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## Serbia's World Class Natural and Cultural Assets

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The 32nd annual **International Tourism Fair** in Belgrade kicked off last week - with over 850 exhibitors from 41 countries on show. At a press conference hosted by the Serbia Tourist Organisation, officials laid out their plan for positioning Serbia in the international tourism market. Their focus will be concentrated on a number of core markets, with cultural & heritage tourism, cruising, city breaks, sport adventure, wine, and conventions among the most

important.

Serbia has a rich and diverse cultural history which sets the country apart from many of the destinations in Eastern Europe. Historically, Serbia has been the crossroads of eastern Europe and western Europe due to its geographical location in the centre of the Balkans. Serbia's rich Roman history and previous Ottoman and Austrian rule also position Serbia as a cultural hub and a crossroads of Muslim and Christian culture.

Serbia's list of historical assets is extensive. Sixteen Roman emperors were born in Serbia. There are extensive military roads, and an arch bridge over the lower Danube built by the Romans which became the longest in the world. A 25 million euro investment in a unique educational tour - entitled the Roman Emperor Route - will see a tourism partnership extended between the participating countries of Bulgaria and Romania, connecting the cities where Serbia's Roman emperors were born. The Serbia Tourism Organisation is looking to extend The Pan European Route which exists from Scotland to Bavaria to bring added value for tourists.

Serbia has eight UNESCO world heritage sites, including the Decani monastery, the largest construction project of medieval Serbia, which houses perfectly preserved 14th century paintings and Gamzigrad, a late Roman fortress built in the early years of the 4th century.

Serbia has many natural assets including the iron gate, a gorge on the Danube River which is the second largest in the world (behind Colorado). Eight wine regions have also been identified in Serbia and the industry continues to produce significant quantities for export.

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The keystone to Serbia's natural assets is its natural 588 km link along the Danube River from Hungary. The Danube River, the longest river in the European Union, provides a link to the rest of the countries which share the river with Serbia including Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Moldova. The number of tourists engaging in cruises along the Danube has grown since 2003 when only 141 ships docked along the Serbian portion of the Danube and in 2009 as many as 800 docked. In 2009, 50,000 cruise passengers arrived in Belgrade and 15,230 passengers to Novi Sad. There are 200 Floating Bars and Pubs in Serbia along the Danube.




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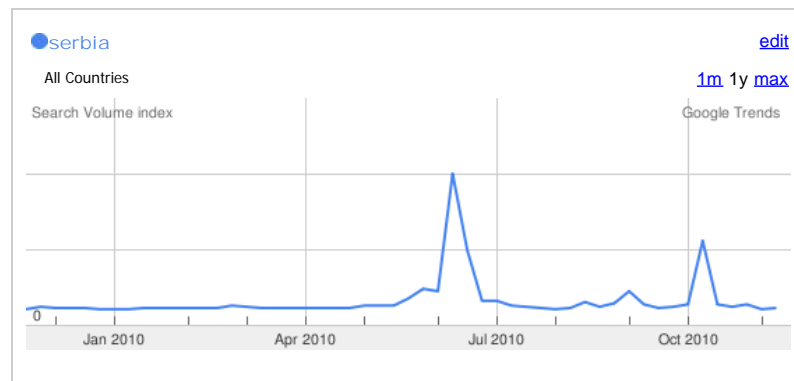


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In addition to the presentation of the local and international tour operators, the accommodation capacities, the tourist organizations, booking systems, the hotel and catering equipment, natural attractions, tourism education and media, our efforts will be additionally oriented to getting the Serbian rural tourism offer closer to the local and international...



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