

## The Role of Vitosha Mountain in the Development of Sofia as a Tourist Destination: Current State and Attitudes

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**Abstract:** Vitosha Mountain is inextricably linked to the development of tourism in Sofia from the very beginning. It has evolved as an area for weekend recreation of the capital inhabitants, as well as a destination for domestic and foreign tourists both in summer and winter, due to the particularities of its resource potential and location. The diversity of user groups and tourism development options, together with the protected status of the area, create a number of conflicts that have exacerbated in the recent years and which are typical problems of sustainable development.

Based on a brief review of the recreational potential and the history of tourism development, this paper examines the current role of Vitosha Mountain for Sofia as a tourist destination. The research is grounded on secondary and primary data, including official tourism statistics and two surveys of hoteliers in Sofia municipality that were carried out in 2011 and 2012 for the local government. The focus is put on the accommodation sector in Vitosha District – one of the 24 administrative districts in Sofia municipality, adjacent to Vitosha Nature Park. Results make it possible to outline the features of modern tourism development of the studied area, as well as, the view of local entrepreneurs on key issues concerning farther development of Sofia as a tourist destination and the role of Vitosha Mountain in it.

**Key words:** *Vitosha Mountain, destination Sofia, tourism development, potential, problems, attitudes.*

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