

**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



MYSTICAL DANUBE

Thematic Tourist Route

“BETWEEN TWO LAKES –

THE PATH OF MOUNTAINS

AND LEGENDS”

Partner information

Project	GREEN AND MYSTICAL DANUBE STORYTELLING ROUTE Transnational valorisation of natural and intangible cultural heritage for the socio-economic development of rural areas in the Danube region
Activity title	A2.4 Development of the Green and Mystical Danube Storytelling Route based on all Action plans
Financed by	INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme
Partner name	Agency for Management of Protected Areas of Podgorica
Full address	Radosava Burića bb, 81000 Podgorica
Contact person	Dalibor Zečević, Director
Location and date	Podgorica, December 2025

Content

PARTNER INFORMATION	1
1. ABOUT THE THEMATIC TOURIST ROUTE "BETWEEN TWO LAKES – THE PATH OF MOUNTAINS AND LEGENDS"	3
1.1. Description and Profile of the Route	4
1.2. Target Groups, Motivation, Expectations, Interpretation Approach	7
1.3. Accommodation, Food and Beverage Options	8
1.4. Activities in the Area	9
2. POINTS OF INTEREST (POI)	11
POI ① VIEWPOINT ABOVE MOKRA	11
Theme: THE KUČKA MOUNTAINS (ŽIJOVO or ŽIJEVO)	11
Theme: THE KUČI TRIBE	15
POI ② VIEWPOINT KATUN LAKOVIČA	16
Theme: WATERS	17
Theme: ACTIVITIES	18
POI ③ BUKUMIRSKO VIEWPOINT	20
Theme: LEGENDS RELATED TO BUKUMIRSKO LAKE	20
POI ④ BUKUMIRSKO LAKE	26
Theme: BUKUMIRSKO LAKE	27
Theme: THE THRESHING FLOOR	29
POI ⑤ KATUN LAKOVIČA	31
Theme: ABOUT KATUNS AND LIFE IN THEM	31
POI ⑥ DREKALOV VIEWPOINT	36
Theme: DUKE DREKALE	37
Theme: LEGENDS FROM KUČI	38
3. INTERPRETATION	43
3.1. Guide / Interpreter Profile	43
3.2. Experience Creation Techniques	44
4. TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE	46
4.1. Entrance-Orientation Panels (Portals)	46
4.2. Directional Signposts Between POI Points	47
5. MARKETING OF THE THEMATIC ROUTE	48
5.1. Marketing mix	48
5.2. Logo of the Thematic Route	50
REFERENCE SOURCES AND LITERATURE	51

1. About the thematic tourist route “Between Two Lakes – The Path of Mountains and Legends”



Illustration 1: Detail of a topographic map, Žijovo section, 149-3-3, data from 1970. Printed in 1980.

The thematic tourist route “Between Two Lakes – The Path of Mountains and Legends” leads visitors through one of the most mysterious and beautiful areas of the Kučka Mountains – the space between Bukumirsko and Rikavačko Lake, where nature, memory, and tradition intertwine. This thematic product is not only a combined hiking trail, but also a journey through layers of time – through stories that have shaped the identity of mountain communities and the ways in which people understood the world around them. At every step, we discover traces of

ancient katuns, stone hearths, threshing floors, and the lakes that, in local tradition, became mirrors of the sky and homes of fairies, dragons, and heroes.

The route connects six thematic points that guide the visitor from the real to the symbolic: from landscapes, mountains, and waters, through life in the katuns, to lake legends and mysticism. Each point offers an experience – a view, a story, a sound, or a feeling – through which the visitor discovers not only nature, but also the ways in which people, with respect, lived in harmony with it for centuries.

“Between Two Lakes – The Path of Mountains and Legends” is an invitation to experience the mountain and the cultural landscape more deeply and more quietly.

1.1. Description and Profile of the Route

About Tourist Routes

A tourist route is a planned and interpreted whole that connects attractions, sites, or activities into a logical and experientially engaging sequence. It has a tourist purpose – the visitor travels for the sake of experience, education, entertainment, or spiritual enrichment. It usually includes infrastructure, signage, information points, interpretation, and promotion. It may be thematic (linked to a specific theme) or non-thematic (e.g., a panoramic drive without a specific theme).

General Information about the Thematic Tourist Route

The thematic tourist route “Between Two Lakes – The Path of Mountains and Legends” follows a winding path between mountain peaks, plateaus, lakes, and old katuns. Every part of the landscape carries its own story – of water, stone, the katun, and tradition. In spring, the route speaks through its flower-filled meadows and fresh greenery; in summer, it is possible to see active katuns, while autumn brings silence and colour.

Route Information

Name: “Between Two Lakes – The Path of Mountains and Legends”

Length: 10.8 km

Time required: Between 2 and 4 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Highest point: 1762 m

Lowest point: 1446 m

Start: Viewpoint above Mokra (GPS: 42.60572, 19.566696)

End: Viewpoint "Drekalov vidik" above Rikavačko Lake (GPS: 42.34429, 19.35415)

Themes: mountains, waters, nature, katun life, legends, culture, memory

Tabular Overview of the Route

TOI No.	TOI NAME	Description	GPS	Elevation (H)	Distance Between TOIs	Movement & Time
1	VIEWPOINT ON MOKRA	Starting point of the route	42.60572, 19.566696	1532 m	1.2 km ↓	Transport 5 min
2	VIEWPOINT - KATUN LJAKOVIĆ	Point where trail leaves the asphalt road	42.60783, 19.55975	1549 m	200 m ↓	Hiking 5 min
		Viewpoint location	42.36223, 19.33357		500 m ↓	Hiking 15 min
3	BUKOMIRSKI VIEWPOINT	Part of the marked hiking trail 'Bukumirski Circle'	42.606009, 19.556591	1469 m	500 m ↓	Hiking 15 min
4	BUKUMIRSKO LAKE	Parking area	42.603293, 19.557354	1446 m	3.900 m ↓	Transport 10 min

	INTERSECTION TO ŠIROKAR	Intersection of asphalt and gravel road to Širokar (starting point of the route)	42.60572, 19.56696	1532 m	3.800 m ↓	Transport 12 min / Hiking 1 h 8 min Recommendation : Use a 4x4 vehicle on the gravel road
5	ŠIROKAR	Katun	42.58133, 19.59031	1762 m	500 m ↓	Hiking 10-15 min
6	VIEWPOINT - DREKALOV LOOKOUT	Viewpoint location	42.34429, 19.35415	—	—	—
	TOTAL	Length: 10.800 m			Time:	2-4 hours

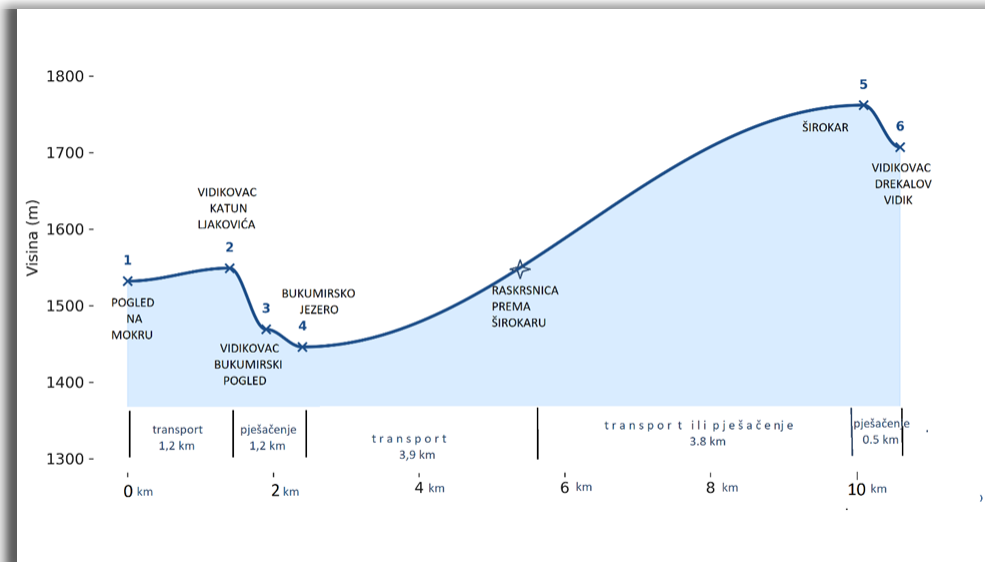


Illustration 1 – Route Profile

The route is equipped with appropriate infrastructure on the ground. In the following text, for the description of each point of interest, a photograph of the situation in the field is provided.

1.2. Target Groups, Motivation, Expectations, Interpretation Approach

Target Group	Profile	Motivations	Expectations	Recommended Interpretation Approach
Nature Lovers and Hikers	Active visitors, domestic and international hikers, groups and individuals.	Physical activity, landscape, peace, untouched nature.	Well-marked trail, safety, clear information, photogenic nature.	Focus on natural elements (water, mountains), simple language, QR codes with curiosities, discreet interpretation.
Cultural and Educational Tourists	Lovers of history, culture, and tradition; researchers, students, museum professionals.	Learning about life in katuns, beliefs, and legends.	Authenticity, stories about people, credible guides.	Storytelling, story reconstruction, connecting with mountain symbols and myths.
School and Educational Groups	Pupils and students on field classes.	Learning through experience, combination	Interactivity, simple messages,	Gamification ('tracks', tasks), workshops on legends and

		of science and storytelling.	safe environment.	nature, symbolic games (heroes, dragon, fairy).
Cultural Nomads and Digital Travelers	Independent travelers, slow travelers, digital workers.	Authentic experience, contact with local people, tranquility.	Visual and spiritual aesthetics, calmness, silence, storytelling.	Visually strong interpretation (minimalism, design), audio guides with narrative tone, emphasis on emotion and atmosphere.
Local Residents and Returnees	People from Kuči and the surroundings, diaspora, descendants of residents.	Return to roots, memory, identity.	Emotional connection, sense of pride and belonging.	Inclusion of local voices (interviews, memories), stories about ancestors, events and gatherings.

1.3. Accommodation, Food and Beverage Options

Camp Veruša

Service type: Facility offering basic accommodation services in a natural environment.

Address: Veruša

Phone: +382 68 593 138

National Restaurant Ribnjak

Service type: Restaurant offering traditional culinary experiences.

Address: Veruša

Phone: +382 69 352 388

Naša Kuća Veruša

Service type: Private facility offering accommodation and homemade food.

Address: Veruša
Phone: +382 06 8319 604

Katun Mokra

Service type: Rural household offering traditional accommodation and homemade meals.

Address: Mokra
Phone: +382 67 542 888

1.4. Activities in the Area

Activity	Description	Recommended Visitor Profile
Katun Life	Traditional way of life in the mountains, summer stay of families in katuns where they keep livestock and make cheese and cream. Today it offers insight into cultural heritage and a sustainable way of life.	Cultural tourists, ethnologists, research groups, local visitors.
Hiking (easy trails)	Gentle trails around the lakes and katuns allow slow, thoughtful movement through the landscape and an experience of silence and natural beauty.	Families, recreational visitors, older visitors, digital nomads.
Mountain Hiking	Ascents and viewpoints that reveal wide horizons of the Kučka Mountains. An activity that combines physical effort and a sense of freedom.	Experienced hikers, nature lovers, individual adventurers.
Cycling	Gravel roads and gentle climbs suitable for cycling tours that combine	Active tourists, couples, younger visitors, mountain bikers.

	adventure and enjoyment of the landscape.	
Horse Riding	Once an everyday means of movement, today an experience that connects visitors with nature and mountain tradition.	Tourists seeking an authentic experience, families, educational groups.
Herb Gathering	An activity that reveals the richness of the flora of the Kučka Mountains and passes on knowledge about folk medicine and traditional gathering.	Eco-tourists, researchers, schools, local guides.
Mushroom Picking	In spring and autumn, the mountains offer edible species; the activity encourages careful and responsible interaction with nature.	Families, recreational visitors, schools, culinary enthusiasts.
Birdwatching	Around the lakes and mountain meadows, many bird species can be seen. The activity develops patience, concentration, and love for nature.	Eco-tourists, photography enthusiasts, students, researchers.
Tracking Animal Signs	Learning about animals through traces and signs in the landscape – such as footprints, nests, feathers, or fur.	Children, school groups, families, storyteller-guides.

2. Points of Interest (POI)

POI 1

VIEWPOINT ABOVE MOKRA



Illustration 2 – Location of Point 1; Source: AUZP, 2025.

Theme: **THE KUČKA MOUNTAINS (ŽIJOVO or ŽIJEVO)**

One of the lesser-known “Dinaric gems,” located along the Montenegrin-Albanian border. They are named after the Kuči tribe, which inhabits the area and traditionally moves its livestock to the mountains. Another name used for the entire group is Žijovo. Local residents also use the name Žijevo, which is the form recorded on older maps. The name Žijevo originates from the male name Žijo, a diminutive in Kuči of the names Živan or Živko. Sometimes the term Planine kučke krajine (“Mountains of the Kuči region”) is also used.

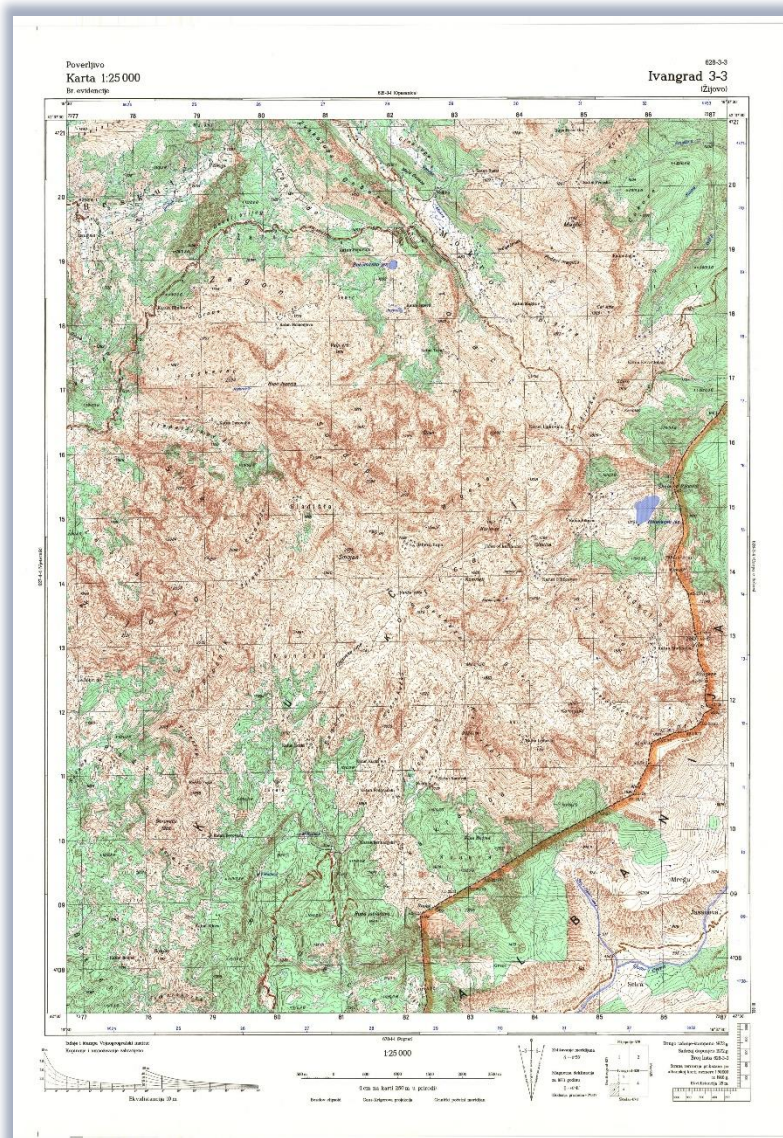


Illustration 4 – Topographic map of Žijovo; Source: www.topografskakarta.com/jugo/download/srb_25/ivangrad11/h653.html

The western border of the Kučka Mountains is formed by the canyons of the Morača and Mala Rijeka rivers, approximately the wider area through which the road Podgorica – Lijeva Rijeka – Veruša passes.

To the southwest, the boundary is Čemovsko Polje in the wide Zeta Valley.

In the south and southeast, it is marked by the course of the Cijevna River.

To the east, a part of the Žijevo mountain range, lower in average elevation but considerable in area, lies on Albanian territory (the area of the Klimenti tribe), south of the Vrmoša River.

The northern boundary of Žijevo, towards the Komovi range, follows the line Veruša – Mokra – Širokar. Crna Planina and Maglič represent a broader extension of the Komovi massif.

Mountain peaks of the Podgorica side of the “Komovi Nature Park”

Štitan, 2147 m a.s.l. (može se pronaći i podatak 2165 m a.s.l. i 2172 m a.s.l.);

Velji Torač-Mali Štitan, 1900 m a.s.l.;

Veliki Štitan, 1988 m a.s.l.;

Surdup, 2184 m a.s.l.;

Velji vrh, 1916 m a.s.l.;

Kariman, 1857 m a.s.l.;

Pasjaci, 2030 m a.s.l.;

Smojan, 2064m m a.s.l. (može se pronaći i podatak o 2080 m a.s.l., 2082m m, te 2085 m a.s.l.)

Toljevac, 2022 m a.s.l.;

Vrhovi masiva Komova:

Kučki Kom, 2487 m a.s.l.;

Bavan, 2326 m a.s.l.;

Rogamski vrh, 2303 m a.s.l.;

Suvovrh, 2211 m a.s.l.;

Mali Suvovrh, 2028m m;

Sumor, 1967 m a.s.l.;

Planinica, 2153 m a.s.l.;

Gornji vrh, 2016 m a.s.l.;

Donji vrh, 1957 m a.s.l.;

Kurlaj, 1957 m a.s.l.;

Stražarica, 1885 m a.s.l.;

Maglič, 2142m m;

Crna planina, 1984m m;

In the Podgorica section of the Nature Park, there are 13 peaks above 2,000 m a.s.l.



Illustration 3 - Mokra, Source: <https://www.dinarskogorje.com/ku269ke-planine-381jovo---vodi269-1-dio.html>

Mountains in the Area

Crna planina

This is a broad, rounded elevation extending in a northwest–southeast direction, from Veruša in the west to the Bušat *katun* in the east. This gentle, forested rise is in fact a wider branch of the Komovi mountain range. Its highest point is Matovo Bilo (1984 m a.s.l.), near Kozelj and the summit of Maglič. Springs appear on this elevation even at altitudes above 1800 metres. In the Bušat *katun* there is also a former Yugoslav Army outpost. The traditional Kuči livestock ascent (*izdig*) to Komovi (the High Mountain) used to pass through this *katun*.

The Legend of Crna Planina

According to local lore, the name of the mountain is connected to Dragiša, a vojvoda (duke) from the Piperi tribe. One year, a snake entered the cradle of his only son. Dragiša removed his wedding ring to reward the snake, passed the ring over the snake's body, and released it. The following year, when the host ascended to one of the katuns on the mountain (which did not yet bear this name), the snake jumped into the bed, bit, and killed the heir. The father cried out:

“Oh, mountain, how black you are! You have shrouded me in black—black may you be forever.”

The mountain was once held partly by the Piperi and partly by the Bratonožići. Today, Crna Planina and Bušat are held only by the Kuči.

Maglič

It received its name because the summit is covered in fog (*magla*) for a good part of the year. It is a grassy elevation extending northwest–southeast, from the Bušat *katun*, the Kozelj pass, and Crna Planina in the west, to the Širokar Krivodoljski *katun* and the peaks of Kariman and Suvovrh in the east. It represents a broader branch of the Komovi range.

At the foot of Maglič lies one of the source branches of the Tara River (Verušica), as well as one of the source branches of the Vrmoša–Grnčar–Ljuča River (Kupala, Velji Potok, Prouški Potok, Vučin/Vučiji Potok), which later flows out of Lake Plav as the Lim River. The waters of this elevation belong to the Black Sea basin.

The highest summit is called Lumer, located at 2142 m a.s.l. The CT-1 transversal trail passes over Maglič.

The settlement of Mokra, at the foot of Maglič, received its name from the moist land around the Verušica River. It is located in a glacial valley (a trough) that extends toward Veruša.

Theme: **THE KUČI TRIBE**

Kučí are one of the Montenegrin–Brda (Highland) tribes, annexed in 1885 to the Zeta *nahija* of the Principality of Montenegro.

The indigenous inhabitants of the Kučí area were mostly engaged in livestock herding and lived a semi-nomadic way of life. Struggles for rich mountain pastures enabled the more numerous and stronger population groups to survive in these regions, while the arrival of new populations often resulted in the displacement and migration of the earlier inhabitants.

In the past, most of the population of this area consisted of Slavs and Albanians and until the 16th and the end of the 17th century, processes were underway that shaped the ethnic structure of the Kučí tribe and later the lineage of the Drekalovići.

The Kučí are divided into three communities:

- **Starokučí,**
- **Novokučí (Drekalovići),** and
- **Zatrijepčani.**

The first person to leave extensive written records about this tribe was also one of its members, Vojvoda Marko Miljanov. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, he recorded oral traditions about the origin and development of the tribe in his works *Examples of Humanity and Bravery* and *The Life and Customs of the Arbanasi*.

More about the way of life of the Kučí tribe will be presented at the other points along the thematic route.

POI 2

VIEWPOINT – KATUN LAKOVIĆA



Illustration 4 – Viewpoint – Katun Lakovića; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.

Tourist infrastructure at the site

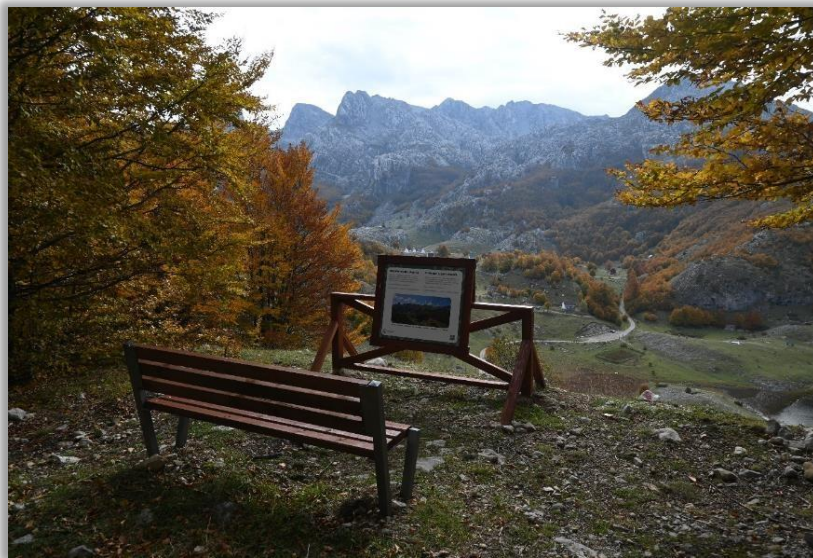


Illustration 5 - Tourist infrastructure at the viewpoint; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.god.

Theme: WATERS

Glaciation

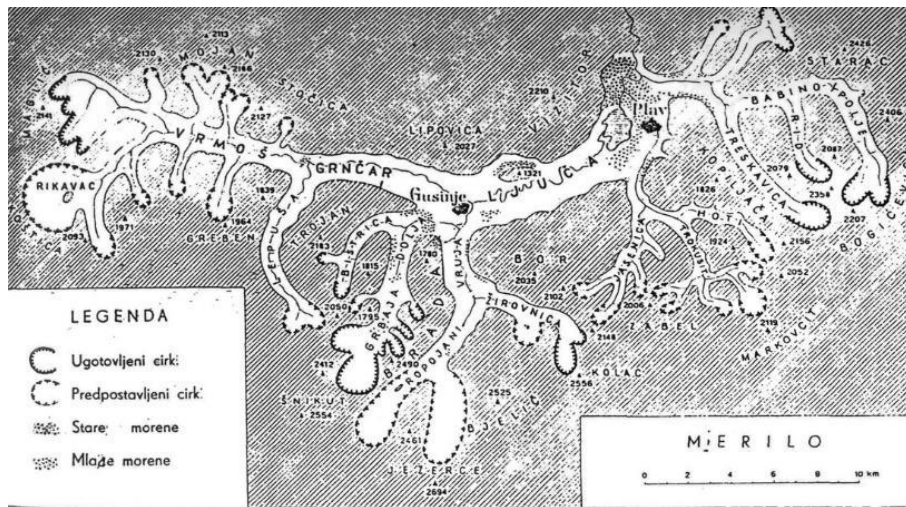


Illustration 6 – Glaciation of the Plav Glacier and its subsidiary glaciers; Source: <https://www.dinarskogorje.com/ku269ke-planine-381ijovo---vodi269-1-dio.html>

During the Würm glaciation, in the western part of the area, the main mass of ice formed in the cirques on the passes and plateaus between Prokletije and Žijovo – the Kuči region. One part of the glacier moved toward Veruša, and another toward Škrobotnica. A third glacier was located in the Brskut valley, in the western part of the Kučka Mountains. In Prokletije, the ice cover extended over an area of about 250 km² (J. Cvijić, 1913, 1921). The glaciation was characterized by numerous “cirque and valley glaciers.” Larger glaciers from the cirques on the northern and northwestern sides of the mountain descended into the valleys of the Vrmoša River, Grnčar, and Vruja. This glacier, 35 km in length, ended at the site where Lake Plav is today, formed in a terminal basin. This was the largest glacier in the Prokletije range. Smaller glaciers flowed into it from Rikavac, Planinica, and Mojan.

Waters of Žijovo

On Žijovo there are two glacial lakes formed after the last Ice Age — Bukumirsko Lake and Rikavačko Lake.

In the mountain area of Žijovo there are no significant permanent surface watercourses. These are found along the edges of the massif and form its natural boundaries. They include the Morača, Mala Rijeka, Opasanica, Veruša, Ribnica,

Cijevna, and Vrmoša. The Kuči massif is crossed by the watershed between the Black Sea and Adriatic basins: most watercourses belong to the Adriatic basin (Cijevna, Mala Rijeka), while waters from the northern parts flow toward the Black Sea (Tara).

Despite the lack of surface streams, in some parts of Žijovo there are sources of drinking water.

The Tara River

By the joining of the Opananica and Verušica (Veruša) rivers — and their tributary flows — the longest and most beautiful river in Montenegro, the Tara, is formed at the place called Han Garančića. It flows for 144 km before meeting the Piva River at Šćepan Polje, after which the Drina River is formed, one of the longest and largest rivers in the Balkans.

Legends of the Tara River

Legend says that the Tara was created from the anger and fury of a lovesick fairy, after she was abandoned by a handsome shepherd from Mount Kom.

Theme: ACTIVITIES

CT 1

The region of Komovi and Žijevo is also a recreational and tourist zone. It is particularly attractive to mountaineers, for whom this has long been a popular destination, and more recently to cyclists and motorcyclists who use the local gravel roads. In this area there are marked hiking trails included in the national network of the Mountaineering Association of Montenegro, under the numbers 601, 301, 316, and for cycling, 636.

The first mountaineering transversal — CT1 — begins precisely at Veruša, Bukumirsko Lake and Širokar, Maglič, Kurlaj, Komovi, and continues further across Bjelasica, Sinjajevina (locally Sinjavina) to Durmitor, ending at Black Lake, passing through ridge areas at elevations of 1500–2200 m a.s.l. This is the first transversal trail in Montenegro, established in 1987. It connects the Komovi Nature Park, the

national parks Biogradska Gora and Durmitor. A special attraction along the route are the numerous viewpoints as well as the glacial lakes: Bukumirsko, Rikavačko, Ursulovačko, Šiško, Zabojsko, Zminičko, and Black Lake.

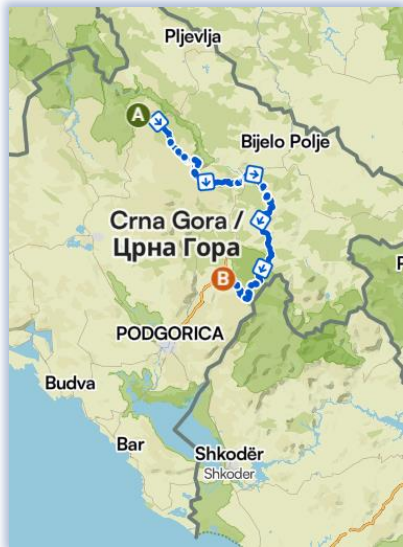


Illustration 7 - CT1; Source: <https://www.komoot.com/tour/52870511>

The transversal is designed for eight days of hiking. Its length from Veruša to Black Lake is 172.5 km. In the case when the control point is Bukumirsko Lake, it measures 160.5 km.

Illustration 8 –Section of the map of registered trails of the Mountaineering Association of Montenegro;
Source: <https://pscq.me/registar-staza/>

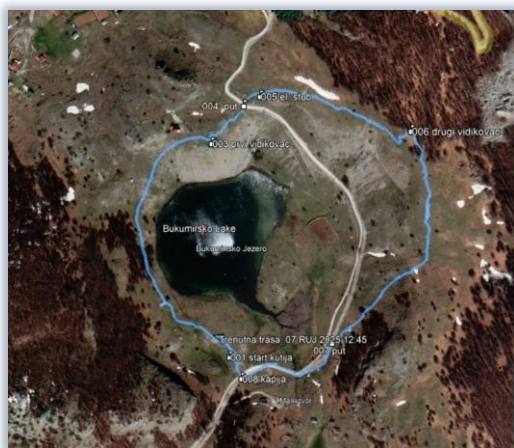


Illustration 9- Circular trail around Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.

POI 3

BUKUMIRSKI VIEWPOINT



Illustration 10 - Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025

Tourist infrastructure at the site



Illustration 11- Tourist infrastructure at the Bukumirski Viewpoint; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025



Illustration 12- Photo frame; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025

Theme: **LEGENDS RELATED TO BUKUMIRSKO LAKE**

Legends are a synthesis of cosmological, ethical, and ecological meanings in the traditional culture of Montenegro, especially within the oral traditions of Old Montenegro and the Highland tribes. Their structure and motifs reveal the ways

in which the community explains natural phenomena, social order, and the boundaries between the human and the supernatural world.

Legend of the Two Travellers



Two travellers were walking in autumn from Kom toward Kuči and Podgorica. At one place, night fell upon them. They had nowhere to spend the night. They came to a rock and lay down under a beech tree. One of them said he had heard that devils appear in this area. They came up with the idea to put each other's legs into each other's trousers and sleep that way. When the devils see one body and two heads, they will be confused and we will survive the night, they thought.

Illustration 13 - Legend of the Two Travellers; Source: AI-generated, 2025.

In the middle of the night, black men emerged from the lake. They circled around them and said: "We have seen everything, but never this. Go and bring Domišljan from beneath Kariman, he will know what it is." Domišljan came and said: "Truly, I cannot think of what this might be."

While the devils circled around the two travellers and talked, the travellers were not asleep but were listening to everything being said. At one point the devils said: "If these people knew, they could wipe us out and cleanse the lake of us." Someone asked — "How?" Another answered: "They should heat a great stone until it glows red, then roll it into the lake. The lake will glow, boil, and drive us out."

The two travellers survived the night, went where they had intended, and told everyone what had happened. The people gathered to destroy the devils that appeared there. They

lit a fire beneath a huge stone, and when it was red-hot, they pushed it into the lake. The water boiled from the heat. Out of it leapt a bloody cap, and then a man on a green horse who cried out: "May your trail be erased, just as ours is today!" After that, the Bukumiri who found themselves by the lake — after whom the lake is named — turned against each other, and few of them remain today.

Interpretation:

This legend depicts the conflict between human ingenuity and the supernatural order. The travellers, as symbols of human curiosity and reason, attempt to overpower the forces of darkness, but their discovery leads to catastrophe. The lake is a "living being" and does not tolerate violence — when fire is forced upon it, punishment and self-destruction follow. In an anthropological sense, this is an etiological myth about balance: humans must not "cleanse the world of evil," because even evil has its function within the cosmic order.

Legend of the Origin of the Lake

According to the legend, an unknown traveller, after a long journey on foot, decided to stop and rest. Thirsty and exhausted from the long road, the traveller fell asleep and dreamed of water that would quench his thirst. The morning brought him a surprising sight. Water had mysteriously appeared out of nowhere and filled the entire valley, creating the lake as we know it today.

Interpretation:

This story belongs to the archetype of world-creation through dream and desire. The traveller symbolizes a human being who unconsciously calls upon nature to respond to his need — and thus a sacred place is born. The lake is a "dream fulfilled," which makes it a mythological source of life rather than danger. In folk imagination, such myths often signify nature's blessing, where water appears as a reward for a pure heart and human humility.

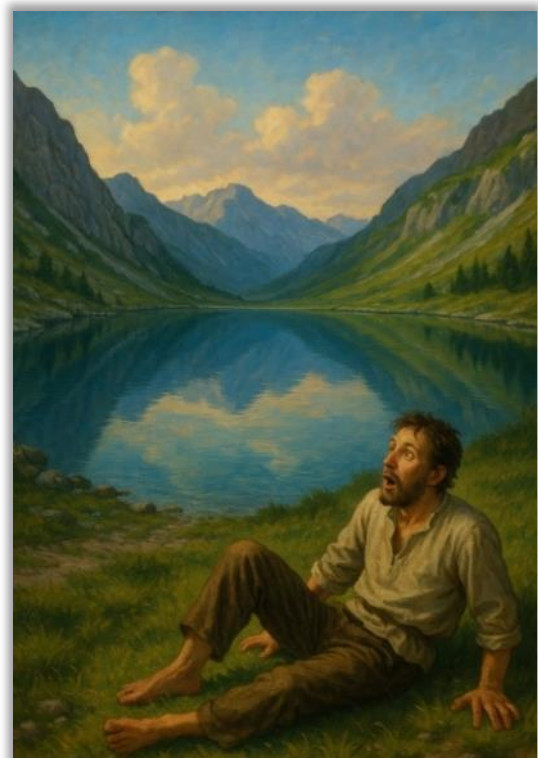


Illustration 14 Legend of the Origin of the Lake; AI-generated, 2025.

Legend of the Disappearance of the Bukumiri



Illustration 15 - Legend of the Disappearance of the Bukumiri; AI-generated, 2025.

According to the story, the lake was home to a dragon who was not pleased with the presence of the Bukumiri and caused them various problems. In order to rid themselves of the dragon, the Bukumiri set a pile of wood on fire to heat a rock above the lake and then hurled it into the water. The enormous temperature of the boiling water was supposed to drive the dragon out. From the lake emerged a man on a white horse who cast a curse upon the Bukumiri, after which they killed one another, and the tribe disappeared from this part of Kuči. In Kuči, people still say:

“They killed each other like the Bukumiri!”

Interpretation:

The dragon is the guardian of the natural order and a symbol of the lake’s power.

When people try to destroy him, they are in fact

destroying their own world. This is a classic myth of a sacred place and a taboo — an attempt to conquer or “purify” a natural force leads to a curse. The symbol of the mrmoljko (newt), as the dragon’s successor, reminds us that nature remembers and that every intervention carries forward through time. This legend

also has an ecological tone: disturbing the natural balance leads to the disappearance of species and communities.

Legend of Mrdolja and Jelena

It was said of the lake that almost nothing alive could survive in it (neither fish nor worm), and that a snake would be poisoned in it instantly. Every sensible person avoided it and fled from it as from the devil, yet Mrdolja wandered around it day and night, summer and winter. No one knew where he came from. One year he built a small hut beneath a large rock, and whenever he would go toward Bukumirsko Lake from Brskut, Kom, or Prokletije, a darkness would fall down Žica and it would turn pitch black in the middle of the day as if it were night. Water would burst from the sky and from the earth.

Once he set out toward Bukumirsko Lake, and in the village people began to collapse. Jakov Mijatov's mouth twisted and shifted behind his ear, Andro Mirkov saw some white phantom and died instantly, Djola Pašov was struck in the forehead by lightning which also killed several sheep. A whirlwind blew, swirling neither here nor there (one would say it coiled upon itself like a leech or tornado). The people were terrified and no one dared step out of the hut — and who knows how long it would have lasted if not for Jelena Pavlova. Jelena was as beautiful as a fairy, and her father Pavle had so many children he himself could not count them. When asked how many he had, he would count them on his fingers: Ratko and Radatko, Marko and Marinko, Ranko and Radenko, Stanko and Stamenko, Dara and Mara, and two little ones, two just baptized, and two not yet baptized. Only Jelena he never mentioned. Somehow she did not fit into his flock of children.

Jelena dared to leave the house and headed toward Bukumirsko Lake. Pavle called her, tried to bring her back, and finally cursed her: "May you never return, may you break apart, and may the world point its finger at your trail!" And Jelena never returned. She made her way to the hut of that strange man, but the hut was bolted shut and only the tracks showed that someone had been there and left. The tracks led her to the lake where vampires and witches danced a fiery circle. Flames rose from the lake to the clouds. In the circle was Mrdolja, and from his chest echoed a terrifying song. The whole valley filled with murmurs, and the sky with bloody clouds.

Then Mrdolja led the dance, trying to ensnare Jelena, but she immediately spread her wings and flew up the Devil's Cliffs, and Mrdolja turned after her. Who knows how it would have ended if Jelena had not stopped and said: "Oh, Mrdelja, you who lured me and led me toward the devil, may you not see me before you, nor hear me beside you; may you

try to touch me yet be unable to move; may you watch the stone, and step over the abysses."

Mrdolja slipped and began falling down the cliffs, and Jelena after him. Thus the good fairy broke her wings upon the rocks, and from then until today a waterfall flows there, and below it the river runs its course, the winds blow in their directions, and people return to their homes in peace and joy.



Illustration 16- Legend of Mrdolja and Jelena, AI-generated, 2025.

Interpretation:

This legend contains elements of a feminine myth of sacrifice and renewal. Jelena is a “good fairy,” a figure of a female protector of the community who confronts destructive forces. Her sacrifice brings calm — the storms cease, and people once again live in peace.

Anthropologically, she represents a mediator between the world of darkness and the world of light, a heroine who restores order through her own suffering. The lake, once again, becomes a place of trial but also of purification: through Jelena’s death, peace is born.

POI 4

BUKUMIRSKO LAKE



Illustration 17- Bukumirsko Lake; Source AUZP, 2025.

Tourist infrastructure at the site



Illustration 19- Thematic panel at Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.



Illustration 18- Information panel at Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.



Illustration 21- Thematic panel at Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.



Illustration 20- Benches by Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.



Illustration 22 - Toilet sign at Bukumirsko Lake;
Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.



Illustration 23 - Stone grill by Bukumirsko Lake;
Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.

Theme: **BUKUMIRSKO LAKE**

Bukumirsko Lake was named after the Bukumiri tribe. It is located at the foot of Mount Žijovo, at an elevation of 1,443 m a.s.l. It belongs to the group of small lakes. It is 210 m long, 130 m wide, and about 17 m deep. This is a glacial lake that receives water from melting snow, precipitation, and occasional springs. Its surroundings are grassy and hilly; its bottom is muddy, and the sides are covered with marsh vegetation, which may contribute to its gradual disappearance. The color of the water shifts from light green near the shore to dark green toward the center of the lake.

It lies on a terminal moraine that rises 40 m above the lake. The space stretching out before you marks the direction of the glacier's movement in the process of shaping the surrounding landscape.

The Bukumiri

The Bukumiri were an old pastoral tribe, known only through the oral traditions told among the Kuči. They lived in the area around Bukumirsko Lake and the Momonjevo plateau. Their existence is evidenced by kiljani gravestones. The Bukumiri were likely related to the Mataguži; both groups experienced a similar fate. According to the oral tradition of the Kuči, the Bukumiri killed one another in a mutual conflict (a blood feud) near Bukumirsko Lake. Jovan Erdeljanović wrote about them.

Today, the surnames Bukumirić, Bukumir, and Bukumirović still exist. According to sources, the Bukumiri moved from Jablani (the present-day Bratonožići) to the Lim valley, settling in Ržanica, Budimlja, Petnjik, and Lužac, but due to conflicts with the Vasojevići they later relocated to Sjenica in Serbia. Descendants of this old tribe still exist today.

Plant and Animal Life

This thematic tourist route is located within the “Komovi” Nature Park, one of the most beautiful mountain areas in Montenegro, protected due to its exceptional biological diversity and untouched nature. The impressive mountain massif consists of Kučki Kom, Ljevorečki Kom, and Vasojevički Kom, which rise above green valleys and plateaus. It is characterized by a rich variety of plant and animal life. Particularly notable are the habitats of forests, pastures, mountain peaks, and scree slopes.

Žijovo, where we are located, is characterized by rugged karst terrain without tall vegetation, covered mostly with grass. Forest vegetation is found in the northern areas (from Crna Planina toward Opananica and Komovi), in the southern areas (Radeća, the southern slopes of the Žijovo peak), and in the eastern part (the Albanian side of the massif), as well as sporadically in deep hollows.

Alpine Newt



Illustration 24 - Alpine newt; Source:
<https://gorskeoci.me/index.php/2018-02-21-15-58-18>

Bukumirsko Lake is an authentic habitat of the Montenegrin alpine newt (*Ichthyosaura alpestris montenegrinus*), an endemic species discovered and first described in 1951 by Milutin Radovanović. It is assumed that, due to fish stocking, this subspecies of the alpine newt (*Triturus alpestris*), known locally as “žmigavac”, has disappeared from the lake, which needs to be verified through research.

Theme: THE THRESHING FLOOR

The cultural and historical identity of Montenegro, alongside the hearth, katin life, weaponry, the episcopal system, and other elements, is to a great extent shaped by the cult of the gumno (threshing floor). Threshing floors are an essential element of Montenegro's cultural landscape. The construction of gumna is associated with the 18th century, and they gained full importance during the 19th century. They were used until the 1960s. The word gumno comes from the Russian language.



Illustration 25- Threshing floor near Bukumirsko Lake; Source: AUZP Photo Archive, 2025.

Stone threshing floors were historically extremely important for people's lives, because grain was threshed on them. They were built on windy sides of the terrain. To obtain grain from the sheaf, domestic animals tied with a rope to a wooden post (the stožer) would run in a circle, separating the grains from the stalks (the straw). When only chaff (crushed straw) mixed with grain remained, it was thrown into the air so that the wind would blow the chaff away and leave clean grain on the stone surface. Where the threshing floors were small, up to 2.5 meters, the grain was threshed by hand.

Some of the meanings of the threshing floor (gumno):

- **Stone** is a symbol of endurance and of Montenegro's rocky landscape. It is also said that the gumno is eternal, because great labour and unity are needed to build it.
- **Bread**, because the quality of flour in the household depended on how well the grain was "threshed."

- **Protection of the family, tribe, and state** – The elders gathered at the gumno to make important decisions for the community. Even Njegoš was “chosen” at the threshing floor of Ivan Crnojević.
- **The circle** – the physical form of the gumno is important; it allows everyone to stand in equal positions. The threshing floor was usually built on communal land, making it “neutral ground,” and between the gumno and the sky there is nothing.
- **A precursor to the public square** – men gathered on the gumno to sing traditional songs, women to chat, and young men and women to meet.
- **“Beginning and end”** – newborn children were presented on the gumno, and the dead were mourned there. Although more often used for festive occasions such as arranging engagements, dancing the kolo, or celebrating slava, the gumno accompanied the entire life cycle of the community.
- **Playground** – After threshing, children would jump from the edges into the middle, into the discarded chaff.
- **Magical element** – In folk tradition, the gumno carried a special magical and symbolic meaning. It was considered a boundary space between the domestic and the wild, the human and the supernatural world. According to many ethnographic records, it was believed that fairies, witches, and ancestral spirits gathered at the gumno, especially at night and during seasonal transitions.

Because of this, the gumno was regarded with respect — by day as the centre of community and labour, and by night as a place of special energy and invisible forces that was to be avoided.

POI 5

LAKOVIĆA KATUN AT ŠIROKAR



Illustration 26 - View from the katun at the Širokar pass toward Torč (in the background on the left) and Maglič (in the background on the right);

Source: <https://www.dinarskogorje.com/b610-ku269ke-planine-381jovo.html>

Lakovića Katun, also known as Ljakovića Katun, was named after the family of the same name from Kuči. The Ljakovići are descendants of Ljaka, son of Iliko Drekalović. In the sources of various authors, the following names can be found: Širokar Ljakovića, Širokar Lakovića, and Katun Širokar.

Theme: **ABOUT KATUNS AND LIFE IN THEM**

Most of the land in the mountainous Kuči area is communal land, shared property. It consists of plateaus with pastures and forests that once belonged to the entire tribe and are today state-owned. According to old customary law, all members of the Kuči tribe were allowed to cut forest or graze their herds wherever they wished, and no tribesman could sell or otherwise alienate his right to the mountain.

However, although the mountain was the common property of the tribe, there were limitations on the use of communal land. Certain brotherhoods had, from ancient times, acquired the right to establish katuns only in specific locations, even though the pastures and forests around those katuns remained common property

of all Kuči. Another restriction was that livestock could be driven to the middle and upper mountain pastures only by mutual agreement and collectively. The ascent to the lower mountains took place on St. George's Day (Đurđevdan). The agreement on the ascent to the middle mountains was made at a common assembly, ten days before the ascent, by the Kuči chiefs and others who had katuns there, and that day was usually Trinity Day (Trojičindan), on June 5.

At the Širokar assembly site, the day for the ascent to the upper mountains was determined, usually two or three days before or after St. Peter's Day (Petrovdan, June 29). The Drekalovići mostly owned katuns in the high mountains.



Illustration 27- An Katun in Kuči; Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsj0Qfc6GEg>

In 1904, at an assembly of tribal and village chiefs, the Tribal Agreement on the ascent to the mountains was adopted, and it was respected by all. The return of livestock from mountain pastures is called *zdig*.

For the Kuči, katuns are not only an economic base, but the foundation of identity. They are places of origin, oral tradition, boundaries of brotherhoods, and memories of ancestors. That is why the

katun is always a story of beginnings — it is there that legends, nicknames, songs, and stories about wolves, fairies, and thunder are formed.

What does the katun way of life look like?

Although at first glance it appears to be merely a “pragmatic” form of seasonal pastoralism, in a deeper sense it is one of the strongest expressions of the human relationship with space, nature, and freedom, and as such it has fundamentally shaped the mentality of the Dinaric region.

Life in the katun is a constant struggle, but also a dialogue with the mountain. The mountain is both enemy and provider, trial and home — an archetypal figure of the Great Mother, nature that both gives and takes. The katun is not merely a

settlement — it is a model of the world in miniature, a form of “seasonal civilization.” It is a space where humans live in rhythm with nature, not against it. This rhythm has a beginning (the ascent), a peak (life in the mountains), and a return (the descent into the valley), precisely following the archetypal structure of journey, cycle, and renewal.

The katun functions as a liminal space — on the boundary between the civilized and the wild, home and nature, order and chaos. Within it, humans temporarily free themselves from the social structures of the village or the state and enter into a “pure relationship” with nature and their own experience.

The katun is a space of freedom. The mountain knows no status, title, or wealth — only endurance, knowledge, and humility. That solitude in the mountains is not isolation, but inner freedom — a person is alone with themselves and with nature, without intermediaries. That is why the katun becomes a symbol of inner autonomy — one who survives in the mountains has survived themselves.

The Space of the Katun: Settlement as Landscape



Illustration 28 – Širokar Ljakovića, Source: Endangered Mediterranean Mountain Heritage—Case Study of katuns at the Kuči Mountain in Montenegro, Fotografija: Ivan Laković, 2020. god.

The katun in Kuči was not a permanent settlement, but a seasonal micro-world established each year in the mountain zone, most often from late May to October. It was located on gentle plateaus below high cliffs, near a spring or watercourse, with a view of pastures and mountain passes — not by chance, but as a result of deliberate spatial planning.

The katun was not a cluster of houses, but an extended functional unit — the arrangement of structures followed the needs of the herds, work, and communal life. That is why it can be said that the katun was more a landscape than architecture — its layout was “etched” into the terrain and the logic of nature.



*Ilustracija 29 - Međe suhozida, Izvor:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwkaMT5bZjc>*

The dwelling for shepherds was the glada. These were built as dry-stone structures and covered with rye straw or wooden shingles. They had no chimney — smoke escaped through openings beneath the roof, which helped retain heat and protect against insects. The roof was covered with shingles, turf, or thin stone slabs (covering stones). Inside, everything was reduced to what was functional: a hearth, a stone

bench, a bed made of wooden planks and wool, and the walls often served as shelves.

The hearth is the centre of the world (axis mundi) of katun life: everything begins and ends around it — the family gathers, stories are told, food is shared, and survival takes place. In a symbolic sense, the hearth in the katun has the same role as a temple in a city: it connects worlds — the lower (earthly), the middle (human), and the upper (heavenly). When a fire is lit in the katun, it does not merely illuminate the space, but marks human presence in the world of gods and mountain spirits. In this sense, the katun is a sacralized space — even if it has no church, it carries the energy of a ritual place.

Next to the huts there were dairies (mljekare — small houses for cheese and skorup), smaller structures, often partially dug into the ground to maintain coolness. Near the glada there were torine for the overnight keeping of livestock. The torina was enclosed with dry-stone walls or with proščina — split wooden stakes, woven with beech twigs or logs resting on wooden posts (sohe).

Kuči cheese from a mijeh

In the Kuči mountains, the tradition of cheese-making is still preserved in a way that has been passed down through generations. The process is slow and demanding, but it results in a product of unique taste and aroma.



*Illustration 30 – Chees from the mijeh, Source:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsj0Qfc6GEg>*

The cheese is first made from fresh milk, which is curdled and drained, after which the mixture is placed into wooden vats. There it matures for at least ten days, after which it is shaped into a round loaf and left for another seven days to absorb the aroma of nature — the scent of beechwood and grass.

After that, the planinka crumbles the cheese, repacks it into a mijeh (a whole animal skin — sheep or cattle — removed in one piece), and leaves it to mature under mountain conditions, usually until November. It is believed that the more tightly the cheese is packed into the mijeh, the better it matures. During drying, smoke gives it its distinctive flavour and mild sharpness, characteristic of mountain cheeses from this region. Kuči cheese, a product that unites knowledge, patience, and the natural conditions of the mountain, is part of a tradition that still holds a special place in the lives of local herders.



*Illustration 31 - Return of the planinka to the katun; Source:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwkaMT5bZjc>*

Snow Gathering

Snow gathering during the period of katun life was an important practice in mountain regions such as Kuči. During the summer months, when herders stayed in katuns high in the mountains, snow that remained in shaded depressions and caves was

covered with branches and grass so that it would last longer. The snow was cut by the planinke (women of the katun) into regular shapes, weighing several tens of kilograms, and carried on their backs to the katun using ropes. It was used for drinking, watering livestock, cooling milk and cheese, as well as for refreshment during the hottest days.

POI 6

DREKALOV VIEWPOINT



Illustration 32- View of Lake Rikavačko; Source: Photo archive AUZP, 2025. god.

Tourist infrastructure at the site



Viewpoint offering a view of Lake Rikavačko and the mountain ridge surrounding the lake.

Illustration 33- Tourist infrastructure at the viewpoint; Source: Photo archiveAUZP, 2025. god.

About Lake Rikavačko

It is located at the foot of Mount Vila (2,093 m above sea level), which belongs to the Žije(o)vo mountain massif. Nearby is the border between our country and Albania. Its name derives from the word “rika” (roaring), because during stronger winds the water surface becomes wavy and strikes the shores, producing a sound that the Kuči people described as a roar.

It is situated at an altitude of 1,314 m above sea level. The waters of the Rikavac stream flow into it, while the waters are drained underground toward the catchment areas of the Cijevna and Ribnica rivers. The lake is mainly fed by precipitation (rain and snow). It is of glacial origin. The lake is 525 m long, 235 m wide, and 13.9 m deep.

Around Lake Rikavačko ran an old Roman road, followed later by a medieval road, which connected Podgorica with Gusinje and Serbia even during the period of Ottoman rule.

Theme: **DUKE DREKALE**

Duke Drekale was the leader of the Kuči tribes and the founder of the Drekalović lineage. He was born in the 16th century in Kuči. There are no precise historical records about his origin, only certain folk traditions. The Kuči duke Marko Miljanov wrote about Duke Drekale in his works based on oral traditions that have been passed down in Kuči for generations. It appears that he was of the Catholic faith and later in life converted to Orthodoxy.

He distinguished himself in the struggle of the Kuči for independence from the Turks and was therefore elected duke of that tribe. Marko Miljanov describes him as the first Kuči who successfully opposed the Ottomans. He had several sons, but the ducal title was inherited by his son Lale. It is believed that Duke Drekale was killed by the Turks—in an attack in which no one survived, and only by chance was his son Lale saved, as Marko Miljanov states in his works.



Illustration 34- Lake Rikavačko; Source: Mountaniering club "Komovi", 2025. god.

Theme: **LEGENDS FROM KUČI**

Lake Rikavačko and the surrounding mountains carry a strong mythological charge, and these three legends contain the basic archetypal patterns of the relationship between humans, the mountain, and nature in Kuči.

The Legend of Taming Koštica

As this was formerly a wild region, which could be used for living only for a few months (in summer), in order to tame that wild mountain someone had to overwinter on it. In that case, nature would take pity on humans, allow them to remain there and survive throughout the year. For people to succeed in this endeavor, they built a church. A friar decided to overwinter on Koštica, and the locals supplied him with food, water, firewood, built him a house—everything he needed to survive the winter. The people then began to descend from the mountain, and due to its inhospitable nature they could not maintain

contact with the priest until spring, when they would again begin to move up to the summer pastures (katuns).

In the spring, when they went looking for the priest, they found him dead in the house. On a nearby table they found a piece of paper on which was written: I had food, water, firewood, and everything in sufficient quantity, and I lacked nothing. If you have found me dead, know that I could not survive the winter because of the mountain's dread—the sounds, thunder, winds, and storms.

Interpretation:

Mount Koštica in this story is not merely a geographical space but a living being with its own will. Within it resonates the “dread of the mountain,” which is a metaphor for the power of nature and its autonomy—something that cannot be possessed, only respected. From an anthropological perspective, this is a myth of a liminal space—a boundary between the natural and the cultural world.

The friar symbolizes the human need to sacralize the mountain—to give it meaning and, through a religious act (the building of a church), to secure a human presence. However, his death shows that the sacred cannot be imposed upon nature; rather, it must grow out of a long-term relationship of respect.



Fear as a boundary

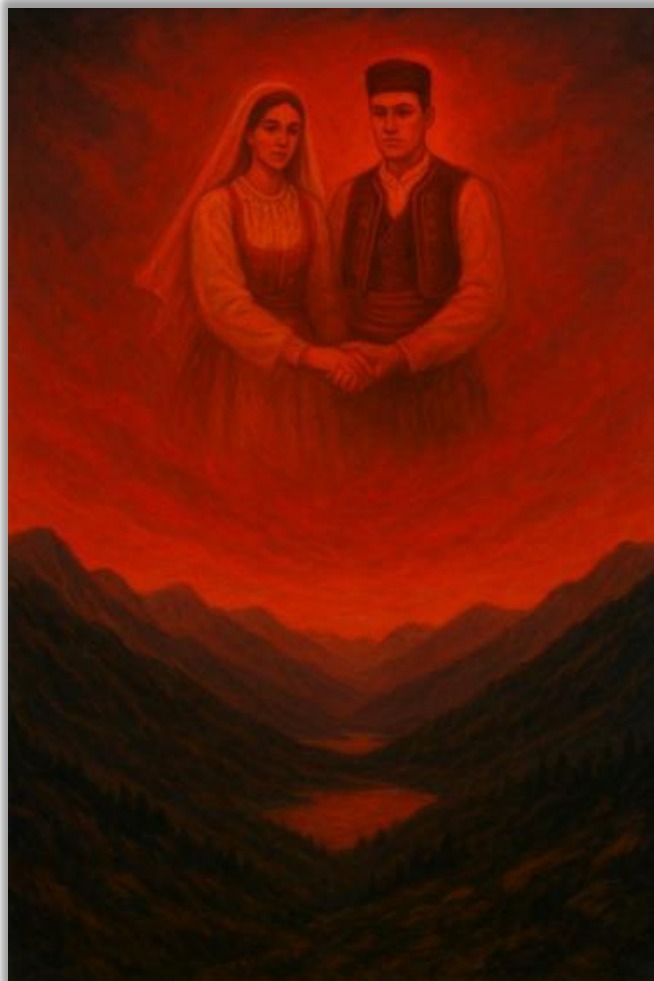
The message on the note (“I died from the dread of the mountain”) represents the anthropological key to the legend: a human being does not die of hunger, but of emotional and cosmic coldness. Here, the mountain becomes the “superior Other”—a space in which humans confront their own limits, silence, and infinity.

The function of the legend within the community

*Illustration 35- The Legend of Taming Koštica,
Source: AI-generated, 2025. god.*

For the community, this legend is etiological and didactic—it explains why Koštica is not inhabited during winter, but it also establishes a taboo: nature has its own rules of dwelling. Whoever violates them risks their own life. Thus, the story is at once a myth about the limits of human survival and a ritual reminder of respect for the mountain. Za zajednicu, ova legenda je etiološka i didaktička — objašnjava zašto se Koštica ne nastanjuje zimi, ali i uspostavlja tabu: priroda ima svoja pravila boravka. Ko god ih naruši, rizikuje sopstveni život. Dakle, priča je istovremeno mit o granicama ljudskog opstanka i ritualni podsjetnik na poštovanje planine.

The Legend of the Cursed Wedding



*Illustration 36- The Legend of the Cursed Wedding;
Source: AI-generated, 2025. god.*

Two centuries ago, in the heart of Kuči, a young man fell in love with a girl from a rival tribe. Their love provoked anger on both sides, but they nevertheless decided to marry. In the midst of the celebration, an old man known for foretelling misfortune appeared at the gate. He then said: This wedding will not end in joy, but in blood. Mocked by the guests, he eventually left.

A sudden storm descended upon the village, and lightning struck the tent in which the newlyweds were staying. When the guests approached, they found both of them dead, their hands still entwined. It is said in Kuči that if, on the eve of a wedding, an unusual red glow appears in the sky, the wedding should be postponed, because the spirits of the unhappy newlyweds wander the mountains in search of revenge. Many believe that on

stormy nights their wedding song can still be heard.

Interpretation:

This legend follows the classic pattern of myths about forbidden love, which are very common in Balkan oral tradition. As in the myth of Romeo and Juliet, love is a force that attempts to break through social and tribal boundaries—but this transgression is punished by death. The lovers' death restores the disturbed order to balance.

Nature as judge

The storm and the lightning represent cosmic justice—nature reacts to moral disorder. In folk interpretation, nature is often an agent that enforces divine law, especially when humans violate it. The lightning striking the tent is a symbol of God's punishment, but also of the restoration of harmony: the young couple die embraced, which can also be interpreted as a "sacred reconciliation" of two worlds.

Spirits and collective memory

The presence of the spirits of the lovers on stormy nights is a way for the community to preserve the memory of the tragedy and to transmit a moral message through fear. The red glow in the sky becomes a cultural warning sign: nature "speaks" through signs, and people must know how to read them.

In both cases—on Koštica and at Lake Rikavačko—nature has a moral function. It is both "witness" and "judge" of human actions, while humans remain those who attempt, often in vain, to establish lasting peace with it.

Ove legende su kolektivni odraz planinskog mentaliteta Kuča — kulture u kojoj se granica između svetog i svakodnevnog neprestano osjeća, a svaki pokušaj da se ona pređe bez poniznosti vodi u tragičan kraj.

The Legend of Mrgud Who Would Not Give His Daughter to the Sun

The wife of Mrgud Markišin had nine sons and one daughter. One day, in Zabrđe, a strange old man appeared on a worn-out nag and said to Mrgud Markišin: "The Sun itself has sent me to ask for your daughter." The brothers all spoke at once, saying that their

sister was born for such a fiery son-in-law and that they should give her to him immediately, this very moment.

But Mrgud Markišin did not give her — may the earth give him no peace — he did not give his daughter to the Sun and would not give her. He said: “Do not be foolish, children. How could we give her, and to whom would we give her? The Sun has neither home nor hearth; it burns and warms itself by its own fire. No one knows where it sets nor where it rises.”

The strange old man on the nag grew angry, lingered there for a short while, and then disappeared. Afterwards, Mrgud’s sons died, and his daughter went mad, and from him

there remained neither lineage nor descendants — his trace was erased, and all of this was forgotten.



The Sun, resentful and unforgiving, when it remembers this, sends upon the Komovi, Žica, and Rikavac storms and calamities: hail, sleet, snowdrifts, heavy snowfalls, whirlwinds and cold winds, mockery and suffering, darkness and eclipse. Such conditions held the inhabitants as if nailed in place, so that they could not leave their huts for days.

Illustration 37- Legedna o Mrgudu koji neda šćer za Sunce Legend of Mrgud Who Would Not Give His Daughter to the Sun; Source: AI-generated, 2025. god.

Interpretation:

This legend carries a patriarchal–mythical structure and speaks of the boundary between the human and the divine. Mrgud rejects a cosmic bond — the union of the earthly and the celestial — and is therefore punished. In anthropological symbolism, the Sun represents life force, and the refusal to give a daughter to it signifies resistance to the cycle of renewal and change. As a result, the Sun becomes an avenger: nature strikes back at those who interrupt the flow of life.

3. Interpretation

Guide / Interpreter Profile

Then	The guide was considered an expert on the destination, often highly educated, and guests would passively rely on them while the guide presented information in a lecture-style manner.
Now	The guide is an expert on the destination who conveys enthusiasm to visitors. Open and seemingly spontaneous, the guide shares knowledge in a more relaxed way and, through interaction with visitors, creates connections between the visitor and the destination. The guide actively involves visitors in interpretation, encourages dialogue, and is familiar with techniques of gamification and bringing the past to life in order to intensify the experience and create lasting memories based not only on new knowledge, but also on emotions.

Interpreter Profile:

An educated tourist guide, curator, biologist, ethnologist... who has an excellent command of one or more foreign languages.

Skills:

- ✓ language skills
- ✓ communication skills
- ✓ educational skills
- ✓ animation / facilitation skills

3.1. Experience Creation Techniques

Storytelling – narration as a bridge between facts and emotions

Storytelling is the oldest technique of interpretation – it transforms information into experience. Through stories, the guide builds an emotional framework, introduces rhythm and tension, and connects the past with the present. The structure of a story often follows the archetypal hero's journey: departure, trial, and return with new knowledge.

This approach is particularly suitable for mountain trails, such as the one between Bukumirsko and Rikavačko Lakes, where every landscape can become a stage and every legend a dramatic moment.

Role Play, costumed tours

Guiding in the role of a historical or mythical character introduces elements of play and surprise. Costumed guides and interpreters help visitors experience the past, not merely hear about it. A successful “character” must have:

- accurate historical information,
- a realistic context (time, customs, events),
- a developed character and voice.

The interpreter's task is to make the character convincing and human, so that visitors believe the story and find a part of themselves within it.

Games

In contemporary tourism, games play an increasingly important role. They can be digital (mobile applications, interactive maps) or analogue (treasure hunts, quizzes, riddles). Through play, visitors connect with the place and with one another – learning through experience and enjoyment.

Humour

Humour builds trust and brings the guide closer to the group. When used carefully, it opens space for emotional connection and makes the experience memorable.

On thematic routes that include elements of legends, myths, and local anecdotes, humour can be a key tool for softening serious themes and creating a sense of lightness.

Interpretative guiding

The role of the guide in contemporary tourism is not to transmit large amounts of information, but to help visitors understand the meaning of a place. Information is easily accessible today; interpretation is not. That is why the guide must be an interpreter – a translator of meaning.

A good interpreter:

- selects what reveals the core identity of a place,
- connects local stories with universal messages,
- uses their own voice and emotion as instruments,
- and constantly seeks a balance between knowledge and feeling.

Interpretation is not merely the transfer of data, but the art of interpreting the world – it invites visitors not only to look, but to feel, reflect, and remember.

Use of templates from literature, music, and folk songs

Local literature, poetry, oral narratives, and music are authentic voices of place.

Their use in interpretation gives the guide depth and tone – a rhythm that reminds us that a place has a soul.

On the section of the route between Bukumirsko and Rikavačko Lakes, where mountains, water, and legends intertwine, words can become landscape – and stories a bridge between times.

Conclusion

On the section of the route between Bukumirsko and Rikavačko Lakes, each interpretative point has a dual layer – natural and symbolic. Through storytelling,

humour, play, and dialogue, the guide does more than convey facts; they connect visitors with the spirit of the place. In this way, the experience becomes multidimensional: simultaneously educational, emotional, and reflective – precisely what defines the essence of the experience economy in contemporary tourism.

4. Tourist infrastructure

In addition to the existing tourist infrastructure, described and presented in the previous chapters, it would be desirable for the thematic route to be additionally marked with the following elements:

4.1. Entrance-Orientation Panels (Portals)

They should be installed at two key points:

- **Viewpoint above Mokra** (starting point of the route)
- **AUZP Information Centre at Bukumirsko Lake**

Content:

- A motivational bilingual message inviting visitors to walk the route;
- A route map with elevation profile and information on difficulty (easy route, 2–4 h);
- A legend (description of each point and the time required to move from one point to the next);
- QR codes with the GPX route and digital guides (multilingual versions) and the notice:

“Download all materials here. After this point there is no signal.”

- Leave No Trace! label;
- Text on assuming personal responsibility when walking the route;
- Logos of the project and implementation partners.



5. Marketing of the Thematic Route

AUZP is tasked with positioning the thematic route as an example of sustainable tourism within the “Komovi” Nature Park. The proposed marketing plan is based on activities that can be implemented with minimal costs and through the use of digital tools that do not require continuous maintenance.

The key promotional message may be:

“The Path of Mountains and Legends — a place where nature, heritage, and the stories of the Kuči become one.”

Promotion of the route is planned in partnership with the Tourist Organization of Podgorica, as a way to consolidate capacities, increase visibility, and ensure sustainable visitor management.

5.1. Marketing mix

- Production of multilingual digital guides in PDF format, intended for individual visitors. The guides will be available for download on multiple digital platforms, as well as via QR codes placed on gateway information panels in the field. As the thematic route passes through an area without mobile signal coverage, the digital guides must be optimized for offline use (PDF + GPX), with a maximum file size of 3 MB. Each visual must contain a clearly highlighted message: **“DOWNLOAD BEFORE YOU GO!”** and be visually consistent with the route’s identity.
- All visual materials (digital and physical) must contain the bolded note **“Download before you go!”**, emphasizing that all digital content is available exclusively before entering the signal-free zone.

- Production of a promotional video presenting the thematic route through footage of lakes, mountain landscapes, *katuns*, and elements of traditional pastoral life, with narration dedicated to legends, natural values, and the cultural heritage of the Kuči.
- Placement of the route on the AUZP and TO Podgorica websites, including the creation of a dedicated landing page: **podgorica-travel/izmedju-dva-jezera** and **auzp.me/izmedju-dva-jezera**. The pages will include an interactive map, digital guides, downloadable GPX files, a photo gallery, short legends, and video materials, with the option of automatic download of a ZIP package (PDF + GPX).
- Publication of the route on specialized digital platforms for hikers, cyclists, and active tourists, such as: Komoot, AllTrails, Gaia GPS, Outdooractive, Strava, Google Maps, and Google Trails. AUZP uploads the route only once, after which the platforms automatically distribute it to users, eliminating the need for additional maintenance.
- Training of tourist guides for interpretative guiding along the thematic trail, with the establishment of the designation **“Route Guide.”** A small pool of guides (3–7 persons) will be formed, whose profiles will be visibly presented on the AUZP and TO Podgorica websites, giving the route a human dimension and recognizability.
- Preparation of a manual for creative guiding along the thematic trail, as an integral part of the guide training process.
- Organization of promotional **“thematic days”** in cooperation with TO Podgorica, twice a year:
 - **Spring at Bukumir** – a guided tour with storytelling of legends
 - **Summer at Širokar** – a *katun* experience, tasting of cheese from a *mijeh*, and storytelling around the hearth
 During these events, AUZP may engage local households, strengthening the connection between the trail, the community, and the authentic *katun* identity.
- Development of the tourism package **“Podgorica + Mountain,”** intended for tourists with a short stay in the city. The package includes transfer, a guide, a city tour, and a visit to the thematic route with interpretative

guiding, tasting of local products, and a short hike. The package will be prepared as a ready-made tourism product and promoted to travel agencies within project activities in spring 2026.

- Promotion of the thematic route within the joint product **“Mystical Danube,”** during final project activities and presentations at international tourism fairs.

5.2. Logo of the Thematic Route

The logo of the thematic route has a graphic design representing the dragon from the legend of Bukumirsko Lake. It was created as part of the joint design concept for the thematic route **“Mystical Danube.”**



Illustration 38 Poster with visuals of the thematic route **“Mystical Danube,”** Interreg Danube Region, 2025.

The design solution for all materials provides for the use of both the colour and monochrome versions of this logo.

Reference Sources and Literature

- Geographical and Ethnographic Characteristics of the Area

Grupa autora. *Planinarski vodič kroz Žijovo*. Planinarski klub Gorica, 2008.

Laković Ivan, Kapetanović Aleksandra, Pelcer-Vujačić Olga and Koprivica Tatjana, (2020.) „Endangered Mediterranean Mountain Heritage—Case Study of katuns at the Kuči Mountain in Montenegro“, *Land* 2020, 9(8), 248; Dostupno na: <https://doi.org/10.3390/land9080248> - 28 Jul 2020 (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

Grupa autora. *Kučke planine (Žijovo) - Vodič 1. dio*, Dinarsko gorje; Dostupno na: <https://www.dinarskogorje.com/ku269ke-planine-381ijovo---vodi269-1-dio.html> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

RTCG-Zvanični kanal. *PRIRODNI FENOMENI CRNE GORE - Kako i gdje nastaje "Suza Evrope"* (Video zapis). YouTube. 13. mart 2023. Dostupno na: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brpFNJrxFUQ> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

- Stories and Legends

Legend of the Two Travellers:

Montenegro. *Đukić Miško Bukumirsko, Veruša, Opasanica, Komovi, divne uspomene* (nemontirano); (Video zapis). YouTube. 24. nov. 2021. Dostupno na: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qByYvFGIB-M&t=1205s> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

Legend of the Taming of Koštica:

RIVchannel. *Crnom Gorom: KUČKI KATUNI „Govor Planine ” - serijal, 1 epizoda HD*, (Video zapis). YouTube. 21.maj 2021. Dostupno na: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtzUwgXyjuE> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

Legend of the Two Travellers, Legend of Mrdolja and Jelena; Legend of Mrgud Who Would Not Give His Daughter to the Sun:

Dalibor Zečević. *Razgovori uz ognjiste*, Veruša 1977. god II DIO, (Video zapis). YouTube. 11. feb. 2016. Dostupno na: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u-NCDeKUVE> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

Legend of the Two Travellers:

Popović Marko Miljanov. *Sabrana djela, kritičko izdanje, I: Pleme Kuči u narodnoj priči i pjesmi*, str. 70 i 71. CANU, 1989.

Story of the Origin of Mount Žijevo:

Erdeljanović Jovan. *Stara Crna Gora i Boka; Kuči, Bratonožići i Piperi*, str. 90. Pobjeda, 1997.

Legend of Crna planina: narodno predanje

Legend of the Cursed Wedding:

Valhala19851 (AI generisan video) Tiktok. Dostupno na: <https://www.tiktok.com/@valhalla19851/video/7539196921123032342> (pristupljeno: oktobar 2025.)

- Tourism Interpretation

Thorsten Ludwig. *The Interpretive Guide – Sharing Heritage with People*, Bildungswerk interpretation, Werleshausen, 2015. (Iva Silla, prev.) Dostupno na: <https://interpret-europe.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/croatian.pdf>

Androić Miren, Horjan Goranka, Klarić Vlasta, Nevidal Renata. *Upravljanje turističkim posjetama na tematskim kulturnim rutama*. Udruga Lujzijana Delnice, 2012.

MUZE - Ratković Aydemir Dragana Lucija, Draženović Mirna, Klarić Vujović Iva.
Duh mjesta i interpretacija baštine. Udruga „Interaktiva“ u sklopu projekta
Mrkopalj – Mjesto zdravog življenja, 2019.

