Montenegro | Boka Kotorska

The Bay of Boka Kotorska

Hidden and endangered terraced World Heritage landscapes

The Bay of Boka Kotorska is situated on the eastern Adriatic coast in Montenegro, cutting deeply into the land, surrounded by steep limestone mountains whose highest peaks are around 1800 m high. Specific natural characteristics of the Bay, especially its vertical jaggedness, make it a unique bay of the Mediterranean. This natural harbour provided conditions for a continuous life from prehistoric times on, while under the influence of diverse cultures an exceptional cultural landscape has been created. The Natural and Culturo-Historical Region of Kotor, covering with its buffer zone the whole Bay of Boka Kotorska, has been inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1979. Its Outstanding Universal Value is embodied in the quality of the architecture in its fortified and open cities, settlements, palaces and monastic ensembles, and their harmonious integration to the cultivated terraced landscape on the slopes of high rocky hills.

The Region has a specific vertical structure composed of coastal settlements with defined coastline and groups of houses, and arable land, i.e. terraced fields, occupying the upper zones of steep hillsides featuring forests or rocky landscape. Furthermore, in upper zone of the Bay the remains of older settlements with terraced fields can be found.

Cultivated terraced landscape has been recognized as one of the important characteristics of the Kotor World Heritage region. Vineyards, olive groves and orchards grown on the hillsides have been mentioned in the medieval and Venetian archival sources, with its characteristic landscape that preserved its appearance and function until the mid-20th century. However, the excessive and uncontrolled urbanization that has been taking place over the last decades, occupying primarily the old terraced fields, threatens to endanger the Regions’ Outstanding Universal Values.

Text: EXPEDITIO
Photo: Historic postcards (1,2). EXPEDITIO

1 - Kotor part of the Bay with arable hillside fields, the beginning of the 20th century
2 - Arable terraced fields above Prčanj, a photograph from the beginning of the 20th century
3 - Transformation of terraces fields and preserved fields at Glavati cove, Prčanj
4 - Preserved terraces fields with olive groves, Gornji Stoliv
5 - The process of urbanization of zones with the remains of terraced fields, authorities
6 - The remains of terraced fields in the upper zone of Dobrota
7 - Preserved terraces fields at Mala estate, Risan
8 - Arable fields below Gornji Stoliv
9 - Neglected, but preserved terraced fields with olive groves, Gornji Stoliv
10 - Activities of restoring dry-stone walls – retaining walls of olive groves, Gornja Lastva