



Cross-border peaks Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania by Fatos Lajçi

BALKANS PEACE PARK PROJECT IN RUNNING FOR TOP TOURISM AWARD

Peace Park nomination now among three finalists in competition for award from the British Guild of Travel Writers

Last autumn community leaders from valleys in northern Albania and adjacent areas of Kosovo and Montenegro met in Pristina (Kosovo) to mark their support for creating an international peace park in the mountainous region where their three territories converge. Now, less than a year later, the Balkans Peace Park Project (BPPP) finds itself in the running for one of Britain's premier tourism awards as one of three finalists for an award from the British Guild of Travel Writers (BGTW). That was agreed at a Guild meeting held in London on Wednesday 12 September.

'The land of the living past', is a phrase coined by Edith Durham who one hundred years ago travelled through the remote valleys and mountains that now lie at the heart of the Balkan Peace Park region. Edith Durham recorded her travels in a celebrated piece of travel writing called *High Albania*.

The BPPP helps unite communities that have hitherto been divided by common borders and makes a stand against environmental degradation. It promotes the effective protection of a region that has mountain landscapes and rural lifestyles which are not replicated elsewhere in Europe. The project also promotes access to the region for ethical and responsible tourism in one of Europe's remotest areas. Above all, the project is a powerful agent for peace in a region of Europe where ethnic tensions have still not been entirely resolved. The BPPP benefits from support from a number of non-governmental agencies and individuals besides the six municipalities and some government ministries.

Representatives of the three finalists are invited to attend a gala dinner at London's Savoy Hotel on Sunday 11 November, on the eve of the World Travel Market – and there the winning project is announced. 2007 is the thirtieth year in which the BGTW (many of whose members are among Britain's most accomplished travel journalists and authors) has made an award for the best overseas tourism project. The criteria are simple: the project must be genuinely innovative, it must be sensitive to environmental and ecological concerns, and it must make a positive social contribution. At their best, such projects allow for interested travellers to explore landscapes, communities and cultures which might otherwise be off-limits.

For more information on the Balkans Peace Park Project, go to www.balkanspeacepark.org. The award programme is sponsored and organised by the British Guild of Travel Writers (see www.bgtw.org). BPPP was nominated for the 2007 award by Nicky Gardner of *hidden europe* magazine (www.hiddeneurope.co.uk).

Media images and interviews available on request to Antonia Young, Chair of BPPP-UK