**World Cultures 11 Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Unit – Europe Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Globe Trekker: The Balkans**

***Guide: Zay Harding***

The Balkan states are at the heart of Europe. This area used to be known as **Yugoslavia**, but civil conflict torn that nation into seven new countries. Four will be explored in this video.

**Kosovo**

In February 2008, Kosovo\* broke away from Serbia. The “NEWBORN” sculpture was unveiled and signed. **Pristina** is the capital of Kosovo and is home to 250,000 people (out of about 2 million people in the country). While Pristina used to be a multicultural trading town, it now is home to international aid workers, administrators, and peacekeepers, which has led to inflation.

About 90% of the population of Kosovo is Muslim and of Albanian descent. Kosovans see their history as a long struggle for freedom. Kosovans give a great deal of credit to Bill Clinton and Tony Blair (former British Prime Minister) for helping them break free from Serbian rule.

A **pils** is a traditional Albanian hat also popular in Kosovo. It is made of wool, soaked, and then molded and shaped. In Kosovo, 50% of the population is under the age of 20, and a lively music scene reflects this facts.

The **Gazimestan** monument is very important to Serbs, the group that occupied Kosovo in the years leading up to its independence in 2008. The tower was built in 1953 and commemorates the fourteenth century **Battle of Kosovo**, in which Serbs fought against the **Ottomon Empire**. The monument is heavily guarded today by U.N. troops because there is still great mistrust between the Serbs and Kosovans.

**Serbia**

Serbia was the seat of power of the former Yugoslavia, but today it is trying to find its place. Transportation between Kosovo and Serbia is not permitted because Serbia refuses to recognize Kosovo’s independence, so traveling between the two countries is difficult and time-consuming and forces Zay to briefly enter Montenegro.

In the farmbelt region outside of **Kalenić**, a summer festival highlights the area’s traditional clothing, folkart, music, food, sports, and moustaches!

The Serbian **Christian Orthodox** monastery at Kalenić was built in the 15th century. The twelve nuns at Kalenić perform two worship services a day and complete a variety of chores like raising cattle and producing honey, wine, candles, and clothing. They are supported by donations from visitors to mass. Monastic life has always been valued; appreciation for this dates back to the Battle of Kosovo, when **Princess Milica** became a nun after her husband, **Prince Lazar**, was killed.

At the market in **Kruševac**, a traveler can stock up on produce. The **Highway of Brotherhood and Unity** was created by **President Tito** as a way to unite the various peoples of Yugoslavia.

Serbia’s capital city, **Belgrade**, is hip, urban, and gritty. It is located at the intersection of the **Danube** and **Sava** rivers. In the city, street signs are unreliable. It is known for its nightlife. Don’t be surprised to hear gunshots fired in the air; they are in appreciation for the musicians.

The 1999 **NATO bombing campaign** destroyed many ministerial buildings in Belgrade and the ruins are still visible. The campaign was designed to stop **Slobodan Milosevic** from further invading Kosovo. Because of its strategic location, Belgrade is no stranger to invasion. The United States was an ally of Serbia in WWII, but an enemy in 1999.

The old Yugoslavian railroad network is inexpensive and remains reliable. **Guca** plays host to the **Trumpet Festival**. Serbia has seen a revival to traditional music recently. **Kupus** is a traditional Serbian cabbage stew, and all types of meat are often eaten. Serbian music is lively and fun, and is appreciated by the people after decades of repression and conflict. The music begins early and lasts all day.

Hitchhiking is accepted in the Balkans but driving skills vary.

**Bosnia-Herzegovina**

**Sarajevo** is the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a beautiful city and has been at peace for 20 years, but because of its conflict-ridden past, many travelers are hesitant to visit. Bosnia was the fourth of the former Yugoslav states to declare independence, and this declaration resulted in the city being encircled and under attack by Serbian troops from 1992-1995. The **Siege of Sarajevo** lasted nearly four years and remains the longest in modern European history. Leftover weapons have been “repurposed” into everyday items like pens and vases.

The **Tunnel Museum** houses an 8000 meters long tunnel which was created by Bosnian soldiers and volunteers. It was the only way in or out of the city during the lengthy Siege of Sarajevo. The idea for the Tunnel Museum was developed by a Bosnian soldier whose childhood home was directly above the tunnel. Life during the Siege was very difficult for Bosnians, and many visitors were surprised that a war like that could occur as recently as the 1990s.

Though the war in Bosnia began due to conflict over land and power, over time it developed into an ethnic conflict between Bosnia’s Muslims and Orthodox Christians (many of whom were of Serbian descent). These two groups had lived side by side in peace for centuries until this war. About 40% of Bosnia’s population is Muslim, a legacy of 400 years of Ottoman rule. After Ottoman rule ended in 1878, Bosnia became a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The **Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand** was assassinated in Sarajevo. This event served as the “spark” for WWI.

**Igman** was a major site for the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics, but it became a part of the war zone. Though the area is quite scenic and great for hiking, land mines still exist in the area and pose a danger.

The village of **Lukomir** is a six hour hike at increasing elevations. Development has been slowed due to years of conflict in Bosnia, so many villages remain isolated, but this has helped to preserve traditional ways of life. Bosnians remove their shoes before entering a home; this is a Muslim custom that Christian Bosnians observe as well. The traditional diet revolves around dairy and potatoes. It is typical to eat from a shared dish.

Farmers stockpile hay in the summer months for their livestock to eat during the long and harsh winters. The scenery in Bosnia is breathtakingly beautiful. Ancient burial sites were marked with Christian crosses, but they were also decorated with pagan symbols. It is believed that many Bosnian Christians converted to Islam when the Ottoman Empire took over the area, because the Ottomans were quite tolerant of a wide range of beliefs.

**Mostar** was an important Ottoman city. The historic bridge of Mostar is actually a replica of one built in 1566 by the Ottomans. The original bridge was destroyed in the war in the 1990s but was rebuilt in 2004. The new bridge is an exact replica and the stone was taken from the same quarry. Daredevils enjoy jumping from the bridge into the cold water. Today, the Turkish old town is the main attraction, home to many mosques and restored Ottoman homes.

**Montenegro**

Montenegro escaped the worse of the Balkan wars. It became independent in 2006 when it broke away from Serbia. Its coast has long been a destination for the rich and famous. **Herceg Novi** has reminders of some interesting history; **President Tito** built “pens” for his submarines here. Montenegro has great dives sites into the Adriatic Sea. Cave diving is generally considered dangerous because of the water’s currents, but here in the Blue Cave the water is calm, and the walls of the cave turn blue at certain times of the day.

**Kotor** is a UNESCO world heritage site, known for its beautiful bay surrounded by mountains. The name “Montenegro” means “black mountains” and besides the coast, most of the country is mountainous. Mountain biking is popular.

The **Tara Canyon** is said to be the deepest canyon in Europe. Rafting on the Tara River at Radovan Luka is a very popular activity and is done using traditional rafts made of wooden logs with wooden oars. The river flows throughout the length of the **Durmitor National Park**. Rafting cannot be done in the winter and spring because it is too dangerous, but shallow water and exposed rocks in the summer also pose problems. Sometimes the only solution is to take the raft apart and then reassemble it after getting free from the rocks.

\*The world’s newest country is actually South Sudan, created in 2011.