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People tend to associate [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) with war and destruction, but a lot has changed since the 1990s.

With Olympic-standard extreme sports, bars more esoteric than Berlin's and some of the friendliest people you'll ever meet, it's no wonder Bosnia has one of the fastest-growing tourism industries in the world. Plus, it's more affordable than its Balkan neighbours. So why not join the dark horses of the 2014 Football World Cup and join Team Bosnia? Here's why you should visit.

1. World-Class Nature Lovin'



Blagaj Tekke. Bet you didn't think you could find this in Bosnia...

There are around 200,000 uncleared landmines in Bosnia, but as long as you stick to the official trails, that shouldn't stop you from discovering the vast array of outdoor activities that this 1984 Winter Olympic host country has to offer.

Head to Bjelašnica or Jahorina for an affordable ski holiday in the winter or some formidable hiking in the summer. Have a swim at Kravice Falls, raft down the Neretva River or explore the caves at Vjetrenica. For a truly unique experience, organise with a park ranger to visit the UNESCO-listed Perućica, one of the last untouched forests in Europe.

2. Eclectic Nightlife in Sarajevo

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Sarajevo gears up for a big night. Image c/o Gabriel Hess, Flickr

Any old bar in Bosnia's capital will offer football telecasts, western food and cheap booze. But to really experience the city's character, check out one of Sarajevo's quirky nightspots.

Top of the list is the bohemian Zlatna Ribica ('Goldfish' in English), with its antique fittings, fancy upholstery and eclectic music. Kino Bosna, a converted 1920s cinema, is home to Bosnia's alternative crowd, cheap beer, and plenty of smoke – especially on Mondays. Head to the Koktel Bar Que Pasa for delish cocktails or to the Underground Club for smooth jazz and straight-up rock. Five nights of fun times, sorted.

Image Caption: Zlatna Ribica

Credit: c/o Jonathan Khoo Flickr

3. Traditional food that doesn't involve quinoa or açai



Cevapi on the grill. Image c/o Damir T, Flickr

Thanks to those crafty Ottoman occupiers, in Bosnia you'll find Burek much like Turkish Börek and coffee as rich as in Istanbul. Vegetarians beware though, as most traditional dishes are meat-based. A 'salad' usually involves lettuce thrown together with tomato and onion. A must-try is the Bosnian ćevapi, a pork and beef sausage served inside flat bread. Just the smell is enough to get mouths watering.

4. A history lesson where you'll learn a lot more than you did in high school



Graves at Srebrenica. Image c/o Martijn.Munneke, Flickr

The process of rebuilding Bosnia after the Yugoslav War is a slow one, and continues nearly two decades later. Many of the people you'll meet will have lived through the conflict. One of the best ways to learn about this side of Bosnia's history is to do a [tour with a local guide](#). There are also plenty of museums that help tell the story, such as Gallery 11/07/95 or the display at the Sarajevo Tunnel. If you feel up to it, head to Srebrenica in the country's east and pay your respects to more than 8,000 people killed in one the worst acts of genocide since the Second World War.

5. Street art in the unlikelyst of places



An old luge in Trebević. Image c/o Paul Jeannin, Flickr

While there's little joy in seeing Bosnia's many bombed-out and shrapnel-marked buildings, there is hope and poignancy in some of the graffiti found in and around these buildings, particularly in Mostar.

Likewise, many of the Olympic venues still stand, eerily unused. The old aerial ski jumps at Bjelašnica or the overgrown luge run at Trebević make for some pretty moving photography. Although it's tempting to get all Christopher Columbus and head off into the unknown yourself, make sure it's safe or that you go with a guide.

6. People, culture and matrimonial gunfire



Mosque in Počitelj. Image c/o Martijn Booister, Flickr

We confirmed it – Bosnia has some of the friendliest people on earth. This might be surprising for some given the country's reputation for political corruption, but it's unlikely you'll experience any direct effects of this as a tourist. Though if you do find yourself invited to a traditional Bosnian wedding, you may want to stay out of the way of celebratory gunfire (what goes up, must come down!)

Bosnia is a predominantly Muslim country but is also home to Serbian Orthodox, Sunni Muslim and Roman Catholic communities. Be awed at the stunning Sufi monastery in Blagaj or count your blessings at Medjugorje. Religion aside, there's shopping to be done in the cities' baazars, flicks to enjoy at the Sarajevo Film Festival and enough football to lose your mind over.

7. Stari Most (Mostar Bridge) – Mostar's pride and joy




Stari Most – don't look down.

While this Ottoman-era bridge was mostly destroyed in 1993 during the war, its subsequent rebuilding is symbolic of the strength of the local people. So is Mostar's annual bridge-diving competition, when participants from around the world take the twenty-metre plunge – some head-first – into the Neretva River.

Ready to check out a different side of Europe? Check out our [Bosnia & Herzegovina small group adventures](#).



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About the author



Chelsea McIver - Chelsea McIver is a freelance writer from Melbourne. While her hometown is full of pretty cool things to do, she travels overseas as often she can or as per her bank account allows. She's always looking to discover new and interesting experiences and share them with the world.

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Anonymous December 30, 2015 at 11:33 pm / [Reply](#)

Funny how people have different experiences. Myself, having traveled in BH for 3 weeks, came out with the impression that this must be one of the top 3 most hostile and unfriendly people in Europe (well, in all the 72 countries I visited around the world, actually). Nothing serious, they are just rude, greedy towards the foreigner, unfriendly, with a hard smile. BH has many enchants and I plan to go back, actually more than once, but definitely not because of the people.

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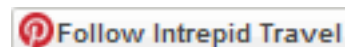
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