

**OHRID INDIVIDUAL GRADES 2016**

Natural and cultural factors:	4.70
General and transport infrastructure:	4.16
Tourist infrastructure:	4.40
Meeting infrastructure:	3.75
Subjective grade:	4.13
Marketing Buzz:	3.21
ICCA index:	1.26
Numbeo Quality of Life Index:	3.20
Global Peace Index:	2.94
<b>DESTINATION MARK:</b>	<b>3.53</b>



# OHRID

## THE BALKAN CONGRESS PEARL

**L**ake Ohrid was, in my youth, a compulsory topic in geography. I remember that it is supposed to be one of the oldest lakes, similar to Lake Baikal and the lake with the funny name, Tititaka. I also remember that Lake Prespa and Lake Ohrid are connected underground and are full of endemic species. I can certainly confirm that Macedonia is a land of beautiful national parks and the lake is one of the biggest Macedonian natural pearls - a kind of Macedonian sea. Despite enormous natural conditions, Ohrid is one of the most overlooked meeting destinations in the region, although it attracts a lot of tourists from the former Yugoslavia and is considered the most elite destination for wealthy Macedonians.

### JERUZALEM OF EUROPE

The coast of Lake Ohrid has been inhabited from prehistoric times. The oldest settlement originates from 6000 BC, as evidenced by more than 170 archeological finds. The Jerusalem of Europe, as they say of Ohrid, is full of treasures, both underground and underwater, and has been UNESCO protected for 30 years. The city where 365 churches once stood, one for each day, has typical architecture with narrow streets and tunnels, over which grew tall houses with fantastic views of the lake and snowy mountains behind.

### ST. NAUM

In Macedonia you have to visit at least two or three sacral attractions. One of the most famous is the Monastery of St. Naum. It stands on a high cliff above Lake Ohrid, about 15 minutes walk from the Albanian border. St. Naum was assistant to St. Clement of Ohrid, a disciple of Cyril and Methodius, and he spent the last years of his life there. One of the most visited tourist places in Macedonia is definitely worth the visit, not only because of the monastery but also because of the attractive park, nice beach and river springs not far from the lake. The springs are supplied from Lake Prespa, which is accessible by the winding road which runs through Mt. Galičica, part of which is protected as a national park. The road itself is worth the effort as it offers the most unique views of Lake Ohrid.

### ST. SOFIA – A VERY SPECIAL VENUE

The church from the eighth or ninth century is one of the most important medieval buildings in Macedonia, with rich paintings where motifs from the Old and New Testaments combine on blue arches and walls. During the Turkish ambush of Ohrid, they turned the church into a mosque and after their departure both Orthodox and Catholic rituals took place in St. Sofia. Today, the church no longer serves as a religious building but, due to extraordinary acoustics, it is used for concerts. The motif of the church is depicted on the Macedonian 1,000 dinar banknote.

### SAMUEL FORTRESS

Above the town of Ohrid is the magnificent Samuel mansion which was built in the 11th century. Before that, the fortress probably built by Filip II during the 4th Century B.C. stood

on the same place. During the reign of Czar Samuel, Ohrid was the capital of the Bulgarian Empire. The fort was reconstructed in 2003 and it offers a magnificent view of the city and the lake. With a little effort it can be a superb venue for events.

### OHRID PEARLS

Few know that only the Talev and Filev families deal with the traditional production of Ohrid pearls. These pearls are made from pastrmka fish scales, the fish that lives in Lake Ohrid, but precise production remains a mystery. The manufacturers are fighting unfair competition, which sell cheaper pearls from an unknown destination. You can receive a guarantee only from the two families, otherwise it is difficult to separate the fakes from the originals.

### NIGHTLIFE

The main attraction of Ohrid is its narrow streets lined with restored Ottoman buildings. The tourist bustle does not die late into the night, as a number of restaurants, bars and souvenir shops invite you to explore! Ohrid is known as the dance mecca of Eastern Europe and so the city is suitable for all of those who are looking for fun. If you want to have fun until the early hours, Ohrid is certainly a good choice, with a lot also happening on the beaches. The nightclubs are only a few steps away from one another, taxis are cheap and so you can go on a “nightclub hike”.

### MACEDONIAN TRADITION OF VITICULTURE

The Macedonian tradition of viticulture dates back to the Roman period. Due to its exceptional geographical position, the intertwining of two climates – Mediterranean in the south and Continental in the north, the good texture of soil which supplies ground water, the local winegrowers centuries ago cultivated a special kind of grape which give the wine a specific taste and aroma. The center of wine events is the Skovin winery, in the city centre, which is an indispensable tourist attraction where they are glad to host larger congress groups.

### MUSEUM ON WATER

For diving enthusiasts Lake Ohrid is real discovery. The water is crystal clear and, on a sunny day, there is nothing better than discovering the treasures of the lake in the middle of endless games of underwater light and shadows. The biggest underwater surprise is the remains of homes and items of the original settlers from the Bronze Age.

Ohrid also offers a very special tourist destination concept and presentation of culture and history, an exceptional archeological complex known as the Bay of Bones, which is an authentic reconstruction of the stilt dwellings which from 1200 B.C. to 700 B.C. covered 8,500m<sup>2</sup>. The museum offers a good historical overview and gives a sense of how people lived. Above the bay rises the Gradišče hill on which a Roman fort once sat.



**VOX POPULI OF THE CONGRESS INDUSTRY**

Currently, the entire congress offer of the destination is based around hotels with meeting facilities. The flagship destination is the Inex Gorica hotel which was once a residence of President Tito. The residence includes a small congress center for up to 400 participants. Among the largest congress hotels is the Metropol Lake hotel with three hotel buildings. The conference center comprises 2,500 m2 with 10 conference halls and, according to the owner, is the largest in Macedonia.

Hotel Granit is a typical representation of a medium-sized hotel and offers conference facilities and three conference rooms with capacity for 120 to 300 participants. There is no lack of small hotels with conference facilities in the city, the most representative are the Royal View Hotel with two conference halls, the Hotel Garden, Hotel Belvedere, Hotel Cingo and others.

There are also many travel agencies which are designated as DMC or PCO agencies, including the most specialized agency, Vis Poj. Ohrid is also covered by agencies from Skopje and the neighboring countries. Serious and strategic meetings destination management currently does not exist in Ohrid, which is certainly the biggest weakness of a destination with such outstanding potential and an incredible concentration of special venues.

**DESTINATION GRADE: RECOMMENDABLE MEETING DESTINATION**

- GRADES:**
- 5 excellent convention destination
  - 4 quality convention destination
  - 3 recommendable convention destination
  - 2 average convention destination
  - 1 so so

3.53

**INDIVIDUAL GRADES:**

**A. NATURAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS: 4.70**

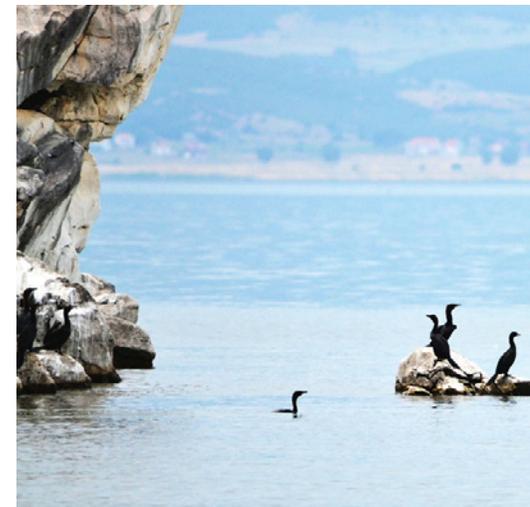
Ohrid is a beautiful Macedonian city on the north-eastern coast of Lake Ohrid, which is among beautiful nature and defined by a mild sub-Mediterranean climate. Old Ohrid had a very turbulent history, which you can taste in every step and with the old architecture it creates a significant experience. From 1979, Ohrid with its lake and surrounding area, has been the only place in Macedonia on UNESCO's list of World and Cultural Heritage.

**B. GENERAL AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.16**

The international airport is just a few kilometers from the city. For transport around the city take a taxi, the ride will not cost you much. Ohrid is not a big city but has developed a solid commuter network and well developed telecommunications. There are several providers, the network is stable and there is free WiFi at numerous locations. The transport is solid in the Ohrid vicinity as it is a developed tourist city. Caution on the highway from Skopje is warranted.

**C. TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.40**

Ohrid is not big city but almost all of its residents are engaged in tourism. The old town is interesting; it starts at the lake with the market and runs all the way to the Samuel fortress. The authenticity of the offer is built around a combination of history, mystics and extremely tasty Macedonian food. The offer is truly diverse and among numerous bars, it will be quite hard to pick the right one. The hotel offer is varied and in comparison with its Adriatic competition, quite solid but



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**DID YOU KNOW**

Ohrid - the European Jerusalem, the cultural capital of Macedonia, the city of Slavic civilization and Cyrillic script used to have 365 churches, one for every day of the year.

it needs refreshing and modernization. They are successfully compensating with extremely friendly providers at all levels.

**D. MEETINGS INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.75**

The organization of meetings is possible mainly in congress hotels, among which is the Metropol Lake Hotel which is the most advanced. There are also a few small hotels with conference facilities in the city. Outstanding is the concentration of special venues. The entire offer is unified since there is not a Convention Bureau. As a result, they are working on local marketing and local events dominate. Team building programs are more leisure-based. To capitalize on the enormous potential of Ohrid, a lot of work needs to be put in to the development of meetings tourism.

**E. SUBJECTIVE GRADE: 4.13**

The Ohrid meeting industry reminds of Macedonian urban music. Nostalgic, ethno music creates a special atmosphere. Such is also the local MICE industry. Ohrid is certainly not an ultra modern destination, but it has its soul which is very much appreciated by event organizers. It therefore deserves a high subjective grade and you will have to hurry before the tourist crowds discover it.

**F. MARKETING BUZZ: 3.21**

In the international congress market, Ohrid is practically unrecognizable. It is mainly known as being in the area of the former Yugoslavia and neighboring Albania and Bulgaria. As there is no local tourist organization, there is no strategic destination marketing and marketing in the field of meetings industry is unbundled. There is still a lot of reserve in this area due to its huge potential.



**WHAT'S NEW 2016**

1. Ohrid Summer Festival / July 2016 - One of the biggest and most important music events in Macedonia. The festival has been running since 1961.
2. Ohrid Swimming Marathon/ July 2016 - Marathon begins at the Monastery of St. Naum and is 30 km long. In 1998 marathon ranked in club of 12 international swimming marathons under the auspices of FINA.
3. Macedonian sun – Balkan Folklore Festival / August 2016 - Ohrid is hosting Balkan Folklore Festival each year in mid-August for one week. The festival invites dance groups from all around the world.

**BEST INCENTIVE IDEA**

Diving in Lake Ohrid: due to its cleanliness, depth and rich life, the lake is ideal for scuba diving. Ohrid offers several variations for organized diving from a boat.

SUPing on Lake Ohrid: On Gradište beach and elsewhere around the lake, you can rent kayaks and increasingly popular SUPs. You can row with a guide from the city center to Kaneo beach and back.

A trip to Galičica National Park and a visit to the monastery of St. Naum – Take a day trip and go from the city to the monastery and park by boat.

**COMPARISONS WITH THE REGION**

One of the main Macedonian tourist centers is becoming increasingly more important as a meeting center. At first glance, it differs from competing regional destinations due to its reasonable prices. The difference is also in the structure of the offer which is primarily adapted to leisure tourism. Ohrid is, in summer, a mass tourist destination with all the challenges that that brings. Out of season it can be a very interesting meeting destination, if rapid development will be followed by the upgraded offer that congress guests expect. The first step is related to performance of providers and the establishment of a Convention Bureau.

**COOL MEETINGS**

Ohrid “Pastrmka” is a special type of fish, found only in Lake Ohrid. Restaurants prepare their traditional dish using it and which they proudly advertise.

**WHO TO CONTACT**

As there is not yet a Convention Bureau you should contact one of the DMCs in Ohrid or Skopje.