

**ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXCHANGE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE  
HOSPITALITY SMEs IN THE BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

**Company name: Mountain hut "Rai"**

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Source: [google.com](https://www.google.com)

**Country/region of operation:** Kalofer, Bulgaria

**Sustainability dimension:** environmental, experiential tourism, resource-saving technologies, mobility management

**Description of the enterprise/initiative:**

Mountain hut "Rai" was built in 1935 in the Raia place, at the southern foot of mountain peak Botev, at 1560 meters above sea level. Hut "Rai" the most popular hut in the Stara Planina mountain range is a three-storey building, which disposes of 120 beds allocated in rooms with 2, 3, 4, 5 and more beds and plank-beds, with inside WCs.

The hut is water supplied and supplied with electricity by a hydroelectric water power station. The hut also offers solid fuel heaters, a shop, tourist kitchen and canteen and wonderful conditions for alpinism.

**Social/ community impact sought:**

The hut was built to be and still is the only place for accommodation at the southern foot of Botev peak close to the highest waterfall in Bulgaria - Raiskoto praskalo (124.4 m). As the road from the asphalt road in the town of Kalofer to the top of the mountain takes 8 hours in one direction, a place for rest was needed and created somewhere in the middle.

**Stakeholders:** mountaineers, nature lovers, young and adult tourist from Bulgaria and abroad

**Approach applied:**

Raiskoto Praskalo and Botev peak are not reachable by vehicle. The route to the top takes full day in one direction so back in the days people used to camp in tents, but as the sites are part of Central Balkan National Park and there are a lot of wild animals including wolf and bears, the destination was primary for experienced mountaineers. After the “Rai” hut was built the tourists increased and the destination became among the favourite ones even for beginners. The construction took a lot of time and efforts, as because of the difficult terrain most of the materials were brought by horses and mules.

**Innovation applied:**

The hut is supplied with own aggregate and water-power plant. For further utilization of the natural resources, solar panels providing electricity and hot water are also installed few years ago. Regarding the mobility of the tourists, to increase the accessibility of the place, off-road jeeps are available and people can be driven up to the hut.

**Social impact and business results achieved:**

Since its construction the hut has welcomed thousands of guest from Bulgaria and abroad who would never have visited Raiskoto Praskalo or climb to the top of the mountain if there was not such place for accommodation.

**Financial situation / sustainability of the business model:**

The environmental sustainability of the business model is ensured by the use of renewable energy, the self-sustainment of the place and the absence of contamination sources. The financial sustainability is ensured by the flow of tourists who visit the hut every year as well as by the fact it is the only hut in this place.

**Key success factors:** resource-efficiency, self-sustainment

**Challenges and problems:**

As the hut is located high in the mountain and there is not a road to the place, the only possible way for carrying products or luggage until a few years was by using horses and mules. The challenge was also valid for people unable to go all the way on foot –children, unexperienced or less mobile people. As the interest for adventurous tourism has risen and more and more people want to spend time close to nature and enjoy the beauty of the mountain, nowadays the hut can also be reached by off-road jeeps.

**Year when the enterprise was created: 1935**

**References (web-site, intent links, video, etc.):**

<http://gowhere.bg/en/places/mountains/hut-%E2%80%98rai%E2%80%99/>

<http://www.bulgarian-mountains.com/Huts/Stara/Rai>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHVu4hFp\\_Dg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHVu4hFp_Dg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcEdXZXZJ6M>