

What is a peace park?



Crossing mountains from Albania into Montenegro - Richard Hargreaves

There are over 600 environmentally protected areas in the world which straddle international boundaries; about 25 of these are specifically dedicated as 'Peace Parks,' symbols of peace and cooperation between countries where sometimes there has been serious conflict between them.

PEACE PARK HISTORY

The first major cross border international Peace Park ever created was between Canada/ USA at Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Both this transboundary park, and Morokulien (Norway/ Sweden 1914) celebrate peaceful borders- or the prevention of war over frontiers. Others, as in the Balkans and Russia/ Finland (Karelia), follow bitter conflicts and war: some like the Korean De-Militarized Zone remain visions for the future. The Greater Limpopo Peace Park between South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe is very recent, as is the 2003 European Greenbelt Project of which B3P represents 3 countries.



Above: photograph taken by one of the students from the Theth Summer Programme photography project 2009

Why have a Peace Park in the Balkans?

The spectacular mountains and valleys of northern Albania, Kosovo/a and Montenegro share a landscape of wild beauty, exceptional flora and fauna and traditional lifestyle that is almost unique in Europe, relatively unspoilt by modern development. But it is a landscape under threat: from declining population in the harsh conditions, from illegal logging and other environmental destruction.

The establishment of a Balkans Peace Park would unite the existing communities of the three countries in preserving this national heritage enabling people to continue to live in the valleys, supported by sustainable visitor activities and appropriate modern facilities.

The Park's Proposed Area...

The approximate 3000sq km of the Balkans Peace Park should include the Kelmend, Shala Valley and Valbona regions of Albania, the Prokletije and Komovi area of Montenegro and the Hajla-Rugova-Djeravica region of Kosovo/a.



Map of proposed peace park area.

The work of B3P to date

- We have annually brought many hundreds of new visitors to the region, and also facilitated several significant academic projects in the region.
- We have established regular exchange visits and programmes to and from the Region with the Yorkshire Dales National Park (UK).
- From 2003, we have helped many walking, climbing, biking, and horse treks through the mountains of the cross - border area, offering our knowledge and expertise in researching old and new routes.
- We have helped to open or re-open several road, footpath, and hiking trail crossing-points between all three countries: Albania/ Montenegro, Montenegro/ Kosovo/a, and Albania/ Kosovo/a, some closed for more than 90 years!
- We helped sponsor, fund and organize international conferences (some with UNEP) at Shkodra, Podgorica, Prishtina and Plav (Montenegro).
- A major achievement was participation with our regional Coalition of NGOs (2006), in obtaining participation in obtaining the signing of a Letter of Good Intent to support the Peace Park by mayors or leaders of municipalities in and around the Peace Park area: Peja and Deçan (Kosovo/a), Plav and Rožaje (Montenegro), Shkodra and Bajram Curri (Albania).
- B3P has been short listed for two major awards: from the British Guild of Travel Writers (November 2007) and the Alternative Rich List (September 2009).
- B3P has initiated annual Summer Programmes in Thethi, Albania since 2008, where the children have been given lessons in English and Environmental studies.
- In 2010 B3P participated with Environmentally Responsible Action (ERA) group and The Ideas Partnership (TIP) in a summer camp in the Rugova Valley, Kosovo/a and made plans for future workshops in the Plav area of Montenegro.

Current priorities

- To run annual Summer Programmes in all three areas, focusing on environmental/biodiversity education, camping and training for local communities - including English language skills.
- To make life easier for people living in the valleys, e.g. repairs to hydro-electric plants, roads, footpaths, schools, and water supplies, and rebuilding of bridges.
- To negotiate clear and simple procedures for obtaining police permission in the three countries, to trek or ride across mountain borders at several signed unofficial crossing points; and to encourage individuals and international groups and organisations to take advantage of these trails.
- To encourage mountain guide training, especially for younger people living in the valleys, in English.
- To encourage interaction of young locals across borders.
- To further close co-operation with local NGOs and with UNEP, IUCN, GTZ and various international development agencies.
- To develop links along the IUCN's European Green Belt: the Finland/Russia border, along the line of the former Iron Curtain through central Europe and parts of the Balkans, including the proposed Balkans Peace Park.
- To establish a much stronger support network for collaborative ventures for professional staff for B3P as well as a regional secretariat.
- To continue to organize study visits to Peace/ National Parks in the UK and other countries.
- To continue to work closely other NGOs and stakeholders in the region committed to B3P's goals.

B3P is a charity which needs funding and support to help with all our current priorities and future projects. We are grateful for any donations people can make whether it be their money, time, skills or expertise.

The Balkans Peace Park Project is a registered UK Charity (No. 1105447) and is regulated by the Charities Commission of England and Wales.

About us

In 2001 a UK Committee was formed to work closely with individuals and NGOs in the Balkans Peace Park region. We became a charity in 2004.

Support our work:

Donations (tax deductible to UK taxpayers) can be made at www.justgiving.com/balkanspeacepark or by cheque made out to The Balkans Peace Park Project and sent to: The Hon. Treasurer, Balkans Peace Park Project, The Camp, Gladestry, Kington, HR5 3NY.

Get involved

We are always interested to hear from people who might be able to help on our current projects, please check our website for our latest volunteer requirements.



Closing ceremony at the Rugova 2010 project in Kosovo - Patrick McEntaggart

Enquiries:

For further information visit our website www.balkanspeacepark.org or contact ann.kennard@waitrose.com

• BALKANS PEACE PARK PROJECT •



- PARKU BALLKANIK I PAQES •
- BALKANSKI PARK MIRA •



Mount Arapit taken by one of the students from the Theth Summer Programme photography project 2009

B3P is a small charity with a big picture. At the heart of that picture is a transnational park, a rugged mountainous region spanning Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo/a, a symbol of peace and cooperation where communities from all three countries work together to protect their fragile environment, stimulate local employment and promote sustainable visitor activities in the region.

www.balkanspeacepark.org