

# Legacy of France - Montenegro Relations in Value Creation of Experiential Tourism Destinations in Montenegro

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**Abstract** *After the disintegration of the SFRY (former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Montenegro turned towards the European Union and tourism-led development. The French tourist market is one of the key EU segments with significant potential for Montenegro's tourism development. Leveraging historical France-Montenegro ties, this study explores opportunities for experiential tourism targeting French tourists. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and literature review, the research identifies culture, history, and entertainment as primary motivations for French visitors. However, findings reveal limited familiarity with shared heritage, highlighting the need to promote lesser-known attractions innovatively and sustainably. A major challenge is the misalignment between educational policies and labor market needs, hindering sustainable tourism product development. This study offers actionable insights for stakeholders to enhance Montenegro's tourism offerings for the French market, emphasizing sustainability, education and innovation.*

**Keywords:** *France-Montenegro Legacy, Experiential Tourism, Value Creation Montenegro, Sustainable Destination*

## INTRODUCTION

Since regaining independence in 2006, Montenegro has been primarily focused on developing tourism, which accounts for over 30% of its GDP. The smallest Balkan country, with the tourism slogan Wild Beauty, welcomed over 2.6 million tourists in 2024, 96.1% of whom were foreign visitors (MONSTAT, 2024).

For several years, to Montenegro tourism market segments from France have consistently constituted a significant portion of the ones from EU countries. Data from the National Institute of Statistics (MONSTAT) indicates that in 2024, 93,778 French tourists visited Montenegro, not including visitors from mega-cruise ships, among whom the French are top ranked (TO Kotor, 2019). While the existing French tourism segments show less interest in coastal tourism offers, their focus leans considerably towards active and cultural tourism. They are also recognized as major consumers of organized excursions, guided by Francophone guides who

are increasingly sought after, due to the very limited interest of learning French language in the last decade in Montenegro (Jovanović, 2017, 111).

These facts can be related to a survey conducted in July 2022 by the renowned British research agency Harris Interactive, at the request of the prestigious French magazine L'Histoire. In the sample size of 1,120 respondents (Levy, Reich, Belaghene, 2022), 83% of the French respondents expressed a pronounced interest in history. The results indicate a growing interest in this field since 2019 with French individuals preferring to acquaint themselves with history through institutions, primarily museums (94%), and specialized literature (91%). Among significant historical periods, World War I holds a high third place in interest among male participants, while it claims the top spot among female respondents. Regarding historical figures, Napoleon Bonaparte stands out, with 18% of respondents expressing a desire to meet him. Finally, 9 out of 10 participants believe that understanding history is essential for comprehending

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the current global order and constitutes an integral part of the general culture of every individual.

In this context, this study identifies destination resources rooted in France-Montenegro history, focusing on two distinct historical periods that French have shown the greatest interest in: the Napoleonic administration in the coastal regions of present-day Montenegro which lasted from 1807 to 1813 and the first two years of World War I (1914-1916), preceding the Austrian occupation of Montenegro. It is important to emphasize that these historical periods are linked in the collective memory of most residents of contemporary Montenegro with the negative political actions of France in the past. The Napoleonic period remains, for the residents of the Bay of Kotor, synonym with godlessness (Mažibradić, 2006, 191) and forced mobilization (Cavalli, 2009, 33). On the other hand, although France was an ally of Montenegro during World War I, it advocated for the abolition of Montenegrin sovereignty and is regarded in Montenegro as the primary instigator of the annexation to Serbia within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, proclaimed in 1918 (Bogojević, Jovanović, 2020, 130).

The presented data, along with the growing influx of French tourists to Montenegro, inspired the authors of this paper to explore the potential for developing experiential tourism tailored to this target group, viewed through the lens of historical France-Montenegro relations. This approach represents a fusion of cultural and educational tourism, encouraging visitors to engage deeply with the history and culture of their destinations. By presenting shared heritage through activities that foster active engagement, sustainable and immersive experiences can be created. Additionally, valorising insufficiently known or underestimated aspects of history could attract French tourist segments and enhance the development of experiential tourism offerings. To achieve this, educational initiatives within local communities will be essential to support and advance the growth of experiential tourism. Therefore, the aim of this work is to enable a more objective assessment of the past, as well as promotion and value creation from the perspective of humanistic innovations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of the offerings provided by a number of renowned tour operators marketing Montenegro to the French market (such as *Voyageurs du Monde* and *Comptoir du Voyage*), as well as local receptive agencies working with the Francophone market (*Luminalis*, *MTO Travel DMC*), reveals that the average French tourist, despite a personalized approach, is insufficiently informed about Montenegro's

history and the historical France-Montenegro relations. Furthermore, due to a shortage of qualified Francophone tour guides, they are often imported from neighbouring countries and inadequately prepared to familiarize tourists with the Montenegrin context (Jovanović, Lazarević-Milivojević, 2020, 215). On the other hand, available indicators show that French tourists, compared to those of other nationalities, display the greatest interest in deeply exploring the destination (they are the most frequent participants in excursions and the most numerous visitors to museums, particularly in Montenegro's royal capital, Cetinje). Compared to other dominant tourist groups in Montenegro (German, Turkish, British), the French stand out (as evidenced by the results of our survey) for their keen interest in cultural immersion and active tourism, which involves dynamic engagement and interaction with the local population.

Experiential tourism or immersion experiences focus on experiencing a country or a destination by actively and meaningfully engaging with its history, people, culture, food and environment. Experiential tourists usually go to less-touristy spots, broaden cultural understanding of the destination, and tend to experience it as authentically as possible. Less visited sights and alternative attractions provide an opportunity for deeper destination insights (Kumar et al., 2025; Zatori, 2016, 115) instead of experiencing it superficially. Also, less known destinations attract travellers which are motivated to get more objective picture of historical events that took place in some region.

According to Karagöz and Uysal (2022), promotion of cultural heritage may "lead individuals to obtain spiritual enrichment, emotional and social development, place attachment, and aesthetic experiences, leading to better understanding their own identity". Tangible and intangible assets strongly contribute to identity of a place as "key characteristics with which a particular place (region, village, town, neighbourhood, public place, etc.) is associated" (Verovšek et al., 2016, 575). Exploring the concept of experience as an immersive process is vital (Wee, 2019). The study by McCain and Ray (2003) suggests that legacy and heritage tourists differ in their travel motivations and information preferences compared to other tourists. Their study emphasizes that neglecting to acknowledge personal legacy motives in heritage travel studies could result in missed marketing opportunities, thus, recognizing the implications of a legacy segment could lead to more effective promotion strategies aimed at attracting tourists who seek personal significance in the destinations they visit (McCain & Ray, 2003).

Lampe (2023) shows how stories of soldiers and war-time memories can be interesting resources – initially for history

researchers and later on for developing tourism stories. This is possible because the concept of cultural heritage has changed, and nowadays it takes on a variety of meanings, roles and expressions, including memories, reflections, emotions and stories that heritage elements trigger among individuals or within a particular community (Fakin Bajec, 2020). Fakin Bajec (2020) points out that visiting heritage sites can not only affect knowledge, but also behaviour and attitudes towards the past, present and future.

Stories (also stories about the past) have the ability to connect people. They are closely connected to emotions and are key drivers of tourists' evaluations, cognitions and behavioural responses (Moscardo, 2021; Ambadar et al., 2025; Volo, 2021). Public spaces of cultural value, according to Solarek and Grochowska (2021, 32), "allow people to satisfy various social needs and create a sense of social integration and opportunities to develop thanks to the concentration of a group of material, aesthetic and symbolic values and integration existing between them and the specific community staying in them".

In the recent period, travels to destinations that provide immersive and emotionally rich experiences are growing (Seeler & Schänzel, 2019). To provide tourists with an original and exciting experience at a destination, the introduction of games into tourism, commonly referred to as gamification is increasingly discussed in scientific literature as an underutilized marketing tool. Two issues of the French magazine *Espace Loisirs et Tourisme* (Issue 358, January-February 2021) are dedicated to this very topic (Gamification. *Le tourisme se prend au jeu*).

As Laurence Audabram notes, the connection between games and tourism is becoming stronger, leading to a shift from gamification of tourism to what could be termed the touristification of games (2021, 37). Unlike traditional approaches where a destination is merely narrated, gamification introduces a more active approach, turning the visitor into a participant and the destination into a setting (Brougere & Roucous, 2021, 4).

In their study titled "Jeux de piste et exploration: tourisme, jeu et fiction" (Treasure Hunts and Exploration: Tourism, Games, and Fiction), Brougere and Roucous (2021) emphasize that exploration and discovery are key in the process of learning, in particular discovery, as it deviates from conventional heritage valorization methods (e.g., guided tours, marked trails, paper guides). Among the games analyzed by the authors, which can be applied in tourism, the educational dimension is always present in the background, while entertainment is placed at the forefront (2021, 14). Games stimulate curiosity and transform the pursuit of knowledge into the pleasure of understanding. Brougere

and Roucous argue that exploration accompanied by a guide constitutes a core principle of tourism, as it allows tourists to gain new insights, whether through traditional guided visits along established paths or by uncovering entirely new, less-explored areas beyond conventional tourist routes.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in the study is structured into two distinct research phases: desk research and field research, conducted during 2023.

The first phase of the research involved desk research and a comprehensive literature review. This phase focused on the study and interpretation of historical and cultural phenomena, including aspects of history, cultural history, education history, maritime history, and art history. Various methodological tools were employed, such as induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, observation methods to gather qualitative insights from existing materials.

The second phase involved field research, which included in-depth interviews and questionnaires (Appendix 1) conducted in situ. This phase aimed to gather qualitative and quantitative data to address the research questions.

Additionally, a total of 25 in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted between September 1 and September 11, 2023. Each interview was analysed using content analysis and coding techniques to extract meaningful insights. The interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders: 6 employees from travel agencies specializing in the French tourism market, 9 employees from local tourism organizations, 7 representatives from local communities in destinations frequently visited by French tourists, 3 employees from the Ministry of Education.

The selection of interviewees was based on their relevance to the study's objectives. Travel agency employees and local tourism organization representatives were chosen for their direct involvement in the French tourism market, while local community representatives were selected to provide insights into the cultural and historical context of the destinations. The geographical distribution of local community representatives included key tourism destinations in Southern (coastal), Central, and Northern (mountainous) regions of Montenegro, with a particular focus on the UNESCO-listed town of Kotor and the historical capital Cetinje. The interviews focused on two types of stakeholders: tourism professionals and local community representatives to ensure a balanced perspective on the research questions. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the potential for experiential tourism in Montenegro and the role of historical and cultural resources in attracting French tourists.

In addition to interviews, 116 questionnaires were distributed to Francophone tourists visiting Montenegro. The questionnaires were primarily completed in the Kotor municipality, with a significant number of respondents staying at the Montebay Perla hotel in Prčanj, Boka Bay. The questionnaires aimed to gather quantitative data on tourists' perceptions of Montenegro as a destination for experiential tourism, their understanding of its historical and cultural resources, and their expectations regarding language accessibility and local community engagement.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

What are the key features of legacy and experiential tourism resources in Montenegro, as perceived by tourism stakeholders and French tourists?

What steps are necessary to enhance education in local communities, particularly in language learning, to better cater to experiential tourism target groups and market demands?

## RESULTS

Based on a survey conducted during September 2023, that explores the features of legacy and experiential tourism resources on a sample of 116 respondents, here are some results (Graph 1). The motivation for visiting Montenegro for 67 (58%) of respondents from Francophone regions of Europe (France, Switzerland, Belgium) was culture and history, while 49 (42%) mentioned entertainment. Among those interviewed, 58 (50%) indicated that they were informed about Montenegro's cultural offers, with 72 (79%) expressing a preference for exploring historical monuments and cultural routes. Cultural events were the primary attraction for 12 (10%) of respondents, while another 12 (10%) favoured museums and libraries.

About 74% (86) of respondents stated that they were not familiar with the legacy and historical ties between Montenegro and France in the past. This and related data suggest a profile of tourists from Francophone regions who not only register familiar tourist images and motifs but also seek to explore the entire territory of Montenegro and its specificities. However, they appear insufficiently informed about the cultural connections between France and Montenegro in the past.

Approximately 42% (49) of respondents noted that sites related to France-Montenegro legacy in Montenegro are not adequately promoted or valorised. This data indicates that the France-Montenegro cultural heritage is not sufficiently

integrated into the destinations' tourist products, while the intangible cultural heritage is not adequately included in events. The research results also highlight inadequate interpretation of intangible cultural heritage in line with visitor and tourist expectations, leading to its devaluation.

The study also reveals a lack of awareness of proper legacy management, threatening the sustainability of recognized tourist sites (Labadi, 2023). In this context, respondents provided specific suggestions. Approximately 73 (63%) of respondents believe that legacy can be best explored through organized tours with a tourist guide, around 19 (16%) suggest thematic lectures and attendance at cultural events marking historical events, while 12 (10%) of respondents would opt for purchasing professional literature and authentic souvenirs.

The basic thesis that the legacy of relations between France and Montenegro is insufficiently included in Montenegro's tourist narrative, especially for the segment of French tourists, is also confirmed by some interviews. Below are some additional statements from the interviews we would like to emphasise:

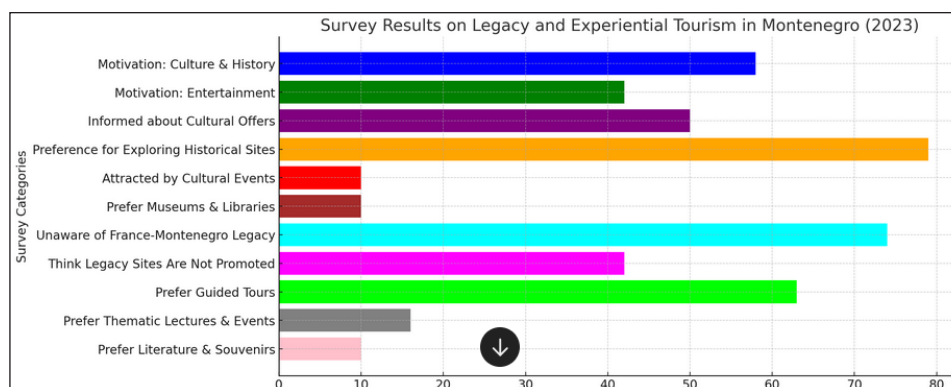
The director of the receptive tourist agency "Luminalis", Aleksandar Milivojević, which operates with Francophone target groups: "I believe that we do not have a sufficient number of Francophone tourism workers trained to work with French tourists. The French have a strong interest in cultural tourism and history, but they prefer to communicate in French rather than in English. I would particularly highlight the lack of competent Francophone tour guides in Montenegro."

The ex-manager of the Tourist Organization in Cetinje, Oskar Huter: "The French are among the most frequent visitors to museums and galleries in the former Montenegrin capital, Cetinje."

Dragan Marković, expert for spatial planning and resident of Cetinje: "Montenegrins cannot forget the fact that they lost their sovereignty in 1918, to which France contributed the most."

Representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, Olivera Nikolić. "Students in primary and secondary schools in Montenegro mostly choose to study Italian or Russian as their second foreign language."

The director of the elementary school "Ivo Vizin" in Prčanj (municipality of Kotor), Aleksandar Vulić: "Students opt for Italian as their second foreign language because it is the only one offered to them".



Graph 1: Survey Results

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this research highlight multiple opportunities for enhancing France-Montenegro relations through the development of experiential tourism. By leveraging historical and cultural connections, we propose several recommendations to create meaningful and engaging experiences for visitors. One such opportunity lies in storytelling inspired by the traces of Napoleon's rule in the Bay of Kotor.

### Storytelling Through the Traces of Napoleon's Rule in the Bay of Kotor

One of numerous colonisations in the costal part of Montenegro was the French one, which, despite its short duration (1807-1813) and unpopularity among the local population due to the desecration of churches (Koprivica, 2009, 185), brought numerous cultural, educational and economical innovations, particularly to the area of the Bay of Kotor (Gaudillere, 2006, 5). The most significant cultural event during Napoleon's period was the establishment of a theatre in Kotor, one of the first on the Balkans. Officially inaugurated in 1810, the theatre could accommodate 350 visitors and served its purpose until its conversion in 1889 into Municipal House (Antović, 1998, 67). Today, its location in the Old town is occupied by a historic boutique Hotel Cattaro.

Professor of dramaturgy at the University of Montenegro, Darko Antović write about this theater in his papers (Antović, 2006) and in the book "Kotorsko pozorište u XIX vijeku" (The Theater of Kotor in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), published in 1998. The historian Boljević-Vuleković analyse the simultaneous establishment of the first state high school in Kotor (1973) where the lectures were organised in national language. This

ambivalent period in Montenegro's history is also associated with several legends, including the love story between Katika Kalfić and a French soldier, protected as intangible cultural heritage of Montenegro since 2023. The story tells of a Napoleonic soldier stationed in the Bay of Kotor on the fortified island of Sveti Đorđe (St. George's), and his bombardment of the enemy city of Perast and the house of his beloved Katika who died on that occasion. The legend served as inspiration for the play *Bokeški D-mol*, one of the most widely acclaimed productions in Montenegro which received numerous awards and recognitions (Pozornica.me).

The construction of the roadways, several smaller stone bridges (in Royal Miločer park, in Lastva grbaljska, in Škaljari in Kotor) and the monument to fallen Napoleonic soldiers on the hill of Ilinica above the tourist town of Herceg Novi (Djordjević Leonard, Jovanović, Manić-Matić, 2024, 70) represent almost unknown tourist sites. These locations could be brought to life for French tourists through the experiential and communicative method of storytelling. Storytelling is an ancient practice based on a historical event or legend that a narrator conveys to an audience. This technique, with a slightly theatrical touch, can bring the tangible and intangible cultural heritage from Napoleon's era closer to visitors and offer a new perspective. To provoke an emotional response from the audience, the method of interpretation is important; the narrator uses gestures, vocal expression, and visualization to present established cultural patterns from a different angle.

The story of Napoleon's era in the Bay of Kotor could also be presented to French tourists using new technologies, such as digital storytelling, which combines various formats: text, photographs, video and audio material. When supplemented with an interactive approach that fosters engagement between the visitor and the destination, storytelling evolves from a one-way narrative into an active and immersive visitor experience.



(From above, from left to right: Trg od Oružja in Kotor in 1838 with the former theater building at the bottom, Hotel Cattaro, the monument to fallen Napoleonic soldiers on Ilinica above Herceg Novi, the stone bridge in the King's Park Miločer near Budva, and the island of St. George in Boka).

Source: Trg od Oružja with the theater: watercolor by Teodor Karčaj from 1838 (sourced from Darko Antović, 1998), author of the other photographs: Ivona Jovanović.

### Picture 1: Heritage Elements Related to the Period of Napoleon's Rule in Montenegro

*Diving tourism as a way to discover the France-Montenegrin underwater heritage from the First World War*

Underwater activities fall under the category of experiential tourism. The Montenegrin underwater heritage from the First World War, which highlights the little-known France-Montenegro alliance, could serve as a challenge for the development of diving tourism, which has been emerging in recent years, especially popular in France.

In 1914, Montenegro and France will find themselves on the same side in the fight against the common enemy, Austria-Hungary, which then controls the majority of the coastal strip of present-day Montenegro (except the town of Bar which was assigned to Montenegro at the Berlin Congress in 1878). Historian Dimitrije Vujović (Vujović, 1964, 1994)

and one of the authors of this paper (Jovanović, 2020) have written about this almost forgotten alliance.

In 1914 and 1915, France helped Montenegro not only financially but also by protecting its allied ships with French warships that delivered necessary food and clothing to the port of Bar.

Several tragic events occurred during these operations, which included dozens of missions. On February 24, 1915, the French torpedo boat Dague was sunk after it hit an Austro-Hungarian mine just 300 meters from the port of Bar. Thirty-eight French sailors lost their lives in this incident. In December 1915, the French fleet also lost two submarines in attempts to destroy Austro-Hungarian warships. The submarine Fresnel, found in the sea recently in 2020 near the Montenegrin-Albanian border (Luković, 2020), and the submarine Monge, sunk in the Bay of Kotor under the command of Roland Morillot, who was posthumously awarded the Legion of Honor in France. (Jovanović, 2020, 26) The wrecks of these ships and submarines, still largely unexplored, remain in Montenegrin waters.

Furthermore, the French are credited with sinking the Austro-Hungarian cruiser Zenta on August 16, 1914, which remains the largest wreck discovered in Montenegrin territorial waters (Luković, 2013, 151). This sinking resulted from the First Naval Battle of World War I, which is known in the literature as the Battle of Antivari (Antivari was the old name for the town of Bar, located opposite the Italian city of Bari). The wreck lies, covered in vegetation and fishing nets, at the depth of 64 to 73 meters and was discovered in 2001 near the tourist village of Petrovac (Luković, 2018). An initiative for the legal protection of this valuable site of Montenegro's underwater cultural heritage was submitted to the Directorate for Cultural Heritage of Montenegro.

Underwater archaeology refers to the study of archaeological remains found underwater, including wrecks from shipwrecks. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001, defines these remains as traces of human existence of cultural, historical, or archaeological significance, either partially or completely submerged, whether permanently or periodically.

Visiting historical wrecks tied to France-Montenegro heritage could also be done virtually. A successfully completed project in 2022, launched by the Center for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (Montenegrin Maritime Faculty), titled "Protection of Underwater Heritage through Digitalization and Valorization as a New Form of Tourism Offering" provides broader access to the underwater cultural heritage sites in Montenegro. In this context, a recently opened virtual diving reality room at the Maritime Faculty in Kotor could represent one direction for responsible experiential tourism aimed at French tourists.

### *Treasure hunt - in search of Franco-Montenegrin war positions on mount Lovćen*

Montenegro's mythical Mount Lovćen, declared a National Park in 1952, is often compared to Greece's Mount Olympus. Separating the coastal part of Montenegro from the continental region, the peaks of Lovćen are the site of some of the fiercest battles in Montenegro's history during World War I.

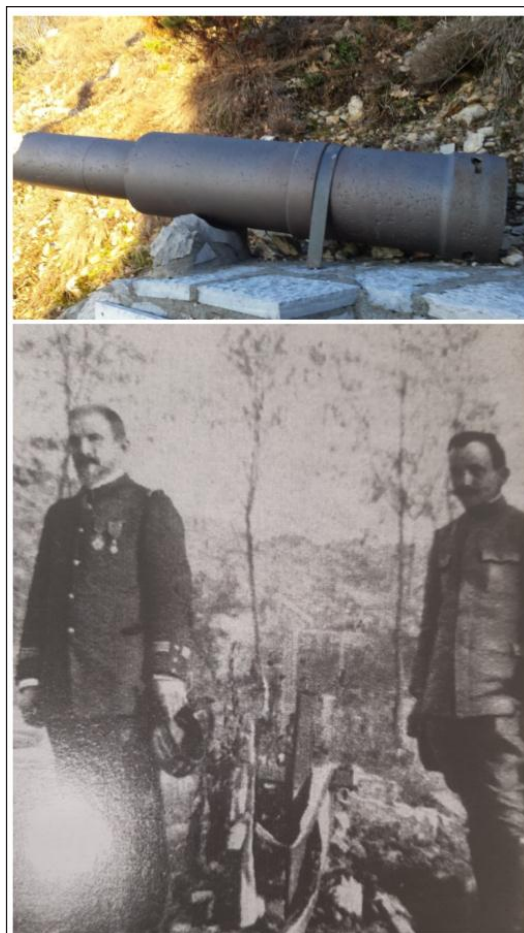
For joint actions against Austro-Hungarian enemy, in September 1914, at the request of the Kingdom of Montenegro, France sent a detachment composed of two artillery batteries and 142 officers and soldiers. The detachment was stationed on the mountain massif of Lovćen, at the site of Kuk and relocated in November at the site of Krstac, placed more than 1km above the Bay of Kotor (Jovanović 2020, 35).

The French artillery commenced the bombardement of the Bay of Kotor with French canons on October 4. In the artillery clashed on Lovćen, the French detachment suffered 21 dead and wounded soldiers, along with several damaged canons (Vujović 1914, 52). The funeral of fallen soldiers was used to demonstrate France-Montenegro friendship and alliance. Over the graves of the deceased soldiers, eulogies were delivered by members of the royal family and the French representative in Cetinje, organised funeral processions were held, and wreaths were laid. The Montenegrin press gave significant publicity to these sombre events (Jovanović, 2020, 31).

Before the departure of the army on November 23 due to numerous circumstances, the French commander Jean Grellier decided to leave the French cannons and artillery for the Montenegrin army. One remaining French cannon is currently on display in the village of Žanjev do, located on the slopes of the Lovćen National Park, in front of the tavern Nevjesta Jadrana (Jovanović, 2020, 36).

Since they rely on history, games like "Treasure Hunts", geolocated investigative activities and riddles allow visitors to develop a competitive spirit in a fun way while learning about history and shared heritage. One such outdoor game that combines adventure and technology is called geocaching ([www.geocaching.org](http://www.geocaching.org)). It is a treasure hunt for the digital generation, requiring a GPS, an adventurous spirit, sharp eyesight, and a desire to learn. The goal of the game is to find a "Geocache" which someone has hidden by leaving coordinates and additional information related to the location. In the case of France-Montenegro war positions, there are numerous opportunities for searching for historical sites, where participants will need to hike, dig, and crawl through trenches. This treasure hunt can lead tourists to hidden, unknown places, with the thrill of the game providing excitement while enjoying the forest and beautiful views of the Bay of Kotor in almost untouched nature. Since

it is a fusion of ecology, scouting, logic, general culture, and physical skill, the virtual treasure hunt is an exploratory game that serves to discover cultural heritage, perfectly fitting into experiential tourism.



Source: Author of the first photograph: Ivona Jovanović; the second photograph is sourced from the monograph by Djordje Martinović (2018), *Montenegrin Army 1854-1916*.

### **Picture 2: A Former French Cannon Displayed in Front of the Tavern *Nevjesta Jadrana* at the entrance to Lovćen National Park and the Burial of a Fallen French Soldier in October 1914 in Cetinje (Bajice)**

Additionally, we propose the following:

Designing themed routes and events in lesser-touristy areas and connecting them with existing routes (for example, creating routes considering common victims from the period of Napoleon's conquests buried on the Ilinica hill near Herceg Novi, and those buried on Cetinje after World War I).

Using storytelling for value creation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (for example, the legend of the love between a French officer and Katika Kalfić).

Motivating tourists and visitors towards value co-creation by stimulating sustainable behaviour through digital communications.

Digitizing heritage content for local population (including content for schools).

Encouraging the use of virtual reality, augmented reality and gamification to prove a unique perspective on France-Montenegro legacy and heritage.

On a long-term basis, one possibility is the establishment of a museum in the Bay of Kotor or an exhibition within the museums in Perast or the Maritime Museum in Kotor, encompassing artefacts related to Napoleon's rule in the region. This is due to the presence of artefacts from the Napoleonic period, such as furniture and utensils, Empire-style salons in private collections in Dobrota and Prčanj (Koprivica, 2009, 181), as well as silver coins minted during that period for the payment of French soldiers (Kirsanov, 2023). Napoleon's routes in Europe attract numerous visitors, as Napoleon remains one of the most popular historical figures.

Another possibility involves the valorization of Montenegro's underwater cultural heritage and the development of diving tourism. Recently, a database of Montenegro's underwater cultural heritage has been under construction (Maritime Faculty and Ministry of Culture), and the remains of French ships and submarines sunk in Montenegrin waters during World War I could pose a challenge for underwater researchers and diving tourism. One example is the Austro-Hungarian ship *Zenta*, recently discovered as the largest wreck in Montenegrin waters.

It is crucial to consider that insufficient promotion of legacy and its exclusion from the tourism product can lead to missing sustainable destination values. Implementation of education for sustainable development in Montenegro is still in initial phase (Vitić-Četković, 2012). This implies a greater risk of heritage devastation and degradation. This is another reason why experiential tourism should be an integral part of the tourist offer for French tourists' target groups in Montenegro. A prerequisite for this is adequate protection, proper management, presentation, and regeneration of France-Montenegro and other legacy in Montenegro.

## CONCLUSIONS

Global travel patterns have undergone significant transformations due to political instability, migration flows, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These changes have fueled a rising demand for authentic, sustainable travel experiences that offer deeper cultural and historical experiences. Modern travellers increasingly seek personalized and meaningful connections with destinations—ones that inspire self-discovery and foster a sense of place. For Montenegro, a transition toward more sustainable tourism is essential, particularly through the

development of lesser-known destinations that can offer unique and immersive experiences.

Montenegro's rich multicultural heritage, intertwined with its historical ties to France, represents an underutilized asset with significant potential for cultural and economic value creation. However, these connections remain largely overlooked in both Montenegrin and French public spheres. For small nations like Montenegro, experiential tourism serves as a powerful means of strengthening national identity, enhancing destination branding, and preserving local heritage. Importantly, immersive experiences align with sustainability principles, as they encourage responsible tourism practices while safeguarding cultural and natural resources. The creation of immersive, community-driven experiences can deepen visitor engagement, promote responsible travel, and position Montenegro as a destination that balances cultural authenticity, environmental stewardship, and economic viability.

However, Montenegro's transition toward experiential tourism faces considerable challenges, including insufficient investment in cultural and natural heritage preservation, underdeveloped tourist infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled professionals in the sector. Additionally, the integration of emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and gamification remains largely untapped, limiting the potential to bring Montenegro's shared heritage with France to life in innovative and engaging ways. Overcoming these obstacles will require strategic investment, cross-sector collaboration, and a commitment to sustainable destination development.

The growth of tourism is intrinsically linked to other sectors, particularly education. Language, for example, is a crucial tool in tourism, shaping visitor perceptions, enhancing marketing efforts, and enhancing engagement with cultural heritage (Potočnik Topler & Zekanović-Korona, 2018; Potočnik Topler, 2018). To strengthen its tourism industry, Montenegro must align its educational policies with labour market demands and develop a strategic approach to foreign language education. Currently, gaps in language planning—such as the failure to match language instruction with tourism sector needs—have led to linguistic exclusivity. This is particularly evident in municipalities like Kotor, where Italian remains the only second foreign language offered. A similar imbalance may exist in the teaching of history, as reflected in the limited public awareness of France-Montenegro relations, an issue that warrants further research.

In this context, Kotor could strengthen its European cultural positioning by joining the European Federation of Napoleonic Cities (FECN), leveraging the historical legacy of the Napoleonic period. Membership in this network would open opportunities for EU funding, support the promotion of

French language and culture in Montenegro, and enhance the visibility of this shared heritage.

The European Union actively supports experiential tourism initiatives, particularly through projects aligned with the EU Agenda for the Western Balkans. As Montenegro moves closer to EU membership, the development of experiential tourism could play a pivotal role in reinforcing European cultural identity and fostering a deeper understanding of shared historical narratives. In an era marked by nationalism, migration, and global security concerns, promoting collective memory through cultural tourism serves as a means of encouraging peace, intercultural exchange, environmental sustainability, and social well-being among Mediterranean and European citizens. Addressing these challenges can bring new opportunities for tourism diversification, economic resilience, and a stronger presence on the tourist market.

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## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FRANCOPHONE TOURISTS IN FRENCH

Merci de prendre quelques minutes de remplir ce questionnaire dont les données nous sont précieuses pour une recherche universitaire concernant le tourisme culturel/expérientiel au Monténégro lié au patrimoine franco-monténégrin.

### Questionnaire

1. De quel pays venez-vous? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Quel âge avez-vous? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Quel est votre sexe? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Quel est votre niveau d'éducation? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Quel est le motif de votre séjour au Monténégro?
  - a. Distraction
  - b. Nature
  - c. Culture et histoire
  - d. Travail
  - e. Sport
  - f. Autre (mentionner) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Etes-vous informé(e) de l'offre touristique culturelle / patrimoniale au Monténégro? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Si votre réponse est positive, par quel biais êtes vous informé(e):
  - a. par les réseaux sociaux et l'internet
  - b. par les revues et les journaux
  - c. par la radio et la télévision
  - d. par des amis, parents, cousins
  - e. par des agences touristiques
  - f. par des guides touristiques
  - g. par d'autres moyens (veuillez mentionner) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Par quel offre touristique culturelle êtes-vous le plus intéressé(e)?
  - a. Monuments historiques et itinéraires culturels
  - b. Musées et bibliothèques
  - c. Evenements culturels (expositions, concerts, festivals)
  - d. Ateliers culturels
  - e. Publications en français ou en autres langues
  - f. Autre (veuillez mentionner) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Etes-vous informé(e) des liens culturo-historiques entre la France et le Monténégro? Entre la France et les Balkans \_\_\_\_\_
10. Etes vous passionné(e) par une époque historique spécifique concernant ces rapports? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Considérez-vous que les localités liées à l'héritage franco-monténégrin sont suffisamment mises en valeur dans l'offre touristique qui vous concerne? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Quelle(s) activité concernant le patrimoine franco-monténégrin devrait selon vous être mise(s) d'avantage en valeur?
  - a. Visite des musées
  - b. Visites organisées aux événements/conférences thématiques
  - c. Excursions et visites guidées aux localités historiques
  - d. Achats de publications spécialisées, de souvenirs authentiques
  - e. Autre(veuillez mentionner) \_\_\_\_\_
13. Avez-vous des suggestions concernant la promotion de l'offre touristique culturelle basée sur l'héritage franco-monténégrin? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IN MONTENEGRIN

### Pitanja upućena predstavnicima Ministarstva obrazovanja i nauke Crne Gore:

1. Smatrate li da je poznavanje stranih jezika u Crnoj Gori od presudnog značaja prilikom zapošljavanja u turizmu?
2. Koje strane jezike je osim engleskog moguće izučavati u osnovnim i srednjim državnim školama u Crnoj Gori?
3. Za koje strane jezike se opredjeljuje najveći broj učenika osim engleskog koji predstavlja obavezan predmet?
4. Šta po vašem mišljenju motiviše učenike da odaberu određeni strani jezik?
5. Da li Ministarstvo prosvjete Crne Gore vodi računa o ravnomjernoj zastupljenosti ponudjenih stranih jezika u školama?
6. Da li u Ministarstvu prosvjete Crne Gore postoji tijelo koje se bavi politikom izučavanja stranih jezika?
7. Da li Ministratrstvo prosvjete sarađuje sa Ministarstvom turizma kada je riječ o neformalnom obrazovanju i obukama stranih jezika?
8. Smatrate li da je u Crnoj Gori politika izučavanja stranih jezika usaglašena sa potrebama tržišta rada u oblasti turizma?

### **Pitanja upućena zaposlenim u turističkim agencijama i Turističkim organizacijama:**

1. Da li smatrate da u CG ima dovoljno lokalne radne snage koja govori francuski jezik?
2. Da li smatrate da postoji deficitarnost radne snage sa poznavanjem francuskog jezika u turizmu Crne Gore?
3. Koja su, po Vama, specifična interesovanja frankofonih turista u Crnoj Gori?
4. Šta karakteriše ciljne grupe frankofonih turista u Crnoj Gori?
5. Koji su glavni motivi putovanja frankofonih turista u CG?
6. Koliko je CG interesantna kulturnim turistima iz frankofonih zemalja?
7. Da li u CG ima dovoljno kvalifikovanih turističkih vodiča koji vode ture na francuskom jeziku?
8. Koje su Vase preporuke za visokoobrazovne institucije u Crnoj Gori, kad je riječ o prilagođavanju zahtjevima tržišta?

### **Pitanja upućena predstavnicima lokalne zajednice (Cetinje i Kotor):**

1. Da li ste upoznati sa francuskom zaostavštinom u vašem gradu?

2. Da li smatrate da su spomenici kulture povezani sa francuskim prisustvom u vašem gradu u dovoljnoj mjeri turistički valorizovani?
3. Da li smatrate da je francuska zaostavština nepravедно zapostavljena?
4. Da li bi upoznavanje turista i lokalne zajednice sa franko-crnogorskom kulturnom baštinom doprinijelo boljem međusobnom razumjevanju i uticalo na zadovoljstvo turista?

Gaining experiential knowledge about France-Montenegro connections through participation in entertaining activities would enable French tourists to learn in an engaging way and gain a deeper understanding of the shared past. For culture and heritage enthusiasts, visits to historical sites could be enriched with storytelling and immersive virtual reality scenography, helping to recreate the unique atmosphere and environment of past eras. For nature lovers, the program could place greater emphasis on sports, recreational, and competitive activities such as diving, hiking, and outdoor track games.