

Bridge Over the River Drina

The full name of this magnificently beautiful structure is the Mehmed Pasha Sokolović Bridge, named for the Muslim Grand Vizier who built it between 1571 and 1577. He ruled over an area of the Ottoman Empire which is now a region in the southeast corner of the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The makeup of the city of Višegrad where the bridge is located is a mix of Muslim and Serbian peoples, reflected not only in the name of the bridge but also in the Serbian Orthodox Church of the Dormition on the eastern bank.



The bridge has been renovated four times in its 450 year history and underwent two major repairs after sustaining serious damage in both World War I and World War II. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007. The Yugoslavian novelist, Ivo Andrić, won the 1961 Nobel Peace Prize for Literature for his novel, *The Bridge on the Drina*, which recounted the ups and downs of four centuries of history in that region. His theme was that the bridge was a symbol of stability amidst chaos: "Everything changes and passes but the bridge remains the same and resists time."

What to look For:

- The bridge's simplicity and proportionate beauty as it rises elegantly from each bank toward the center.
- An access ramp on the river bank makes a sharp left turn to cross the river.
- The center piling of the bridge is 20 ft. high and displays three plaques written in both Arabic and Persian to commemorate various anniversaries of the bridge.
- A niche/recess across from the center piling creates a seating area where cultural events take place as well as public readings of Andrić's novel.

Bridge Facts:

- The Drina River forms a large portion of the border between the nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.
- It has eleven arches of increasing widths (measuring from 36 ft. wide at the ends to 49 ft. in the middle).
- It is built in the Turkish Monumental style of the Ottoman Empire and was contemporary with the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- The strictly pedestrian bridge is 589 ft. long, and the locals hold a diving competition off the bridge every year!



Credit: Tourist Organization of the Municipality of Višegrad

Feature photo: www.123rf.com/profile_sarenac