

TOURISM POTENTIALS OF SELECTED MEDIEVAL FORTRESSES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

Tourism potentials of selected medieval fortresses in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The medieval heritage in the context of cultural and historical tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often neglected, but the practice of other European countries shows that this segment of history can be exploited on a very high level. This is primarily related to large objects in the form of fortresses, which generally have a dominant position over the surrounding area. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are a large number of such forts (over a hundred), which testify to the turbulent medieval past. The fact is also that a large number of such facilities are in an inadequate state, but there are also those who may or already have their tourist function. Within this paper, four examples of medieval forts in Bosnia and Herzegovina - two in the Bosna River valley and two in Northeast Bosnia, from the aspect of their tourism attractiveness and degree of valorization have been analyzed. The methodology in this paper is based on detailed empirical research conducted through very extensive field observation, with the application of combined qualitative and quantitative comparative method of tourism valorization. The particular method used in the paper was based on the application of GIS cartographic models for adequate spatial representation of the study objects.

Key words

Medieval fortresses, Vranduk, Dobož, Srebrenik, Zvornik, tourism valorization
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1. Introduction

From the aspect of modern civilizational articulation, the architectural heritage represents the unique footprint of the cultural identity of each community, referring to the different dimensions of architectural, artistic, historical, aesthetic and spiritual and other values. This multidimensionality represents a specific form of material cultural-historical heritage, which is by its objective existence of great importance in terms of improving the resourceful tourist offer on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This country has gone through a long historical development through different periods, from pre-Slavic, through medieval, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Yugoslavian, to modern, each of which left a significant mark on the social conditions and the local cultural landscape. However, medieval heritage in this context is often neglected, despite its uniqueness. As part of the study and scientific verification, the attribute of architectural heritage in the segment of fortified towns (fortresses) with a focus on the medieval period possesses significant qualitative and quantitative potentials. They are also reflected in the assumption that "around 350 fortified cities have been built around the early 14th and 15th centuries around Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within this paper, four examples of medieval fortified towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina – two in the Bosna River valley and two in Northeast Bosnia, from the aspect of their tourism attractiveness, as well as degree of valorization have been analyzed. These are: Vranduk Fortress near Zenica, Doboј Fortress, Srebrenik Fortress and Zvornik Fortress.

Assessment of around 350 built towns is not excessive because even today archaeologists and historians reveal them through detailed tours of some smaller territorial units (Fekeža 2005). The scientifically researched and verified number of medieval fortifications (fortresses) or their partially-located remains is relatively small compared to the potential. According to the inventory of Redžić (2009), in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 147 medieval fortresses have been recorded, which in their genesis have undergone various stages of development and certain spatial-funcional and architectural transformations. Due to their location and geographic specificity, in the literature, their position often relies on river flows (fortified towns along the river Bosna, Drina and so on), certain historical-geographic regions, that is traditional regions (Cazinska Krajina) or complex regional units (Eastern Herzegovina). From the aspect of administrative-political structures, selected examples of medieval fortified towns are located in both entities and in different cantons within the Federation of BiH. In terms of regional geographic affiliation, according to Nurković and Mirić (2005), Vranduk belongs to Macroregion of Mountains and Valleys, while the fortresses in Doboј, Srebrenik and Zvornik to the Peripannonian macroregion.

These fortifications were built in the 14th and 15th centuries on a territory covered by the medieval Bosnian state, but due to frequent changes in political circumstances, they were occasionally located under the control of neighboring states. Common to them is that they were built on strategically important locations in the context of defense and control of the surrounding region. Some of these forts have partially maintained their function in the coming period. Today they have the status of a national monument, and above all have a tourist function. The entrance to the forts in Vranduk, Doboј and Srebrenik is charged, while Kula grad near Zvornik, in spite of its attractive location and historical value, is not equipped with the necessary infrastructure for earning profits from tourism.

2. Geographic and historic characteristics of selected fortresses

Belonging to tourism regions is determined based on the concept of differentiation area of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 17 tourism regions that have formal and functional character, as well as clearly defined boundaries in a geographical sense. According to the same, Vranduk Fortress is located in Zenica-Doboj region, Srebrenik Fortress in Tuzla region, Zvornik Fortress in Zvornik-Bijeljina region, and Doboj Fortress in Doboj tourism region (Mirić et al. 2016). This definition of belonging of selected researched facilities represents the possibility of comparative observations from different aspects.

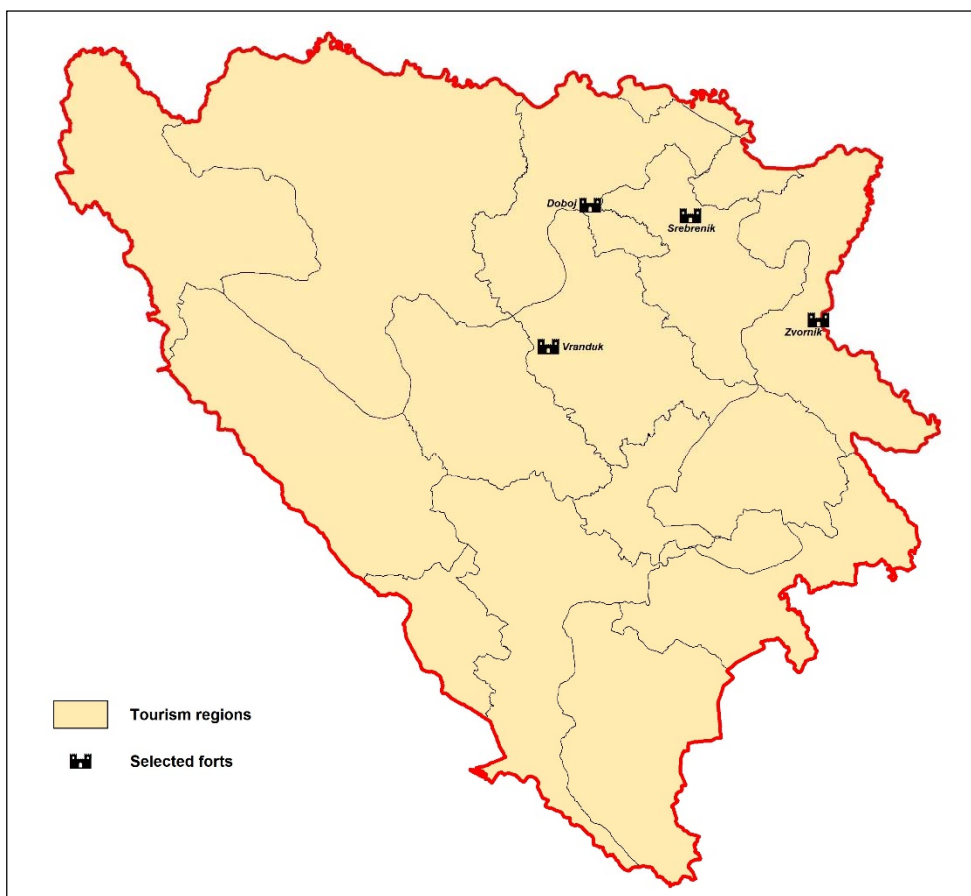


Fig. 1: Geographic location of selected fortresses.

2.1. Vranduk Fortress

The Vranduk settlement with the fortress of the same name is located on the left bank of the river Bosna. It is located about 20 km north of Zenica, on the main M-17 road, which is the busiest freeway in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on the geographic position, it can be said that Vranduk is a kind of a guardian of the entrance to the Central Bosnia, as it lies at the very summit of a steep and inaccessible gorge. At the same time, Vranduk Fortress is also the core from which this picturesque settlement developed. The settlement is characterized by the specific relationship between the fortress and its outskirts (civilian settlement), which gives the entire image of Vranduk

its particular value. The layout of Vranduk, with the fort at the centre and two separate residential quarters resembles certain prehistoric hillfort-type settlements. The fortress is on a very important strategic route that ran along the Bosna valley from Visoko to the river Sava, which is 143 km from Vranduk. In addition to its strategic military value, the road was also of importance for merchants, particularly in the medieval and later periods.

Vranduk was in the medieval county (župa) of Brod, one of seven counties of mediaeval Bosnia, which first features as a country in historical documents in the mid 10th century. From the 14th century to 1463, Vranduk was a gubernatorial town, and then a royal town belonging to the Kingdom of Bosnia. At that time it was the only fortified town in the county (župa) of Brod. Historical works emphasize the military function of the fortress, and particularly the heightened concern of Bosnia's kings in the 15th century on account of its important strategic position. Archaeological and toponomastic evidence in Vranduk suggest that it underwent its full development in much the same way as the most advanced 15th century centers in Bosnia. Being a royal fort, Vranduk was a major objective during campaigns by the Hungarian army against the Bosnian state. The earliest reference to it is in a letter from the Dubrovnik Government to Hungary's King Sigismund dated 11 March 1410. At the beginning of that same year the Hungarians had conquered Vranduk and seized it from Bosnia's King Ostoja.

During King Tomaš' reign, Vranduk was the object of particular attention. Underneath the city this king raised the church and dedicated to St Thomas, his patron saint, and, at his request, he obtained special privileges for it from the Pope in Rome. There is no reference to a Catholic church in Vranduk in early Ottoman official records (defters). It is assumed that the church has been converted into a mosque, dedicated to Sultan Mehmed II El Fatih. Vranduk was conquered by the Ottomans in 1463 and from then on it remained the northernmost frontier fortification under Ottoman rule. In the 18th and early years of the 19th century, Vranduk was used as a prison for political prisoners. In 1878, Austrian troops occupied the fort without a battle. Until 1890 it was occupied by a small Austrian garrison. From then on it remained empty, and ceased to exist as a military strategic place.

The old Vranduk fort is of the hill fortifications type. In terms of the area it covers, it is a small fort erected on a strategic, easily defended elevation which is difficult of access. The fort is well adapted to the lie of the land, resulting in considerably less thick rampart walls, and the smallest number possible of towers. The fort is well adapted to the relief, resulting in a significant reduction in the thickness of the walls of the ramparts. The disposition of the defense facilities and the size of the old town of Vranduk are conditioned by the nature of the terrain. The fort was built on a natural and artificially leveled rocky stone plateau, and the curtain walls of the fort were erected on its slopes. It rises above the Bosna River valley by some 25 m. The fort is, with its longer side, oriented north-west. It consists of: ramparts and main entrance, bailey with cistern and well, the main tower, guardhouse (built into the main tower), and a small tower. The entrance to the fort is via a number of steps through a gateway in the north-east part of the bailey ramparts. The fortress facility Vranduk is actively involved in the realization of numerous cultural events in Zenica and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Days of European Heritage, Cherry Days, cultural manifestations within the ZEPS fair, theater performances, etc.). As part of the improvements to the tourist attractions of the city and the canton, the Tourist Association has incorporated this

destination into its program. Works are currently being done in equipping the exhibition display in the tower.



Fig. 2: Vranduk Fortress.

Source: authors.

2.2. Doboj Fortress

The Doboj Fortress was built on a conically shaped rocky hill (214 m in altitude) above the Bosna river valley, opposite the confluence of the river Spreča. The confluence of the river Usora to Bosna lies somewhat more to the south. The valleys of three rivers led road routes that were intersected in this natural communication hub. The settlement of Doboj developed around a medieval fortress. Doboj lies on one of the main road intersections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and formerly lay on a strategically important road from the north, via which incursions were made into central Bosnia. Today, Doboj is a town with about 25,000 inhabitants, making it the tenth largest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The urban landscape of Doboj is dominated by buildings from the socialist period, and the old bazaar area with the fortress is located on the far west edge of the city. Although Doboj has developed primarily the traffic and industrial function and has no particular tourist reputation, Doboj Fortress is a significant attraction for tourists from the wider region.

Historians maintain that during mediaeval times Doboj lay within the Usora district. The earliest reference to Doboj is in a letter from a Dubrovnik inhabitant dated 28 June 1415. The letter was written in the period when King Sigismund was outside Doboj with the Hungarian army. Although it was at the intersection of important roads, Doboj shared the fate of other cities in the valley of Bosna, north of Vranduk.

In Doboј, in 1449 an agreement was reached between Bosnian king Stjepan Tomas and Hungary on a joint military action against the Ottomans. The northern boundary of medieval Bosnia towards Hungary determined a number of fortified cities south of Sava, between the river Bosna and Drina. Two parallel lines of fortifications have been identified. On the northern line were Dobor, Gradačac and Koraj, and on the southern Doboј, Soko, Srebrenik and Teočak. After the Ottoman conquest of one part of Bosnia in 1463, the Hungarians sought to retain the domain of Usora and Soli in their own authority, because this area had a strategic importance for Hungary. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1476, the Ottomans conquered this area, and among other things, and Doboј itself. The conquered areas were annexed by the Bosnian Sandžak. From then on until 1835 dizdar (a fortress commander) with his crew was in charge of the fortress. At the end of the 17th century, in 1697, the fortress was briefly occupied by Austrian troops in the invasion of Eugene Savoy (KONS, 2005). The second time, again briefly, the Austrian troops occupied it in 1718. After the Belgrade Treaty of 1739, the Doboј captaincy was formed. The city was abandoned in 1851.



Fig. 3: Doboј Fortress.
Source: authors.

The old Doboј town consists of an upper and lower range of fortifications. The terrain configuration dictated the shape of the fortification, which form an irregular triangle in plan, with its widest side (around 100 m) facing north. This north-facing side is the most strongly fortified, since attacks were expected from that side, and from it troops could be prevented from passing. The ramparts, which are 70 to 80 metres long, run down the most prominent „ridges” of the hill. In the course of time the fort undergone various adaptations. It has a total area of 3600 m². The entrance to the fort is at the north-western corner, through an arched gateway. A path running along the northern

outer wall, built in the 18th century, leads to the entrance to the upper part of the fort at the north-eastern corner of the inner part of the fort. To the east of the entrance is a tower gate, with 5 m long sides and 1 meter thick walls. Stairs lead to the entrance to the tower. The ground floor has two loopholes in the north wall. Wooden stairs lead to the upper floor, with its overhanging timber structure. The steep pyramidal roof is also timber-built, and clad with shingles.

Stone stairs lead from this tower to the upper part of the fort, which was formerly entered by wooden steps or a movable ladder. The upper part of the fortress, originally built medieval fort, situated on top of the stone elevation. It occupies an area of approximately 1400 m². The old town of Doboj was well-maintained after the works done from 1962-1964 (KONS, 2005). In some places, the outer eastern wall and the roof of the tower, have been damaged by the artillery action of the recent war, but they have been refurbished in the recent years.

2.3. Srebrenik Fortress

The old Srebrenik Fortress is situated on the northeastern slopes of Mt. Majevisa, in the village of Gornji Srebrenik, some 5 kilometers from the small town of Srebrenik, the center of the municipality of the same name in the Tuzla Canton. The old fort was built on a high and steep, almost inaccessible rock above the river Tinja. Underneath the most accessible part of the city a deep ditch was dug so that the site can only be reached via the bridge. It is located five kilometers from the present-day modern road of Tuzla - Lončari - Brčko. In certain historical periods Srebrenik had a great strategic importance. Its role was of defending a broad areas. It is located between the straight Pannonian and mountainous parts of Bosnia. In the Middle Ages protect the area south of the Sava from the aspirations of the Hungarians. During the Ottoman period, in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, when political and military aspirations were at times in opposing directions, first by Hungarians and Ottomans and then, in the 17th and 18th centuries, by the Austrians, Srebrenik again regains its importance.

The old Srebrenik Fortress was close to the eastern border of the medieval county of Usora, the history of which can be traced in the context of the mediaeval Bosnian state from the 13th to the 15th century. The oldest mention of this town dates back to 1333, when Bosnian ban Stjepan II Kotromanić issued a charter, under the Srebrenik Fortress, by which he waived his rights to the coastal town of Ston (KONS 2005). Srebrenik first came under Hungarian rule in 1393, during a campaign by King Sigismund (1387-1437). From then on, Hungarian military campaigns against Bosnia became more frequent. The Hungarians occupied Srebrenik on another three occasions, in 1405, 1408 and 1410. In 1408, in order to weaken Bosnia, Hungary's King Sigismund nominally bestowed the Srebrenik fort to the Serbian despot Stefan Lazarević. A Hungarian garrison remained in the fort where, according to historical documents, it was recorded in 1430. In 1433 a Bosnia's King Tomaš succeeded in regaining control of Srebrenik. Considering that the territory south of Sava up to the Bosnian mountains was a very uncertain area between Bosnia and Hungary, the demarcation between them determined a number of fortified cities in the area between the Sava, Drina and Bosnia rivers, and one of the most important was Srebrenik. In the autumn of 1464, after the fall of medieval Bosnia under the Ottomans, the Hungarian army occupied Srebrenik and other fortifications in Usora. Thus the Srebrenik banate was established, which included Usora, Soli, and Spreča with the regional cities, and its center was in the town of Srebrenik. The Ottomans conquer Srebrenik and the surrounding area in the second decade of the 16th century, and is merging with the Zvornik Sandžak. The Ottoman army left the fort in 1838.

The layout of the defense facilities in the old town of Srebrenik was dictated by the nature of the site. The fort was built on a cliff rising above the surrounding terrain to a height of some 50 to 70 meters. The upper plateau of the cliff is uneven and cleft. The height difference between the lowest point of the tower III and the highest point is about 13 m. As a result, the entire fort is squeezed into an area of about 60 m (north/south) x 30 m (east/west). The entrance to the fort is through the gate tower on the south-eastern slope (KONS 2005). From the gate tower to the north, it descends to a 15 m long rampart, which is bent at a sharp angle to the tower II, which is in the form of elongated horseshoe, with an inside dimension of about 5 meters long and 3.5 meters wide. It has been preserved at the height of 4.5 m. The north bailey was built between tower II and III. Tower III continues to the north-eastern corner of the west bailey. The stairs leading from tower III lead to the complex of the upper fort, consisting of a the main tower, cistern, and residential building. On the south side of the residential building there is a small bailey that is unlikely it existed in the Middle Ages. The ramparts of the city and outer parts of the walls of all the towers and the baileys, which together with the ramparts formed a defensive shell of the city, are about 1.5 meter thick , while all other walls within ramparts are thinner. Given that in the period between 1975 and 1978 Srebrenik was thoroughly conserved and in 2003 a new bridge for access to the city was created, there is no major damage and the need for major interventions other than improving interior aesthetics and tourist infrastructure.



Fig. 4: Srebrenik Fortress.
Source: authors.

2.4. Zvornik Fortress (Kula Grad)

Zvornik is 74 km south of the confluence of the Drina and the Sava rivers. It is a border town towards the Republic of Srpska and the largest settlement on the Drina River. The fortress of the town tower was built on a hard-to-reach mountain range Mlađevac, at the exit of the Drina from the gorge to the fertile plain, where a modern urban settlement was developed. To the north, Mlađevac is bordered by the lower course of the Bjelobarska River, to the east by the Drina, to the west by the Mekinja Stream and the road leading to the village of Sultanovići, and to the south by the lower course of the river Jošanica. Part of the upper stream of the Drina River from the mouth of the river Sava, downstream to Zvornik, was navigable in the antique period, and there are data from the later periods. Due to the strategic location on the river Drina, in the Middle Ages, and especially in the Ottoman period, Zvornik enjoyed a considerable importance. The fort guarded the route from Serbia to Bosnia via Sarajevo and Dubrovnik, and the route to Tuzla and Srebrenica, and controlled the road along the left bank of the Drina to Srijem (the Dubrovnik road) as well as the major transverse route from the Spreča valley to Kolobara, which crossed into Serbia by ferry.

A special feature for Zvornik is the three-part, and at the same time a unique fortification - Donji, Srednji i Gornji grad (town), the largest and one of the most specific fortifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Zvornik fortress is also known as Kula grad, Old Town of Zvornik and Đurđev grad. As one of the most valuable objects of this kind in the country, Kula grad (town) was declared a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is assumed that the fortress was erected at the end of the 13th or early 14th centuries. In the 15th century the fort was occupied by the Serbian despot Đurađ Branković. According to legend, the fortress was built by his wife Prokleta (Damned) Jerina, so the name Jerina's town (KONS 2005). The fortress was later expanded by the Ottomans during their rule, and upgraded by Austro-Hungarians, whose crew was situated in Zvornik Fort in the period from 1878 to 1918, so today the fortress is a testimony to the various historical periods. The town consists of three interconnected parts: Lower (near the road Zvornik-Sarajevo with a recognizable town gate), Middle (the oldest part, with a big 20 meters high tower in the central part of the fortification) and Upper Town (on the elevated hill above Zvornik, at the 400 m altitude).

The fortress can be reached by a 1,700 meter long footpath that runs from the town center through the Bair settlement and a 7 km long asphalt road through the Srpska Varoš settlement, which is suitable for motor traffic. A special advantage is the fact that the entire complex of the Upper Town is located in an attractive location with a spectacular view of Zvornik, the Zvornik Lake and the River Drina, and as mentioned above, the Upper Town is accessible along the paths that have been named after some mystical legends, which additionally enhances the experience that tourists can have when visiting this locality. Around the site there is plenty of space to accommodate and larger organized tourist groups (more buses can be accommodated on the parking lot) and since there is tourist signalization along the paths leading to the fortress, it is possible to reach it without a tourist guide. However, a significant part of the fort is in ruins and is not adequately adjusted to development of the tourism industry, which is why it imposes a regulation of this area in accordance with the general development objectives.



Fig. 4: Zvornik Fortress.

Source: authors.

3. Evaluation of tourism potentials of presented medieval fortresses

Tourism valorization is determination or estimation of tourism attractions values, i.e. estimation of attraction level of all phenomena, objects and landscapes that have, among other characteristics, property of attractiveness to tourists, and that it can be served for tourists in order to fulfill their (cultural or recreational) needs. The most effective method of tourism valorization is combined qualitative-quantitative method, whose basic principles are synthesized through possibility of comparison of tourism attraction of the same type (e.g. monument with monument), determination of elements for evaluation, comparison which includes the most affirmed motives, as well as applicability and principle of complementarity. Procedure of tourism valorization of medieval fortresses mentioned in this paper is carried out through evaluation of tourism geographic location, artistic value, tourism value of surroundings, tourism attractiveness and recognition, level of construction and equipment, and incorporation into tourism affluence (Košić 2011). Values for every parameter of tourism valorization have their range between 1 and 5.

Tab. 1. Evaluation of tourism values of selected tourism objects.

Tourism motive	Location	Artistic value	Surroundings	Attractiveness	Level of construction and equipment	Incorporation into tourism affluence	General tourism value
Vranduk fortress	3	5	5	5	5	4	4,5
Doboj fortress	4	4	4	4	5	4	4,2
Srebrenik fortress	2	4	4	5	3	3	3,5
Zvornik fortress	3	4	5	4	1	3	3,3

4. Conclusion

Selected fortresses (Vranduk, Doboj, Srebrenik and Zvornik) represent major tourism attractions in their corresponding regions. These regions are not recognized in general as being highly significant in tourism economy, even though they are densely populated. Because of this fact, it is very interesting to analyze the potential of unique historic locations like these selected fortresses for overall tourism development in such regions. One of the most important concluding remarks is that analyzed fortresses have especially high level of attractiveness and appealing surroundings. Vranduk fortress received the highest value, primarily due to complementarity of all elements relevant for tourism development. Relatively high value is determined also for Doboj Fortress, which is recently reconstructed and decorated. Srebrenik and Zvornik fortresses got somewhat lower values because of the relatively poor level of maintenance and greater distance from the main roads. However, all four of mentioned fortresses have a great historical significance on national level, and accordingly high tourism potential. This is reason why local and regional development agencies and institutions must include these in their development strategies.

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Summary

Within this paper, four examples of medieval fortresses in Bosnia and Herzegovina – two in the Bosna River valley and two in Northeast Bosnia, from the aspect of their tourism attractiveness and degree of valorization have been analyzed. These are: Vranduk Fortress near Zenica, Dobož Fortress, Srebrenik Fortress and Zvornik Fortress.

The methodology in this paper is based on detailed empirical research conducted through very extensive field observation, with the application of combined qualitative and quantitative comparative method of tourism valorization. Procedure of tourism valorization of medieval fortresses mentioned in this paper is carried out through evaluation of tourism geographic location, artistic value, tourism value of surroundings, tourism attractiveness and recognition, level of construction and equipment, and incorporation into tourism affluence.

Vranduk Fortress received the highest value (4,5), primarily due to complementarity of all elements relevant for tourism development. Relatively high value (4,2) is determined also for Dobož Fortress, which is recently reconstructed and decorated. Srebrenik and Zvornik fortresses got somewhat lower values (3,5 and 3,3 respectively) because of the relatively poor level of maintenance and greater distance from the main roads. However, all four of mentioned fortresses have a great historical significance on national level, and accordingly high tourism potential.

