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Study trip in Kosova Gjakova as a seminar destination



HFT Luzern in Thun

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Managment Summary

On behalf of the tourism school HFT Luzern in Switzerland, we were analyzing the tourism potential of Gjakova. Our definition of the project was to create a SWOT analysis, in which we are specifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the destination in a tourism aspect. We recognized that littering is one of the biggest weaknesses of Kosova. However friendliness and the undiscovered nature is definitely convincing us. As well part of the task was to find out which types of seminars the town could accommodate and what activities the participants could do in their free time. During our stay in Gjakova, Malush and Diana from the Swiss-Kosovarian foundation GjakovaBasel were showing us the sights of the town and we realized immediately that there is a big potential for tourist activities, especially for seminar guests since in Gjakova there are some good facilities for seminars. Finally we established 8 different packages for activities during seminar stays. For example, we recommend a guided walking tour, dinner with locals or a trip to the Mirusha waterfalls.

To sum up, the beauty and the hospitality of Gjakova generally surprised us. The locals should be clear on the potential of its region. It is now necessary to be active for solving some problems like littering and finally optimize the value chain and the cooperation between the different organizations and partners in order to let tourism grow.

Introduction

During this week, we are analysing which kind of seminars including free time packages we could offer in Gjakova for the guests and their partners. We are going to treat the following tasks in the documentation:

- Which kind of touristic activities can be done in Gjakova?
- Are there any handcrafting offers?
- What kinds of seminars can be held in Gjakova?
- What activities can the partner of the participants do?
- Are there any city tours to do?
- Are there any hikes to do?

Gjakova

The city of Gjakova is situated in the southwestern area of Kosovo. In 2011, the city's population stood at approximately 95'000. It is the only town in Kosovo with a female mayor. During the Kosovo war, big parts of the city were burned down or destroyed. To this day, some of them have never been restored. Big parts of the city however were rebuilt in its old and traditional style, which can easily be spotted and reached from the center of the town. The old town area of Gjakova, also known as the big Bazaar, is very inviting and has a lot of bars and restaurants. Also, it is said to be the oldest Bazaar in Kosovo. The city is known for its hand crafting and jewellery shops. Because of the history, Serbian people are hardly accepted here. Several war monuments and religious buildings such as mosques and churches stand in Gjakova, which is barely possible in other countries. From what it looks like, the people of Gjakova seem to be outside all the time and not working too much. If one takes a closer look though, there will be a surprise waiting. There are multiple places for young people to create a business or find out their talents in the Science and Technology field. As usual in hardly developed touristic places, tourists will have to accept some skepticism towards them in the beginning. Nonetheless, when confronted, the people of Gjakova are friendly and welcoming, above all if there are Swiss tourists, which seem to have a special bond with the Albanian People.

Tourism in Gjakova

When visiting the tourism office of Gjakova we were told that there are neither conventional city tours nor general touristic activities in the area. Only on request there are some unofficially guided tours by the owner of the office. Most of the hotels, restaurants etc. are not really prepared to attend foreign tourist, they are more used to the local ones. Although there aren't really any offered activities, we actually found some interesting places, which we think could be used in order to promote tourism. The following places or activities could be promoted and eventually be used to support local tourism:

- Old town (Bazaar)
- Hadum Mosque (16 century)
- Mother Teresa statue in the center of the new town
- Innovation center
- War museum
- Music museum/school
- Ethnology museum
- Amusement park
- Beauty treatment

Seminars

In this task we were told to analyze if the city of Gjakova could be an interesting place for seminar tourists and how we could promote it in terms of attractive tourist offers. There are mainly two hotels that are suitable for Seminars. In the Hotel Carshia e Jupave and in the Hotel Pashtriku could be host between 100 – 150 people.

Carshia e Jupave

- 24 rooms
- 50 – 120 Euro per night
- 1 Seminar room for roughly 40 people

Hotel Pashtriku

- Roughly 90 rooms
- 30 – 60 Euro per night
- 3 seminar rooms with a total of more than 500 people

There could be hold many different seminars like for computer science industry, healthcare programs, tourism projects or for example conferences about development aid like NGO's. There could be organized many activities for the seminar guests like a visit to the makerspace Bonevet for computer science industry seminars or a tour to the mirusha waterfalls during tourism conferences. Thanks to the existing infrastructure of seminar hotels we see a potential for holding seminars in Gjakova, furthermore there would be many activities for the guest which could be part of the seminar.



SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Hospitality	Insufficient access to finance
Culinary	Missing tourism value chain
Hotel quality and cleanness	Bad reputation of the country
Low criminality	Less amount of touristic activities to do
Attractive old town	No public transport
	No knowledge of English by majority of the local people
	Littering
Opportunities	Threats
History of the war	Partners do not want to work together
Establishing a good reputation of the country	No tourists
Individual tourism destination	Better promotion by other countries
Create new jobs	Economic slowdown
Tourism office	People rather go to Albania

Strengths

Our impression is that the hospitality in Gjakova is on a high level. The staff of the restaurants and hotels is very friendly and hospitable. Also the culinary is a strength of Kosova. The food tastes wonderful and the prices are extremely low throughout the country. The hotels are offering a good service, especially the cleanness of the rooms is excellent. Surprisingly, the criminality is very low even though the country has been in a war some years ago. After the massacre which happened to the town of Gjakova, the locals rebuilt the beautiful old town, which represent now the most attractive touristic attraction.

Weaknesses

The relatively small size of Gjakova compared to competing European cities means that the touristic opportunities are limited. Gjakova offers just a small amount of touristic activities and this leads to a missing tourism value chain, which is very important for a touristic destination. Additionally, there is no public transport which makes it even more complicated to welcome tourists in Gjakova. The majority of the locals are not familiar in speaking English and this blocks the communication between both sides. A big problem is, that there is an insufficient access to finance what is the reason of the slow growing of the economic and the touristic options. Therefore, Kosova has a negative image based on the war and a lack of information. The nature is very beautiful in Kosova but unfortunately, many places are polluted by littering. People are scared of visiting because they believe it is not secure or still a criminal country with political conflicts.

Opportunities

Nowadays a lot of people are looking for undiscovered places where it is not crowded with mainstream tourism. This trend is a good opportunity for Gjakova to apply as an individual destination. The history of the war offers a lot of different monuments and historical places that will attract cultural guests. If the destination could get an abroad marketing it would help to turn around the bad reputation into a positive image. According to our discussion with our partner we found out that the country is suffering because of the high unemployment of the young generation. There exists a tourism office but unfortunately they do not offer any activities or brochures for the town Gjakova. They are only focusing in places like Peja or combined tours to Albania. The office is a good chance for the town to support the tourism value chain. For example, they could arrange a partnership between the local companies and push them to build interesting packages. After creating a touristic concept, they could promote the beautiful old town abroad.

Threats

As the town is not well known there might be a lack of tourists. Another problem could be that they will not get visits because tourists prefer Albania because it is much more popular and developed. The surrounding countries are fortunate to be located along the ocean. A big problem as well is the slow growing economy in the country of Kosova. It stops the innovation of new companies, which would be an improvement for the system and the infrastructure. Because of this situation it is not easy to find business partners to work with.

Seminar package suggestions

Picnic at the Mirusha waterfalls

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transportation by car to Mirusha falls ➤ Little hike to the second waterfall ➤ Have a refreshing swim during a hot summer day ➤ Enjoy a local picnic in the nature
Description	After a long business meeting in the morning, we are taking you to the wonderful nature of Kosova to enjoy a refreshing afternoon. The package includes a transport in a minivan, which is organized by the tourism office. The drive up to the waterfalls will take about 30 minutes until Mirusha town. When you arrived in the village, you may need to walk 5 minutes. After a cooling swim, a traditional picnic prepared by the hotel is waiting for you.
Capacity	10 persons
Duration	4 hours
Segmentation	Business people with a passion for nature and outdoor activities.
Our opinion	In our opinion, this arrangement is suitable for people who want to relax and spend some time in the nature. The waterfall brings a diversity to the city life and is the most attractive tourist spot. We know about the long drive- but it is definitely worth a visit!
Contact	<p>Gjakova Tourist Information Kujtim Rrahmani Sylejman Hadum Aga, Gjakovë</p> <p>kujt.rrahmani@gmail.com 00 377 45 676 015</p>



Dinner at home

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Peek inside a typical Kosovar home ➤ Get to know their traditional food ➤ Learn how to prepare the dishes
Description	Take a look behind the scenes and prepare an evening meal with a local family in their home. During this event, you will have the opportunity to get in touch with the natives and communicate with them. They are well known for their hospitality- try it out!
Capacity	8 people
Duration	2 hours
Segmentation	Foreign tourists with a flair for tradition and food
Our opinion	<p>We think that this program is a good way to connect the tourists and the local families. The inhabitants could easily earn some money, which is combined with a fun part. Therefore, they can practise their English knowledge. To consider the touristic aspect, it would enrich the individual travel and offers the opportunity, to discover the country from another side.</p> <p>To create this dinner at home, we suggest that Malush Tullumi will get in touch with families and take the responsibility over the booking requests. He informed us, that there are some families, which are offering bed and breakfast and would arrange a meal.</p>
Contact	<p>Gjakova Basel Jakova Innovation Center 50000 Gjakova/ Kosova</p> <p>Mob. +377 (0)44 237 244 mtullumi@yahoo.com</p>



Culinary tour

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Get to know the traditional food of Kosova ➤ Wine tasting ➤ Traditional liquor tasting
Description	In this program, the tour guide of Kosova is showing you the best traditional restaurants of the town. Join the evening tour through the old town of Gjakova where he brings you to the most charming, traditional restaurants. We suggest you to try out the Kosovan wines and liquors, which are really nice and worth it to take a sip.
Capacity	Up to 30 people
Duration	3 hours
Segmentation	All kind of tourists
Our opinion	As we met the man of the tourist information, we noticed that they do not offer culinary tours. In our opinion, this activity could interest almost every segment of the tourists. They can experience the traditional food accompanied by the hospitality of the country.
Contact	<p>Gjakova Tourist Information Sylejman Hadum Aga, Gjakovë</p> <p>Kuyt.vahmani@gmail.com +381 390 327850</p>



Wood carving workshop

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Visit the locals and learn, how to carve a wooden figure➤ Get to know the history about wood carving in Kosova
Description	Woodcarving is an ancient and deeply embedded tradition in Kosova. Everywhere, you can find wonderful houses which are decorated by lovely woodcrafts. Get to grips with this traditional handcraft and learn how to carve with the experts. Use your creativity and create a wooden figure to take with you as a souvenir.
Capacity	15 people
Duration	1.5 hours
Segmentation	Tourists which are interested in tradition and active programs.
Our opinion	The man of the tourist office informed us, that there are a lot of wood carvers in Gjakova which are working in their home. On request, he can arrange a visit including a workshop. We think that this program gives the locals the opportunity, to preserve their tradition and show their talent. Is establish the touristic opportunity with an active part and helps again, to connect different cultures, support the value chain and creates jobs.
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BoneVet Workshop

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Get to know the Bonevet organisation ➤ Guided tour through the building ➤ Work and create a project with the kids
Description	<p>Bonevet is a non-profit community centre which is giving the opportunity for young people to experiment with technology, design and engineering and share their knowledge. The experts just teach them the absolutely necessary theory and let them learn by doing. Through this, they want to nurture a vibrant community of idea and resource sharing among its makers, which raise character building traits like grit, creativity, open-mindedness, social responsibility and team work. The students are very talented. For example, they are taught programming and modelling 3D printers and are enabled to build their own prototypes.</p>
Capacity	10 people
Duration	3 hours
Segmentation	Tourists which are interested in technics
Our opinion	<p>When we visited this centre, we were surprised in a positive way. It is amazing, what Bonevet is offering to the inhabitants. It is a unique institution which support young talented girls and boys in a practical way. It is very interesting to see how develop they are and how they youngsters built their projects.</p>
Contact	<p>Arbër Lleshi Technical Officer Str. Vëllezerit Frashëri Gjakovë 50000</p> <p>info@bonevet.org +386 49 814 468</p>



Shkugez walk and dine

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hike through the wonderful nature of Kosova ➤ Dinner at the restaurant Shkugez ➤ Hike back to Gjakova
Description	The tour guide of the tourism information is taking you to a beautiful restaurant out of the town in Shkugez where you can enjoy dinner. The walk will take you one hour through a pine forest. Ideal, to combine your dinner with a walk in the nature.
Capacity	20 persons
Duration	4.5 hours
Segmentation	Active people
Our opinion	<p>On tripadvisor, the restaurant is positive recommended. The guests liked the quiet place with the modern ambience and of course the good food. We think that it is a good way to combine a dinner with an active part.</p> <p>To realise this offer, we suggest that the tourist information will guide the group and take the control over the booking reservations.</p>
Contact	<p>Gjakova Tourist Information Sylejman Hadum Aga, Gjakovë</p> <p>kuyt.vahmani@gmail.com +381 390 327850</p>



Historical City Tour in the old town of Gjakova

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Guided tour in the beautiful old town of Gjakova ➤ Visit the historical spots of the war
Description	Walk through the beautiful old town of Gjakova with a local guide who will tell you all the historical facts about the town and its culture. During your walk, you get the chance to see and visit different mosques and churches, it gives you a look about the small shops, cafes at the bazaar and as well the guides will give you some tips for tasty and local restaurants to visit.
Capacity	20 people
Duration	1.5 hours
Segmentation	For all seminar guests and foreign tourists, but also for kosovarian visitors from other parts of the country.
Our opinion	We think that many tourists are interested in the history of the war and the conflicts in country. With this tour, they get to know well the background information, its sights and the history by a local guide.
Contact	<p>Gjakova Tourist Information Sylejman Hadum Aga, Gjakovë</p> <p>kuyt.vahmani@gmail.com +381 390 327850</p>



Traditional music and dance

Activity	➤ Traditional music and dance show
Description	Experience the tradition of the Kosovarian culture with dance and music in the culture palace in Gjakova. This 1 hour show made by a mix of young and older local people, will give you a wonderful insight of its rich tradition of dance, music and clothing.
Capacity	30 persons
Duration	1 hour
Segmentation	This show is made for cultural interested people, however due of the fact that it shows some typical Albanian tradition it might be rather interesting for foreign seminar guests and tourists.
Our opinion	We think that music and dance is a funny and beautiful way to get closer to a country's culture. We think that this is a must while visiting Kosovo.
Contact	Gjakova Tourist Information Sylejman Hadum Aga, Gjakovë kuyt.vahmani@gmail.com +381 390 327850



Conclusion

During our stay in Gjakova and after analyzing the touristic possibilities, we realized that the city and its region is very attractive and has many potential. One of the most important points in tourism is hospitality and culinary, which is excellent all over the country. There are different sights and activities to do but there are still many efforts to make in matters of marketing, create offers, and optimize the access to the tourist spots. As well it is necessary to be active for solving problems of littering at tourist places. We suggest to optimize the value chain and to cooperate between the different organizations and partners. As well it is important to create some prospects and websites to get some information in advance.

We truly had a great and interesting time in Gjakova. We had the chance to be taken care of by wonderful locals which gave us an unforgettable insight in their country and culture. Special thanks to Malush and Diana for this week. We really hope that our ideas could give an input and will be developed further. Moreover we hope there will be a continuing cooperation between Gjakova and the HFT Thun.