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Dear friends,

Talking about tourism means that we are talking about the history, the tradition, the folklore, the food, the songs, the mountains, the lakes, and everything that makes us special and recognizable. Let us become familiar with Macedonia. The Republic of Macedonia is a small lake country in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, a country that connects the east and the west, a crossroad between the continent and the Mediterranean. Macedonia has a wonderful climate, a temperate continental climate, because four seasons change during the year. This implies conditions for development of both summer and winter tourism. It is rich in springs of warm and healing water, beautiful mountains, rich flora, and untouched nature. However, what mostly distinguishes Macedonia is its rich historical and cultural heritage which dates back to the distant past. From the past and the history, we would like to point out the developed life in the Neolithic Period, the pile-dwelling settlement from the period before 5000 BC, the skeleton of the oldest inhabitant of Southeast Europe from the period before 4000 BC, the locality Pottery Shtip, the Megalithic Observatory Kokino that dates back to 4000 BC, Macedonia - a country mentioned in Iliad and Odyssey. According to the legend it was named from Makedon, the son of the Egyptian god Osiris. A country known for Alexander the Great, however also for the Macedonian Ptolemaic dynasty which continued to rule in Europe for another 300 years after the death of Alexander the Great, mentioned for the passage of the Holy Apostle Paul on the road to Rome in the mission to spread Christianity... Many localities which have been discovered testify of Macedonia's rich history, and who knows how many other secrets lie buried in the depths of this exquisite country. Macedonia is spread on an area of 25.713 km², with 1.700 settlements, 29 cities with approximately 2 million residents. Macedonia is a small country with an extremely beautiful nature. Mountain massifs, excellent for winter tourism and skiing - Popova Shapka, Mavrovo, Pelister, Galichica, Krushevo, Kozuf, Ponikva... Mountains that are beautiful for the study of various types of flora, recreation, excellent prerequisites for the development of "air spas"... In addition to the mountain capacities, the tourism is also recognizable for Ohrid and Lake Ohrid which captivates with its rich flora and underwater life. Ohrid is the town - pearl of Macedonia, protected by UNESCO, a town where in the period of Tsar Samuil in 976 AD, it had 365 churches. A town where the creation of the Slavic culture started, and the first Slavic university was established. Today these temples are still the center of culture. In the immediate vicinity is the town of Struga - the home town of our educators Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinovi, as well as the village Vevchani - an attractive place, recognizable for the Vevchani springs and the Carnival of Vevchani. Prespa and Lake Prespa are spread slightly southward from Ohrid, a region which revived after 20 years. The Prespa region abounds with natural resources - the Lake Prespa with the island Golem Grad which is situated in the middle of the lake, also known as the snake island, a lake where the Mountain Baba rises

with its peak Pelister on one side, and the Mountain Galichica on the other side. A region with vast apple orchards, villages with beautiful houses which retained the authenticity of the old Macedonian house. Here I would like to point out the village Brajchino and the village Kurbinovo, known for the church St. Gjorgji, which dates back to the 12th century and it is the largest single-nave church built of crushed stone and bricks. The ethnological museum - a museum in the Prespa village of Grnchari with one of the richest ethnological collections in Macedonia - a rare and imposing collection of more than 2000 works of art: beautiful samples of jewelry, weapons, old coins, and more than 160 different Macedonian national folk costumes from different regions of Macedonia. In recent years, the road infrastructure in the Prespa region has improved as well, so the road both through Bitola and through Ohrid is good. Hiking and bike paths have been built, and they connect different beaches (Pretoz, Slivnica, Krani, Shtrbovo, Dupeni), and the offer of the beaches is becoming richer every year...The vicinity of the Ohrid airport is another strength for the promotion of this region among the foreign tourists. As we progress towards south, we get to Bitola, the most frequently mentioned Macedonian town in songs - Bitola babam Bitola. A town with a centuries-old tradition, a crossroad of the famous Roman road Via Egnatia, where the ancient town Heraclea Lyncestis is located. A town with many churches, monasteries, mosques. A town where Christianity united with the Ottoman rule, a town of the consuls with a tradition which is nurtured to present day on the famous street Shirok Sokak. A town with a huge historical importance for modern Turkey, because Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was educated here and he finished military school for an army officer in this town. From Bitola we go downwards to the southernmost town of Macedonia, Gevgelija - the Macedonian Las Vegas, known for its night life and many casinos, and passing towards east to Berovo which is recognizable for ecotourism and its untouched nature, we get to the capital, Skopje. Skopje is a city of different people and cultures. It is the city of Mother Theresa, and in her memory a memorial house has been built, which is being visited by people from all around the world. A city which is a mark of Christianity, the Orient, all the way to the European culture. The mega project Skopje 2014 changes and enriches the tourist offer of Macedonia and completely changes the appearance of the capital, especially of Skopje's center. We would point out the following: "A warrior on a horse" - a monument with a fountain of the King Alexander the Great on square Macedonia, in Skopje. Gate "Macedonia", also known as the "Triumphal Gate" - a monument with the shape of an archway (triumphal arch) which is located on square Pela in Skopje. "The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle" is one of the largest and most important structures of the project, and many other monuments that reflect history, but also contemporary life. The wine tourism which is typical of the Tikves region, the folklore, the folk costumes, the folk dances, the dialect and the folk customs, are jealously nurtured and preserved by each region. However, the male folk dance called TESHKOTO strongly reflects the character of the existence of Macedonian folklore and customs throughout the centuries. And the most important thing. Every single person who passed through Macedonia was delighted by the Macedonian traditional kitchen and food, a recipe that is conveyed from one generation to another by our mothers and grandmothers, and all of this nourished by the kindness of our people. Although only a small part is presented above, still it is sufficient to remind us of the importance of TOURISM to our country, and that it touches to every point of life and the economy.

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