

BOSNIAN 'ENERGY PYRAMIDS' BOOSTED BY DJOKOVIC VISITS



This picture shows a view of the Visocica hill, near Central-Bosnian town of Visoko. — AFP photos



A Bosnian tourist guide explains the tour of the so-called Bosnian Valley of Pyramids in the central-Bosnian town of Visoko.



A Bosnian tourist guide explains the tour of the so-called Bosnian Valley of Pyramids in the central-Bosnian town of Visoko.

With tree-covered slopes that rise to a pointed summit, the mountain overlooking the Bosnian town of Visoko resembles any other ordinary hillside in the Balkan state. Yet thousands of yearly visitors—including high-profile stars like Serbian tennis champion Novak Djokovic—don't see it that way. Despite scientists' efforts to debunk the claims, large numbers of people still believe the hill is part of an ancient man-made pyramid complex with healing powers. Djokovic, who is known for his new-age spiritual interests, has made two trips this year, hailing the site as a “paradise on earth.”

The mountain is now part of a controversial pyramid park founded by Semir Osmanagic, a 60-year-old self-styled explorer who “discovered” the site just outside of Sarajevo in 2005. “I saw this hill covered with fir trees and vegetation, its slopes perfectly oriented towards the cardinal points,” Osmanagic, wearing a leather jacket and Indiana Jones-style hat, told AFP on a recent weekend while leading a tour group through the site. “It was obvious to me that it was not a natural hill but the construction” of a “technologically superior civilization”, he said, insisting it is the “largest and oldest pyramid ever built”. Archaeologists have long ago disputed this theory as pseudo-science, saying the hill is a natural geological structure.



This picture shows the underground tunnel “Ravne”, near the central-Bosnian town of Visoko.

In a letter to Bosnian authorities in 2006, European archaeologists denounced the support given to a “cruel hoax on an unsuspecting public” that “has no place in the world of genuine science”. But this did not prevent Osmanagic, previously a US-based businessman, from carrying out “archaeological excavations” on the hill with hundreds of volunteers from abroad. He bought a piece of surrounding land, which includes a network of tunnels he says emit a curative energy force, and a few years later opened the park through his “Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun” foundation.

Djokovic buzz

Today, the park is buzzing with visitors, who have come in even higher numbers since two recent trips from Djokovic. In July and October, Djokovic made pilgrimages to the park and invited “all athletes” to take advantage of the healthy oxygen levels. “I know there are many doubts and dilemmas about the authenticity (of the place),” he told AFP in October. But “in order to fully understand what is going on here... you have to come”.

After a quiet spring subdued by the pandemic, weekend crowds are back at the park, consisting mostly of visitors from the region. “The beginning of the season was catastrophic,



Tourists visit the archaeological park “Ravne” near the central-Bosnian town of Visoko.