

# VISITORS' CENTER AT CERJANSKA CAVE OPENED

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May 21<sup>st</sup>

Visitors' Center at Cerjanska Cave has been officially opened in the presence of Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic, the president of Nis City Municipality Pantelej Bratimir Vasiljevic, the leaders of cities of Sofia and Montana, the partner from Bulgaria and the director of Nis Tourism Organisation Uros Parlic. The visitors' center is 250 meters in size, the first of its kind in the Nisava District and it is intended for fans of adrenaline sports, cave explorers, visitors and tourists, and it will have a reception area with dressing room – wardrobe, cafeteria, souvenir shop and administrative center. The visitor center was created as a joint project by Tourist Organizations of Nis, the City of Sofia and the Association "Love and Light" from Montana within the EU Interrerg IPA program of cross-border cooperation between Serbia and Bulgaria. According to Mayor Bulatovic this project aims to use and promote this great natural monument, educational, scientific and historical heritage of Nis and the development of tourism as a branch that occupies an increasingly important place in the economy of Nis.

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# 12 NEW DESTINATIONS TO FLY TO DIRECTLY FROM NIS STARTING JULY 1ST

March 29<sup>th</sup>

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic announced that the Serbian government adopted the decision of establishing routes of public interest in air traffic, based on which, from July 1<sup>st</sup> this year and until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023, the flights would be established to 12 cities in Western Europe. There will be flights to **Nuremberg, Hannover, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe** and **Friedrichshafen** in Germany, **Gothenburg** in Sweden, **Bologna** and **Rome** in Italy, **Salzburg** in Austria, **Budapest** in Hungary and **Ljubljana** in Slovenia twice a week and to **Tivat** in Montenegro three times a week, but only during the summer season from May to October. "This is the confirmation that Nis is among the priorities of the state. This is the result of almost everyday contacts with the President Aleksandar Vucic and the Prime Minister Ana Brnabic. This is the result of countless conversations and meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister Zorana Mihajlovic and her team, and therefore I can proudly say that Nis officially has become a regional air traffic center," said Mayor Bulatovic. He stressed that the economy, in which the state and the city invested, would gain a new impetus, it would facilitate investors coming to Nis and their meetings with local partners and it would facilitate access to the markets in Western Europe. "Of course, this is also important for the development of tourism, and certainly for our diaspora, because the destinations have been defined according to the actual needs, but there was not enough commercial justification for their launch, without the help of

the state,” stressed Mayor Bulatovic. “This puts stop to all stories and malicious comments on closing the airport. “As we have agreed with Minister Mihajlovic, the headquarters of the company Airports of Serbia would be in Nis. All this, clearly show to the citizens of Nis and the southeast of Serbia that the opposite claims were clearly extremely malicious, inaccurate and directed against the development of not only the airport, “Mayor Bulatovic said at the press conference.

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## **EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN NIS: WE WANT TO FLY TO HURGHADA FROM NIS**

March 8<sup>th</sup>

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic met with the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Belgrade Mr. Amr Aljowaily, with whom he discussed possibilities for improving cooperation, primarily in the field of tourism and improvement of the tourist offer of Nis. Ambassador Aljowaily and his associates presented to Mayor Bulatovic the experiences Egypt had in modern ways of presenting archaeological sites and possibilities for applying this knowledge in Nis, primarily at the site of Mediana, Fortress and other locations that were interesting to the tourists. Mayor Bulatovic informed the guests about the potentials of Nis in the field of tourism and said that Egypt was an example of how archaeological and historical treasure could be used for the development of tourism and that kind of experience could be useful to be applied in Nis which was one of the oldest cities in this part of Europe, with an impressive historical heritage. Bulatovic

emphasized the significance and increasing investments of the state of Serbia in the Nis Airport Constantine the Great which, he said, was “a gate through which an increasing number of foreign tourists were coming to our city.” The talks also highlighted the willingness of Egyptian airline companies to establish routes between Nis and Hurghada, since, as it was jointly assessed, it was big and still unused opportunity to improve economic cooperation between two friendly countries and in particular the possibility for greater number of people from Serbia to visit Egypt, and also for people from the largest country of North Africa to come to Nis and get to know the city and this part of Europe. The official request has already been submitted to the authorities in Belgrade, and the approval of the Directorate for Civil Air Transport and the competent state authorities is expected.

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## **NIS PRESENTED ITSELF AT INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FAIR IN BELGRADE**

February 24<sup>th</sup>

The traditional promotion of Nis as a city of rich heritage with numerous cultural and historical sites was held at the International Tourism Fair in Belgrade. Nis was promoted as the city that offered its guests the best cuisine, entertainment and opportunities for adventure, sport and spending time in nature. For these reasons, according to the director of Nis Tourism Organizations Mr. Uros Parlic Nis is

becoming more and more popular among tourists, and from year to year the number of foreign and domestic guests is increasing. This increase in the number of tourists was almost by 20% compared to 2017. In order to continue this trend Nis has already been introduced in Moscow, Bratislava, Vienna, Ljubljana, Sofia and several other European capitals at the tourism fairs. Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic visited the promotional stands of the city at the fair. On this occasion he emphasized that tourism was extremely important, not only because of the high income it brought, but also because of the image and the reputation of the city and above all because of the new jobs generated by tourism.

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## **VISITOR CENTER AT THE CAVE CERJE**

The construction of the Visitor Center at Cave Cerje is nearing completion. If the weather does not slow down the works the building will be completely finished by the end of the year. The works were visited today by Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic and the director of the Tourist Organization of Nis, Uros Parlic. The facility is built with funds provided from the Interreg IPA cross-border project implemented together by TON and Sofia. The total budget of the project is 587,695 Euros. 477,208 euros is a donation of the European Union, while the rest of the funds were provided by the City of Nis. The Visitor Center will have the exhibition and gallery space, the accommodation for speleological equipment, restaurant and space for rest for the visitors as well as the space for guides, security and sale of tickets, and sanitary facilities. Mayor Bulatovic said that this was one of the most important projects for the city when it was about the development of

tourism in Nis. "It is a significant project not only because of the location of the Cave Cerje and its potentials, the large number of speleologists and tourists that visit it. This will not serve only for the purpose of this site, but it is significant for the whole area where there are monasteries, spas, cave complexes, and many other sites interesting for the tourists", as Mayor Bulatovic said. According to the Municipality of Pantelej the works will begin on the asphaltting of the missing road in the length of 300 meters and the construction of bus stop near the center, which will make the complex complete and infrastructural available at all times.

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## **NEW FLIGHTS FROM NIS TO VIENNA**

In the presence Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic, the members of Nis City Council and the management of the Airport Constantine the Great the first flight from Vienna arrived in Nis. Thus the new line Vienna – Nis – Vienna was officially established. The flights are scheduled for Tuesdays and Saturdays, and in certain months on Thursdays. The one-way tickets are on sale from 2399 RSD. The price includes all taxes except for the service for issuing a plane ticket. Wizz Air says this is "a great opportunity for Serbian travelers to discover one of the European cultural centers at a favorable price of tickets for 19.99 euros". Mayor Darko Bulatovic said that the launching of this line, as well as the enormous interest of passengers for it, was a sure proof that Nis airport had a future. "Since the beginning of this year, about 310,000 passengers have flown from the Nis airport, which is about 8 % more than last year, and we are sure that the plan of having 360 000 passengers

this year will be achieved. I am sure that next year, this number will be surpassed, "Bulatovic said. In response to the increased demand and desire for a number of favorable travel opportunities, Wizz Air continues to expand its network of lines from Serbia, offering this year a total of 20 routes to 8 countries available with two Serbian airports, which will further contribute to the increase in incoming and outgoing tourism trends and improve business relationships between countries.

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## **THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS INCREASES**

During first 9 months of this year, 95,015 tourists were registered in Nis, which totaled 156,556 overnight stays, which is an increase of 17%, and the number of overnight stays by 9.7% compared to the same period of the previous year, according to the Press Release No 290 of October 1st, 2018 by the Republic Institute for Statistics. Since the beginning of the year many tourists from Serbia but also from European and non-European countries visited Nis. The highest number of arrivals was registered by foreign guests, and in the period from January to September, 57,513 foreign guests stayed in Nis, which is an increase compared to the same period of the previous year by 23.5%. Since the beginning of the year foreign tourists have made a total of 83,523 overnight stays, so in this category there was a considerable increase compared to the same period last year by 17.2%. Positive trend of growth relates also to domestic tourists, so in Nis, during first 9 months there were 37,502 tourists with 73,033

overnight stays, which is an increase of 8.3% and 2.2% more than in the previous year. Such results and continuous growth of tourist traffic are the result of good digital promotion of the city, participation in fairs in the country and abroad and cooperation with media houses and numerous journalists from abroad. The work of the Nis Tourist Organization contributed to Nis becoming more recognized tourist destination in this part of Europe.

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## **NEW PATHS OF HEALTH IN NISKA BANJA**

The City of Nis and the Municipality of Niska Banja will be the host of the 5th session of the Joint Consultative Committee of the EU-Serbia Region Committee. Apart from the representatives of almost all cities and municipalities from our country, the session will be attended by a large number of guests from abroad, members of the Committee from all countries in the region. The study tour of the project Health Paths and Meetings in Niska Banja which is financed through Interreg IPA CBC Bulgaria Serbia funds was organized last night. Together with the Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatović and the President of the City Municipality Niska Banja, Dejan Jovanović, the European parliamentarians walked along the paths of health in the park above the fountain. The reconstruction of the health paths is financed by a cross-border project jointly implemented by City Municipality Niska Banja and Bulgarian municipality Zemen. The objectives of the project are increasing of the tourist attractiveness of the cross-border region of the municipalities Zemen and Niska Banja. The project aims at capitalization of the natural and historical recourses in the region and improvement of

touristic products. Through investments in infrastructure the project will contribute to the creation of more attractive tourist conditions and will attract further investments. The project will also popularize the region as a tourist destination. Planned project activities include reconstruction and modernization of the community center in Gabrov Dol and supporting construction activities. In Niska Banja infrastructure activities cover rehabilitation of health walking paths, the amphitheater and scene in the city center and the park. The project includes organization of tours in each country for tour-operators to popularize the project results and the tourist opportunities. Another activity envisages the digitalization of main tourist sites in both municipalities and their integration on a common website which will further contribute to popularization of the region.

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## **NISVILLE – ONE OF THE NIS BRANDS**

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic visited today the Nis fortress where the final preparations for the start of the main program of this year's International Jazz Festival Nisville were in progress. The mayor, together with the Director of Nisville, Ivan Blagojevic, visited the newly opened Jazz Museum in the building of the former Turkish Bath where the history of the Festival and the development of jazz culture in Nis was exhibited. On this occasion the Mayor emphasized the great importance this museum had, as well as Nisville in general, in creating a more complete and richer tourist offer in Nis. "The city recognized the significance of Nisville and included

it among the public events supported by the city, the Jazz Festival was a cultural treasure and unique brand of Nis, after which this city became recognizable and far beyond the borders of our country. This can be seen at every step. The city is crowded with people from all over the world, and I expect estimated 200,000 people to see some of Nisville programs during these ten days, which will be a huge success for the city, "Bulatovic said. Nisville Director Ivan Blagojevic expressed satisfaction with the support provided by the city to the festival without which Nisville could not have been one of the top ten music festivals in Europe, according to the British Guardian. Blagojević hopes that the ministries of culture, youth, and tourism will also recognize the significance of this event, and provide support that will enable Nisville to progress, both technically and program related, primarily through the arrival of the world's greatest names in the world jazz scene. Mayor Bulatovic emphasized that the support from the city increased from 20 million in 2016 to 28 million dinars this year, which testified that Nis was aware of the value of this festival and was ready to support it in the coming years and in the future.

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## **AMBASSADOR OF EGYPT IN NIS**

Mayor of Nis Darko Bulatovic met today with the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E.Mr Amr Aljowaily, the first diplomat from this friendly country who visited our city after more than 15 years. The meeting, agreed a few months ago, coincided with the evening performance of the modern ballet ensemble of the Cairo State Opera at Nisville Theater Festival, so the issue of expanding and enhancing cultural

cooperation was imposed as one of the main topics of discussion between Mayor Bulatovic and the Ambassador. The Ambassador said that cooperation should not be limited to Belgrade and Cairo, as the two main and largest cities. On this occasion he also invited Nis folk ensembles to be guests at one of the numerous ethno festivals in Egypt. Also, the initiative for closer connection, and the twinning of Nis with some of the larger cities in Egypt, was initiated, which was accepted mutually. Mayor Bulatovic pointed out that Nis was a city with a rich but insufficiently investigated archaeological heritage and there was the need for establishing cooperation with Egyptian experts who had vast experience in the field. He emphasized that the National Museum in Nis was ready to connect and collaborate with some of the Egyptian museums or archaeological institutions. Ambassador Aljowaily said that he was familiar with the rapid development of Nis Airport Constantine the Great and pointed out that it would be good to launch an airline, regular or charter, between Nis and airports in Hurghada or Sharm el-Sheikh, and that this would be important not only for citizens of this part of Serbia, but also Bulgaria and Macedonia, and would enable a much larger tourist exchange in both directions.