

U.S. AMBASSADORS FUND FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION



CONSERVATION OF THE 16TH CENTURY ST. FRANCIS RAMPART IN KOTOR

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NEWSLETTER #2

Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor, Montenegro



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- **Project Overview**

The Municipality of Kotor is currently in the second year of implementing the “Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor” project, funded by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in the amount of \$375,000.



Restoration work is underway to repair and replace missing parts and joints of the weather-damaged outer wall. This effort aims to preserve the structural integrity and historical value of the wall.

The St. Francis artillery point holds significant historical and cultural importance, being part of the UNESCO protected city of Kotor and a component of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “The Venetian Works of Defense Between the 15th and 17th Centuries.” This section of the city walls, never restored, has progressively deteriorated, leading to partial collapses endangering visitors. Restoring the city walls will enable the Municipality to subsequently reconstruct the flight of stairs leading from the southern city gate to the upper city walls, ensuring long-term sustainability of this historic site. Project activities include vegetation removal, terrain leveling, surface cleaning, masonry and conservation works.





• **Project Update: Phase II and III Progress at St. Francis Artillery Point**

Since the first newsletter, the conservation and restoration project at St. Francis Artillery Point in Kotor has made significant progress.



Removal of Unstable Wall Sections (September 2024)

Unstable plaster, smaller stones, and rocks on the verge of collapse have been removed from the top of the walls to secure this area. These materials have been used in the conservation, restoration, and stabilization phase of the project. The tops of the walls are now cleared and prepared for further rehabilitation. Inside, most of the walls have been cleared of greenery and are regularly maintained to prevent regrowth.

Phase II Completion: The preparatory activities for the conservation, restoration, and stabilization of the St. Francis artillery point and surrounding walls have been successfully completed. Key steps included:

- Installing moveable scaffolding for flexible wall access.
- Defining material delivery routes for challenging sections of the Old City Walls.
- Placing signage for public safety, regulatory compliance, and project information.
- Clearing overgrown vegetation and debris, leveling the plateau terrain, and removing unstable materials to prevent collapse.



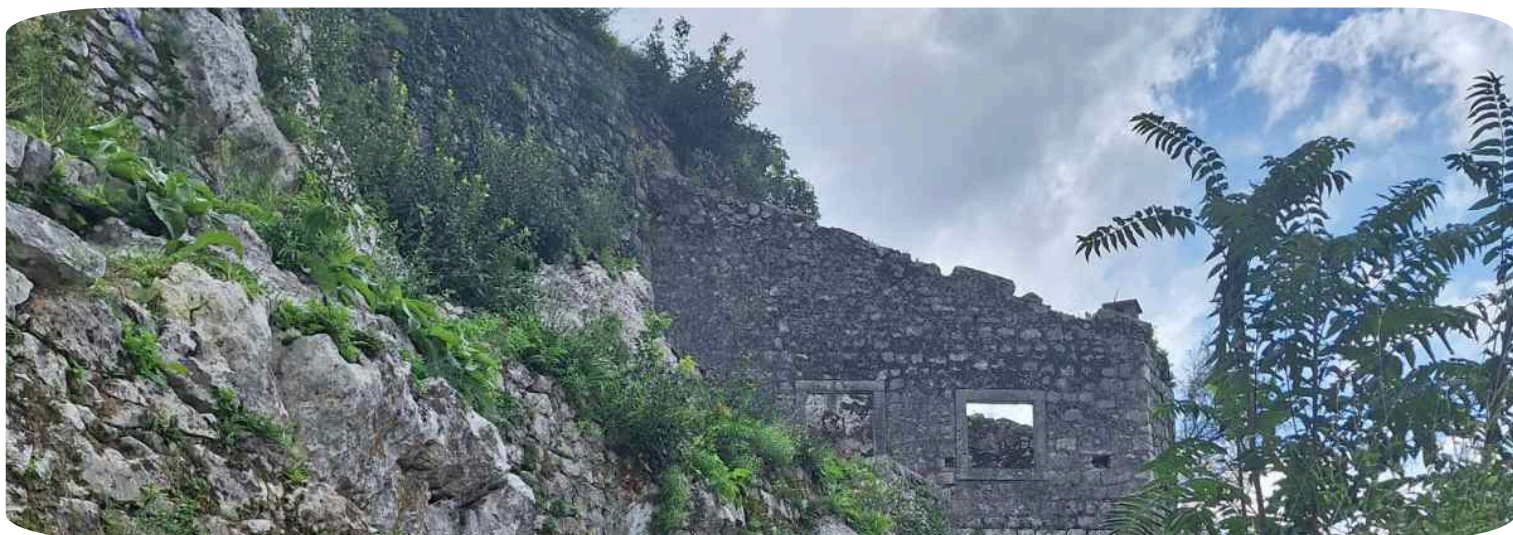


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Phase III Progress: The conservation, restoration, and reinforcement efforts are advancing robustly, focusing on:

- Stabilizing the structure by reinforcing loose stones and wall sections.
- Clearing vegetation and removing weakened mortar, stones, and rocks to prevent further degradation.
- Stabilizing the southern cannon port edge with technical support for removing temporary frameworks.
- Installing mortar caps and drainage system to prevent water damage.
- Clearing and graveling the path to St. Francis to enhance stability and appearance.
- Commencing restoration on the cannon port floor and damaged sections, with careful selection and arrangement of stones.
- Cleaning the walls with a new water pressure and preparing for masonry, crown restoration and final cleaning phase.

This well-organized approach ensures the conservation of historical features and safety, bringing the St. Francis artillery point to its original strength and stability.





Interview with the U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro, Her Excellency Judy Rising Reinke

In our ongoing efforts to preserve the significant cultural heritage of St. Francis Artillery Point, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the U.S. Embassy in Podgorica for their invaluable support.

Stay tuned for an exclusive interview with the Ambassador of the United States of America to Montenegro, as she shares insights into the collaboration and future aspirations for this project.





CONSERVATION OF THE 16TH CENTURY ST. FRANCIS RAMPART IN KOTOR

The Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation was established to support countries in preserving their cultural heritage and to demonstrate U.S. respect for other cultures. How is Montenegro positioned, and how competitive are we as a small country within the mentioned programs?

The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) is a highly competitive global fund under the State Department, dedicated to fostering bilateral relations through cultural heritage preservation. Over the years, seven sites have been successfully restored in Montenegro through AFCP funding, including:

- the ongoing project to conserve the St. Francis artillery point and surrounding walls above the southern gate to the Old City of Kotor (2022; \$375,000);
- the restoration of lower ramparts of the historic Kotor fortress (2003, \$30,600); the restoration of the Shadrvan of the Hussein Pasha Mosque in Pljevlja in 2007, \$30, 100);
- the reconstruction of the drainage system around the Piva Monastery, to preserve monastery frescos (\$22,200 in 2008); the preservation of the remains of the Roman Catholic, Franciscan Monastery at Gurdic, Kotor (2009, \$44,900);
- the preservation of the Ivana Crnojevica Mill in Cetinje (2014-2015, \$65,472);
- the conservation of a collection of twenty Orthodox icons from the 17th-19th centuries of the City Museum Mirko Komnenovic and Gallery Josip Bepo Benkovic in Herceg Novi (2020, \$44,464).

While AFCP funding is not guaranteed, the Embassy has collaborated with numerous applicants, facilitating the development of quality proposals that met AFCP criteria.





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I strongly encourage eligible applicants to consider applying for future iterations of the program. Some of Montenegro's rich cultural sites require immediate attentions, as they are crucial for maintaining national identity and fostering economic growth. It is imperative that Montenegro fully capitalizes on available funding opportunities to ensure the preservation of its cultural heritage. The U.S. Embassy is devoted to working with local partners to continue supporting those efforts.

St. Francis Rampart has faced gradual deterioration over the years, this project had critically importance preserving Montenegrin historical and architectural grandeur. How important is the preservation of cultural heritage in maintaining national identity and educating citizens and visitors about its culture and history?

A nation's history, traditions, and cultural treasures risk fading into obscurity without decisive conservation efforts. It's our collective responsibility to preserve these priceless assets for future generations. This entails allocating funding and resources for cultural preservation initiatives, supporting local communities in their efforts to maintain and restore heritage sites, and promoting educational programs that raise awareness about the significance of this country's cultural legacy.





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Recently, the issue of UNESCO cultural heritage status of the Municipality of Kotor has been raised. How might projects of this nature contribute positively to preserving the designated world heritage site's status?

Projects like repairing the St. Francis artillery point, when successfully implemented, demonstrate the commitment of the citizens of Montenegro to its cultural heritage, signalling to international partners, investors, and businesses its seriousness and potential for future projects. Preserving Kotor's UNESCO status requires simultaneous efforts to mitigate unplanned construction, as emphasized by experts. I am pleased that the Ministry of Culture and Media promptly submitted a report to UNESCO on Kotor's situation, and more work lies ahead. Prioritizing the upkeep of UNESCO status of enlisted sites requires appointing experts, fostering cooperation between government and non-government entities at all levels, and across regions. This is a complex task that demands sustained effort.

Besides restoration and conservation aspects, the project "Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor, Montenegro" has added value in terms of promotion and touristic valorization of the St. Francis rampart. Are promotion and accessibility of cultural heritage locations important for tourism and local development?

Promotion and accessibility are vital for generating revenue at cultural sites, especially within UNESCO-protected zones, where safety and maintenance are paramount. This project seeks to enhance the city's tourism offerings, with St. Francis rampart becoming a focal point for guided tours and restored walking paths.





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The project is expected to have a ripple effect, generating additional revenue from tourism, improving safety for climbing the city walls, and creating a venue for outdoor cultural events in this picturesque area. Ultimately, I hope one day Kotor's outer perimeter is as walkable as in some of the major historic capitals of Europe. Hopefully, this project is a start. Promoting a cultural site during and after its conservation involves the local community and keeps them informed about the progress of the works. This aspect transforms the preservation of cultural heritage into a collaborative and sustainable effort. While increased promotion may pose challenges, it undeniably boosts tourism and financial benefits.

We often forget the importance of culture for the development of society as a whole. What is your final message regarding the importance of culture and preservation of our cultural heritage in the future development of Montenegrin society?

In our pursuit of progress, culture is too often overlooked as a driving force for societal development. However, its preservation holds the key to shaping Montenegro's future. Embracing and safeguarding our cultural heritage recognises our past while being an investment in our collective prosperity and identity, essential for steering Montenegro towards a vibrant, cohesive, and sustainable future.





CONSERVATION OF THE 16TH CENTURY ST. FRANCIS RAMPART IN KOTOR

Interview with the Major of the Municipality of Kotor, Mr Vladimir Jokic

A significant contribution to the continuous and strategic protection of the cultural and historical heritage in the municipality of Kotor has been made by the local government, led by the mayor, Mr. Vladimir Jokić.

In the recent period, numerous projects in this area have been implemented, one of the most important being the project “Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor”.





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Mr. Jokić, how important is the material cultural and historical heritage to the municipality of Kotor, and what activities are the focus of your administration in this area?

The cultural and historical heritage of the municipality of Kotor represents an extremely important resource and holds a prominent place in our municipality's strategic development plans. The fact that Kotor was inscribed on the World Heritage List as one of the first 60 sites, back in 1979, due to its outstanding universal value, speaks volumes about the significance of this heritage and cultural assets, which hold exceptional universal value not only for the municipality of Kotor but also on international level.

In the previous period, a series of activities and projects were implemented with the primary aim of restoring and conserving cultural assets to preserve the complete cultural landscape of the municipality. A comprehensive reconstruction of the walking paths was completed, the reconstruction of the old summer stage Bastion Riva is ongoing, as well as the reconstruction of the location of St. Rocco. These activities were funded through the budget of the municipality of Kotor, carried out by the Secretariat for Investments.





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How significant is the support of international donors in the activities of protecting and restoring the cultural and historical heritage in your municipality?

Given the significance of the cultural and historical heritage of the municipality of Kotor on an international level, a substantial part of the activities and projects for the protection of cultural assets has been funded through cooperation with international donors, primarily with the European Union, through the work of the municipal Office for International Projects. These projects include the restoration of Venetian Republic monuments, the development of cultural tourism, and the restoration and conservation of the fortifications system.

A special kind of continuous support in the activities of heritage protection has been received from the Embassy of the United States of America in Montenegro through the implementation of several significant projects, such as the reconstruction of the lowest ramp of the Kotor Fortress, the preservation of the remains of the Roman Catholic, Franciscan Monastery at Gurdic, and finally the project “Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor” which were funded through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.





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Do you believe that the restored city fortifications, such as part of the southern walls and the location of St. Francis, can contribute to the development of the tourism offer in the municipality of Kotor? How important is it to open these sites to the local population and tourists?

We are witnessing significant tourist interest in the cultural assets of our municipality, with a large number of tourists visiting the city walls every day.

We believe it is necessary to ensure that as many tourists as possible become familiar with the extremely significant cultural and historical heritage of our municipality, while respecting the principle of protecting these sites. Our responsibility, which we have successfully fulfilled in the past period, is to ensure safe passage and stay for tourists at these sites, to inform tourists, and to protect these sites from external influences, which are increasingly present given the growing interest and increase in the number of tourists at these locations.

Through the implementation of the project “Conservation of the 16th Century St. Francis Rampart in Kotor” we will ensure safe passage and stay for tourists and citizens from the southern walls at the location of St. Francis, inform them about the site through the installation of info boards, and through the development of an innovative platform for tourists and citizens, we will protect the cultural assets at this site and preserve them for future generations.





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The cultural and historical heritage of the municipality of Kotor represents a unique connection between people, nations, and different historical epochs, and it symbolises today's Kotor – an open city where differences converge. From the perspective of the further development of the municipality of Kotor, how important is it to continue working on the preservation and promotion of Kotor's cultural and historical heritage?

Kotor has always been, and still is, a symbol of cosmopolitanism, especially of the spirit and culture of the Mediterranean in this region. Today, Kotor is a city that connects cultures, nations, and generations, a city with cultural and historical value of global significance. Our mission is to preserve these resources, present them, and leave them for future generations.

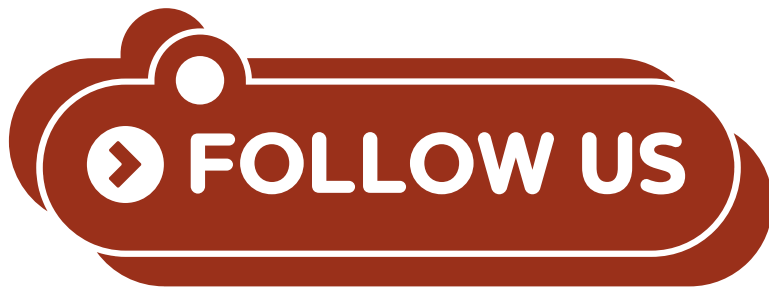




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Join us in preserving Kotor's heritage by subscribing to our newsletter! Get regular updates, insights from our team, and highlights of key milestones. Your support and interest are invaluable to us.

Thanks for being part of this vital journey to preserve and revitalize our shared history!



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