pool, ski slope with a lift, a sports hall, two sports

courts and six marked "paths of health". Lukovo spa's water aids in the treatment of: chronic inflammation - rheumatism, degenerative spinal diseases and conditions after injuries to the bone-joint system. **Lukovo spa** is located in the valley of river Štavska, which with the river Trebinjska, represents the branch of river Lukovo, whose basin is settled on the southern slopes of Kopaonik, which further belongs to the basin of the upper part of river Toplica. The altitude of the spa is 700 m, and this is one of the highest spas in Serbia (Stanković, 2009). Spa has a large number of natural springs used for the treatment of rheumatic, gynecological and skin diseases.

**Table 3:** *Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Lukovo Spa*

Year	Arrivals	Overnight Stays	Arrivals		Overnight Stays	
			domestic	foreign	domestic	foreign
2011	12,535	74,704	12,185	350	73,014	1,690
2012	11,173	74,564	10,618	555	72,027	2,537
2013	11,318	72,564	10,719	599	69,516	3,048
2014	-	70,000*	-	-	-	-

**Source:** *Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia*

\* *According to the estimations of Lukovo Spa directors*

**KURŠUMLIJA SPA** is located southwest of Kopaonik. The distance from Kuršumljia is 11 kilometers. The altitude is about 450 m. Its medicinal properties are suitable for the treatment of anemia, treatment of injuries, diseases of the respiratory system, diabetes. Negligence towards the natural abundance made the water spill out, there is small occupancy of accommodation facilities (hotel "Žubor" and villa "Jugoslavija"), the pump regulating the level of mineral water is out of operation. The vicinity of the mountain Kopaonik, gives to this beautiful spa a chance for the development and restoration. The accent is given to connectiong of these two tourist centers that might impact the regional dvelopment of Toplica district. According to the variety of healing waters (25-68<sup>0</sup>C), this spa enters among few the most respected spas in Europe. At the Spa there is the Institute for the Prevention of Disability "Žubor" with 301 beds and 250 seats in the restaurant and 80 in the buffet "Plaža", 26 beds in Villa "Milica" with a restaurant "Prepolac" with 150 seats, which has been used by "Zvezdara Tours", Belgrade, and 25 beds of the Red Cross Rest Home for Children. The spa-rehabilitation capacity of "Žubor" is 2,000 patients per day. As for recreation, spa has two closed and one open Olympic size swimming pool, soccer field, four sports courts and four marked "paths of

health". Indications: musculoskeletal system diseases, gynecological and neurological diseases. The city has 30 restaurants and coffee rooms of different capacities and offers. One of them is on Samokov, the hill above the town (528 m altitude), famous resort of Kuršumlija citizens. It is named "Samokovo" and has 200 seats. At the bypass of Toplica highway motel there are three motels: "Rudare" in Rudar (60 beds and 268 seats in the restaurant), "Rado" in Kastrat (19 beds and 300 seats) and "Stara Vrba" in Pepeljevac (14 beds and 145 seats). It is evident that, due to lack of investment, devastated economy, poverty and neglect of the tourism potential, Kuršumlija spa and whole Toplica district has been brought to the brink of "collapse". **DEVIL'S TOWN** is a monument of nature of a scary name, but of unrealistic beauty and being the symbol of Toplica district (Bosnić, 2009).

This natural monument is located on the slopes of mountains Radan, and makes this area richer for another tourist spot. In the last ten years the number of tourists significantly increased, visiting this monument of nature. Local self government has built an access road and illuminated the entire complex, and thus enabled visits by night. The promotion of this monument of nature and thus attracting a huge number of foreign tourists is viable through the cooperation between local self government and tourist agencies. This location is characterized by a large number of legends and stories about the origin of uncommon rocks, which can be used for the presentation to tourists and thus make very interesting visit. The most famous natural rarity in the municipality of Kuršumlija is **DEVIL'S TOWN**, located on the slope of Radan mountain, and represents a unique example in the world of erosion on forest land.

As a rare and unique natural monument, Devil's Town has been nominated for one of the world's natural wonders in our country, Europe and in the World. Natural Monument "Devil's Town" is located in the south of Serbia, 89 km southwest of Niš, 27 km southeast of Kuršumlija. It is composed of two, rare in the world, natural phenomena: clay figures, as specific forms of relief which stay in the area very attractive, and the two springs of strongly acidic water with high mineralization. The attractiveness of the phenomenon complements natural environment depicting a rather crude, almost mystical, and in the wider environment colorful and gentle, as well as the remains of the old church and several Sas pit mines.

**Figure 1:** *Devil's Town*



**Source:** *sr.wikipedia.org*

“Devil's Town” is a natural wonder that has not been made by human hands, and yet we want from an inner urge to bring closer to ourselves and people around us this natural treasure we have been are graced by, which has been gifted to us to inspire and upraise, to remind our consciousness of the thought of how to preserve the nature in which we live and in which only we can be what we are, i.e. the most perfect living organism. But this is, after all, the greatest wonder of nature on the Globus! This natural phenomenon in the village Đake, municipality Kuršumlija, consists of 202 figures resulting from erosion, of different shapes and sizes, ranging between 2 to 15 meters and a width of 0.5 to 3 meters, with stone caps on the top, a result of a specific erosive process that lasts for centuries. Figures are forming, growing, changing, shortening, disappearing and reappearing. The surface layer is composed of marl, one meter thick. In the middle there is a yellowish clay, and figure layer is covered with stone slabs alike an umbrella, which protects the loose base from destruction. On the other side, in the depths of the rivers, by washing and sedimentation formed are new figures. In Europe, there are similar phenomena, but “figures” in Devil's Town are of a larger size and significantly more stable, so this is the most famous natural monument of its kind in Europe. Many compare this phenomenon with the “Garden of the Gods” in Colorado - USA. This amazing wonder of nature enchants, but also frights by beauty and strength. Here the path meanders like wounded hinge and around it, the aged hornbeam trees and stumps fallen asleep, which resemble the terrifying creatures. Plateau of Đake region is flanked by boulders, being cut through thunders and mountain whirlwinds. Long ago, eighty families lived in this area, and now only few. Here, there is an abundance of wild pear trees, dog berries,

wild blackberries, plums, rosehips, juniper berries, boletus, chanterelle, with none to collect them. In Devil's Town in 1977, the first International colony of art photography in our country has been founded, which is still active and whose leaders are Velisav Milenković, Živojin Miljković and, by that time the Mayor of Kuršumljija, Božur Petrović. Photo - colony as a unique event brings together photo-artists from the country and abroad, who, with the camera-eye, contribute to the affirmation of art photography and popularization of the unique phenomenon of nature - Devil's Town, organizing exhibitions of art photography created in this colony around the World (Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Hungary, China, America, Austria, etc.). This valuable site was placed under state protection in 1959, and 1995 declared the natural good of exceptional importance by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and placed in the first category of protection. The total protected area of Devil's Town is 67 ha. As a strange natural phenomenon it influenced the imagination of people deriving many legends about its origin. Within the protected area there are two water springs with unusual characteristics. One is situated in the "Devil's ravine", a second "Red spring" by the hiking trail in the middle of the protected areas, with lesser mineralization. These waters are very rare in the world, some of which are used in spa treatments. While people believe in the healing power of "Devil's Water", the doctors still do not recommend it, because it has not been studied enough. International Art Colony "BELE CRKVE" in Kuršumljija was founded in 1995, bringing together academic painters from Serbia and abroad (Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus ...), who on their canvases evoke the motive of colorful landscapes of Gornja Toplica and Kosanica. There are many of those who come to see the Devil's Town, and then immediately ask how to get to the Caričin grad ("Empress's Town") which is 31 kilometers away, but there is no road. Caričin grad was one of the largest and most important Byzantine cities in the Balkans. It was built in the sixth century by Byzantine Emperor Justinian, in gratitude to the area where he was born.

The site lies on a plateau of 42,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The town used to be an important administrative and military center, the seat of newly established archbishopric of IVSTIANA PRIMA that has jurisdiction over north ILLYRIAN, by which the right of rule of THESSALONIKI has been bounded to south parts of the province. It was surrounded by ramparts, and on the highest placed acropolis has been built while the public life was flowing on the circle forum of the town. Under *Petrova gora*, there is the biggest mystery of this area UPHILL/DOWNHILL LANE. It is said

that this is the place where car with stopped engine, being downhill, alone returns uphill. Most of people regard this as a secret of a magnetic field, situated inside the hill. This also explain a fact of fallen German planes during World War II. „Devil's Town“, preserved in own natural milieu, must be made available to coming generations who will enjoy its preserved beauties. Tourism of protected areas waives the economy of scale and directs itself to quality, and at the same time emphasizes the important form of the tourism – ECO TOURISM. In this area, tourists are offered the preserved environment as the top tourist impression, where the tourist in this case is not the sole observer and occupant of protected space, but active participant in the protection and preservation of the same. The increasing pollution of general natural resources such as air and water, soil, noise pollution in urban lifestyle and increasing stress with population due to aggregated daily life pressures in working environment, immensely influenced tourists' need to turn back to preserved environment and preserved attractive areas. The bond of tourists' increased interest to protected areas should be sought in the primeval bond between man and nature and his desire to re-establish to some extent the lost contact thereof. Preserved and protected nature in combination with rural experience should be a pearl of tourism. During the tourist valorization and exploitation of protected parts of nature, it is necessary to be guided by the principles of sustainable development. Current global trends that imply the convergence of man and nature, raised awareness of the need to preserve nature and the increasing lack of quality of natural spaces, present an opportunity to introduce our protected areas on domestic and international tourism markets. It should be added that the development of rural tourism with primary agricultural production is tracing the way to the development of tourism in rural areas. Remote rural areas affected by intense emptying and dying villages, require very intensive sustainable and subsidence rates. All forms of rural tourism according to the length of stay can be divided into: the excursions and stay. Basic attractiveness of rural tourism and rural areas are: proximity to nature, that is the preservation of natural features, then preserved the tradition of the villages (material and spiritual culture), hospitality and family atmosphere. Visitors of these tourist areas are mostly residents of large cities, who desire to experience a different life from the gloomy everyday life. Appropriately constructed rest houses in nature, characterized by peace and serenity are genuine oasis for people from highly urbanized industrial centers. It should be noted that agriculture occupies an important place in the structural and spatial development of rural areas, and consequently the certain forms of

tourism. In the developing process of tourism, agriculture appears as a supplier of food, raw materials and labor, as well as a motive of tourist movements. Rural tourism is becoming a factor stimulating development in agricultural production, which enables an increase in employment in rural areas, but also increasing scope and structure of agricultural production. Tourism as a consumer of agricultural products encompasses different categories of users: tourists, passers-by, hotel guests', out of restaurants consumption, weekenders, foreign tourists and others. For high standard consumers it is no longer enough for food to be of a good quality, but also to be produced in naturally healthy conditions, without the use of chemicals, which includes a specific geographical origin. Modern tourists are of an adventurous spirit and have shown a growing interest in holidays based on natural, cultural and gastronomy activities. On the other hand, agricultural production with an increase in placements of certain agricultural products to the tourist market, would have achieved significant progress in economic and organizational production process that must adapt to the new market setting (Todorović, Štetić, 2009). In addition, the countries with developed economy and industry have their agricultural land more polluted and are thus oriented on imports of organic products from the countries of Southeast Europe, which indicates the possibility for our involvement in trade flows. Mass tourism provokes the saturation within tourist demand, resulting in a need for new tourism products and experiences, new ways of spending leisure time, or for quality experiences that mass tourism can no longer offer. Creating tourist destinations in the regions that possess certain qualities should interest more and more challenging tourist demand. The tourist offer should have its own unique values that will be valorized through tourist movements. In this area there is a need for more widespread development of tourism, and at present it is difficult to achieve the desired result, taking into consideration given economic effects. Special forms of tourism represent the future of tourism development in Serbia, which will provide a more stable and sustainable development of tourism and also cover the so far neglected potential and facilities, which will result in providing the balanced territorial development of tourism and bring benefit, both to tourists and tourism workers and local community. Certainly, there are particular characteristics of specific forms of tourism which distinguish from the classic forms of mass tourism. According to the definition given by Todorovic and Štetić under “specific forms of tourism involves the organization of specific forms of rest, recreational experiences, and long experience of specific content driven by individuals or specific groups”. It is often pointed out that the special forms of tourism are sustainable forms

thereof, which unlike mass tourism, involve fewer participants being responsible towards the environment and the like. The development of specific forms of tourism requires a space that allows the development of tourism trends, and also as an important factor one should pinpoint human resources (people) who should be able to manage the development of specific tourism forms. This should include technical and technological level of capacity equipment within area to suit the requirements of certain forms of tourism. Travel demand has priority over the offer, since specific requirements on the demand side are one of the main factors for the development of specific forms of tourism and at the same time the driving force, or the encouragement of originating and diversification of the tourist offer of special forms of tourism. The very important is the impact of high-technology on the behavior and consumers' choice. On the one hand tourists become more informed, able to travel and meet their wants and needs becoming more diverse, and therefore demands that are placed before the offer in the context of specific forms of tourism are becoming increasingly complex and numerous. Tourists from these spheres act as a visible individuals who want to fulfill their desires, or their life. Specific features and characteristics of the so-called "tourists nouveau" are: looking for experience, rich in money but poor in spare time, flexible in the use of their vacations, enjoyment during the trip, the astute, aware of the quality, individualists, want to feel the positive interaction with the physical and social environment, expressing a desire for self-improvement, expressing a critical attitude, they are less loyal to specific brands, looking for value for money and not only low prices of the offer, they possess a social and environmental responsibility, looking for an authentic travel experience, the participants rather than consumers, and want to choose which experience to achieve. These are the general characteristics of demand in the context of specific forms of tourism. General characteristics listed, mostly address the complexity of the overall demand in the market of special forms of tourism and the way tourists express their desire and access to their achievement. Tourist offer must be aware of these characteristics and be able to create products that would take into consideration the existing trends in tourism demand side. One cannot speak about the tourist offer as a single system, but as a temporally and spatially related group of entities that should establish mutual communication and communication with the authorities responsible for the development of tourism within the destination, all in order to identify more closely own interest in the implementation of the adopted tourism development plans. When creating a special tourism product it is vital to properly estimate internal capabilities and features of

the destination itself. Precisely, uniqueness, authenticity and local factors are elements that specific tourism product must meet. The hotel's facilities are adapted to the specific requirements of demand through the processes of standardization and specialization. The standardization is more or less standard and commonly present worldwide, for example: coastal, mountain, spa, city, transit, sports, business and other hotels. Those hotels start from certain principles of the appearance on the market, offering its guests a unique and authentic experience, and most of them facing the contact with nature and approach to human nature. The performance on the tourism market depends on positioning strategy that is crucial in the marketing approach and communication with the selected segments. Positioning means communicating destinations with consumers aimed at creating the image or name in the minds of selected segments and thus enhancing a superior position compared to the competition. In the end it can be said that the tourism and forms of movement within, is subject to constant changes that are affected by the overall environment.

### **Conclusion**

Regional development of Toplica district can be launched out from the tourism sector, mainly due to the wealth of natural resources. Insufficient utilization of tourism potential, human resources, agricultural production, retains this district economically depressed. Due to reduced economic activity, failed privatization of large conglomerates, a small scale of investments, non-performed regionalization, make this area one of the most deprived regions of Serbia.

Tourism as an economic activity has not been the focus of national development strategy for decades since development has been directed towards other activities. However, in order to successfully develop a region near the tourist attractions, road infrastructure, trade and services sector should be developed. The potential of Toplica district lies in connecting spa tourism and food and local specialties production by local population, leading to increased employment. Toplica area consists of largely agricultural population, hence it can place its products into the nearest tourist spot.

Promotion of tourism facilities greatly contributes to increasing the number of tourists by presenting all features and characteristics of the area. Toplica district has a rich historical tradition, a large number of churches and monasteries which enhances the treasure of this region. The

proximity of “Constantine the Great” Airport in Niš make Toplica easily accessible to foreign tourists, but it takes a lot of money and time investment to accelerate the development of this region.

Citing all the characteristics and features, it can be concluded that tourism can and should be the engine of development and progress of Toplica district.

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