

From Swamp to Sanctuary: Park Ravne 2 in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina as a Vision-Driven Model of Ecological Rebirth, Archaeological Discovery, and Cultural Freedom Through Community Action

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Abstract

Park Ravne 2 in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina, represents a remarkable transformation of 100,000 square meters of swampy, neglected, and contaminated land into a vibrant ecological, archaeological, and cultural sanctuary. Initiated by a non-profit foundation without government support, this project has evolved into a multidimensional space that blends environmental restoration, underground archaeological exploration, and community-based programming. The park is home to multiple entrances to ancient tunnel networks, including Ravne 2, 3, 4, and 6, where prehistoric dry-stone walls and artifacts have been uncovered. Thousands of plants, healing gardens, megalithic installations, open-air art, and inclusive events have made Park Ravne 2 a regional hub for education, sports, healing, and cultural revival. This article documents the park's vision-driven development, its role in public engagement with heritage, and its pioneering fusion of science, art, and freedom.

Keywords

Ecological regeneration; Civic archaeology; Community heritage; Bosnian pyramids; Cultural freedom

1. Introduction

The town of Visoko, located in central Bosnia-Herzegovina, has emerged over the past two decades as a significant site of archaeological interest, ecological renewal, and cultural innovation. (1-2) At the heart of this transformation is Park Ravne 2, a visionary project initiated by the non-profit organization **Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation**, which converted 100,000 square meters of degraded, swampy land into a thriving public space. This park now functions as an open-air museum, cultural hub, sports venue, ecological reserve, and spiritual retreat.

Park Ravne 2 was founded on the principle that community engagement, environmental stewardship, and a deep respect for ancient knowledge systems can coexist and mutually reinforce one another. Situated adjacent to the globally discussed Bosnian Pyramid Complex, the park is not only a green sanctuary but also a living archaeological site, with four discovered tunnel entrances (Ravne 2, 3, 4, and 6), revealing stratified subterranean structures, dry-stone walls, and thousands of ceramic and metallic artifacts. (3-6) These findings, which include one of the oldest dry-stone walls in Europe dated to over 19,000 years BP using U-Th analysis make the park a focal point for alternative archaeological research and discourse. (7)

What sets Park Ravne 2 apart is not only its scientific potential but its inclusive and visionary programming. With free access to all visitors, including tens of thousands of children from regional schools, the park has grown into a center of cultural freedom, ecological healing, and social empowerment. It hosts a wide range of events including concerts, yoga retreats, archaeological exhibitions, international sports tournaments, and volunteer workshops all without state funding. The result is a participatory model that fosters pride in regional heritage while promoting universal values of sustainability, peace, and human connection.

This paper provides an overview of the park's genesis, structure, activities, and impact, presenting it as a unique case study in grassroots cultural transformation, community-based archaeology, and holistic public engagement with history and nature.

2. Historical and Geographical Context

Visoko, a small town nestled in the heart of the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids, has historically served as a cultural and political center since medieval times. Situated in the Dinaric Alps, the region is known for its karstic geology, abundant freshwater sources, and complex underground networks. Historically, Visoko was the capital of the medieval Bosnian Kingdom, with archaeological traces dating back to Neolithic and Illyrian settlements.

The modern rediscovery of Visoko's ancient potential began in 2005 with the announcement of pyramid-shaped hills and their possible anthropogenic origin. Since then, the area has become a focal point of multidisciplinary research involving geology, archaeology, physics, and environmental science. (8) Adjacent to the Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun and the Ravne Tunnel

Complex, **Park Ravne 2** lies in a naturally protected area characterized by a mild continental climate, evergreen forests, and rich biodiversity.

The park's physical transformation began in 2016 with the purchase of a neglected, swampy plot of land contaminated with debris and stagnant water. Situated near the entrance to the Ravne Tunnel Complex a network of prehistoric underground passages believed to extend for kilometers this land was chosen for its proximity to the core archaeological zone and its potential to integrate heritage with ecology.

The Foundation-led transformation project reimagined the site not only as a green park but also as a platform for education, exploration, and community development. The park is now home to four newly discovered tunnel entrances Ravne 2, Ravne 3, Ravne 4, and Ravne 6 each contributing to the understanding of the region's deep past. Among these, the Ravne 3 complex has yielded one of the oldest known subterranean dry-stone walls in Europe, confirmed by uranium-thorium dating to be over 19,000 years old. Stalagmite layers above this wall were also dated using radiocarbon methods to more than 26,000 years BP, suggesting multiple construction phases and extraordinary antiquity.⁽⁷⁾

Park Ravne 2 today is not only a landscaped ecological zone but also a living archaeological ecosystem a physical space where the region's natural, cultural, and scientific heritage converge in a dynamic, publicly accessible setting.

3. Vision and Founding Philosophy

The creation of Park Ravne 2 was guided by a vision that transcends conventional park design. At its core lies the idea of integrating ecological renewal, archaeological stewardship, and cultural awakening within a single, holistic space. The initiative was spearheaded by Dr. Sam Osmanagich, founder of the **Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation**, who personally acquired the land in 2016 after recognizing its potential as both an ecological sanctuary and an extension of the archaeological work already underway in the nearby Ravne Tunnel Complex.

The foundational philosophy behind the park's transformation was rooted in three principles:

1. **Restoration of Nature:** The land was initially swampy, polluted, and overgrown an ecological wasteland neglected for decades. The first priority was the complete rehabilitation of the terrain through drainage, waste removal, tree planting, and the introduction of diverse flora. Thousands of bushes, flowers, and trees were planted, while pathways, water channels, and rock gardens were carefully constructed to harmonize with the surrounding ecosystem.
2. **Free Access and Inclusivity:** The park was conceptualized as a space of freedom free from commercial exploitation, urban stress, and bureaucratic limitations. Entrance, concerts, cultural events, parking, and the use of all installations are entirely free of charge. The underlying belief is that cultural and natural heritage should be accessible to everyone, regardless of financial means, age, or background.

3. **Empowerment through Civic Archaeology:** The project embodies an ethos of participatory heritage, where community volunteers, local workers, regional artists, international researchers, and schoolchildren contribute actively to the site's development. Sculptures, educational installations, artistic pavilions, and botanical features are added each year, reflecting an evolving narrative co-authored by those who engage with the space.

This approach has transformed Park Ravne 2 into a vibrant arena for cultural expression, historical education, wellness, and environmental care. It challenges the paradigm that heritage conservation must be institutional or top-down. Instead, it offers a model where grassroots engagement and vision-driven leadership yield sustainable and inclusive results.

4. Physical Transformation and Landscape Design

When work began on the site that would become Park Ravne 2 in 2016, the land bore little resemblance to the flourishing cultural and ecological landscape it is today. It consisted of 100,000 square meters of neglected, swampy terrain—overgrown with weeds, littered with debris, and frequently flooded. The initial transformation efforts demanded not only vision but intensive physical labor and strategic landscaping.

4.1 Clearing, Drainage, and Infrastructure

The first two years focused on draining surface water, removing refuse, leveling the terrain, and preparing the soil for future planting and structural development. Workers and volunteers installed a network of underground piping to redirect excess water and prevent future flooding. Support walls were constructed from stones excavated from the nearby Ravne tunnels, reinforcing slopes and defining spaces while preserving aesthetic harmony with the natural environment.

Pathways, bridges, and sitting areas were added using natural materials wood, stone, and pebbles to preserve an organic feel and ensure environmental sustainability. Benches were fashioned from large tunnel pebbles, allowing visitors to rest within a space that literally grew from the earth beneath them.

4.2 Botanical and Ecological Planning

The landscaping philosophy emphasized biodiversity, seasonal color, and spiritual symbolism. Thousands of flowers, ornamental shrubs, and evergreen and deciduous trees were planted across the park. Special areas were designated as botanical gardens and spiral flower beds. In one area, over 150 organic fruit trees of 16 different varieties apples, pears, plums, cherries, and more were planted. The fruit is free to visitors, reinforcing the theme of generosity and abundance.

Certain design elements, such as labyrinths, spirals, and flower mandalas, echo sacred geometry principles, blending aesthetic beauty with spiritual and energetic intention. These features invite visitors not only to view nature but to interact with it through walking meditation, tactile contact, and contemplative movement.

4.3 Architecture and Installations

Unlike most public parks built around predefined blueprints, Park Ravne 2 evolves organically through additions made each year. Open-air installations include stone circles, cultural pavilions, educational plaques, and artistic sculptures dedicated to regional history, science, and spirituality. Notable among these are the Nikola Tesla Square, the Vinča and Starčevo Culture pavilions, the Rose Labyrinth of Love, and installations honoring historical figures such as Queen Teuta and King Tvrtko I Kotromanić.

Every feature in the park has symbolic meaning. Water fountains represent life and purity, bridges embody transition and unity, and amphitheaters offer a space for collective celebration. Healing gardens, meditation platforms, and pyramid-shaped structures also function as energy-enhancing zones, drawing interest from wellness communities.

4.4 Open Gallery Concept

The park has become the largest open-air cultural gallery in the region, housing over 60 installations that merge art, archaeology, and education. Sculptures are commissioned from regional art academies, encouraging collaboration and supporting young artists. Each addition is not only a visual enhancement but a teaching tool a reminder of Bosnia's rich historical and cultural fabric.

5. Cultural Programming and Community Engagement

Park Ravne 2 has evolved into a vibrant and inclusive cultural nucleus hosting year-round activities that reflect the diverse interests, traditions, and needs of the regional community. Driven by a model of open access and civic participation, the park supports programming that ranges from large festivals and sports tournaments to intimate workshops, meditative retreats, and educational field trips.

5.1 Annual Festivals and Performances

The Bosnian Pyramid Summer Solstice Festival, held every June, is one of the park's cornerstone events. It includes live concerts, traditional Bosnian music and dance, open-air film screenings, spiritual gatherings, and holistic health workshops. All events are free to the public, and parking and amenities are likewise offered at no charge, reinforcing the Foundation's philosophy of giving and communal abundance.

Concerts attract leading regional musicians and are held on the park's hexagonal stage, a space that blends sacred geometry with acoustic function. These events have become a magnet for families, tourists, and cultural enthusiasts, all within a safe, car-free, and serene natural environment.

5.2 Educational and Spiritual Programs

The park is a favorite destination for school groups from Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia. Over 120 to 160 schools visit annually, with tens of thousands of children enjoying a space free from urban noise, pollution, and safety hazards. Educational installations, historical pavilions, and hands-on workshops allow students to interact with their cultural heritage in dynamic ways.

Spiritual and meditative programs are offered throughout the year, often on the hexagonal yoga platform or within the botanical labyrinths. Yoga retreats, meditation circles, energy healing sessions, and talks by spiritual teachers transform the park into a sanctuary of inner growth and renewal.

5.3 Athletic Events and Health Promotion

Sporting events underscore the park's commitment to holistic wellness. The Pyramid Trail Run attracts hundreds of runners to compete along 5 km and 20 km routes. Other events include the Pyramid Cup international women's tennis tournament (featuring WTA players), youth basketball and handball tournaments, martial arts exhibitions, and public fitness classes.

All events are organized by the Foundation and funded independently without government support. This approach underscores the importance of civil society action and visionary leadership in promoting public health and youth development.

5.4 Inclusion and Volunteerism

The park operates on a foundation of civic generosity. Volunteers both local and international play a critical role in maintaining gardens, constructing installations, and assisting during events. Special programming is organized for children from foster homes, including motivational talks by professional athletes, full-day excursions, meals, and gifts all provided at no cost to participants.

International sculptors and artists have collaborated in open workshops, creating geopunctural circles and symbolic megaliths. These contributions add cultural and spiritual depth to the park while fostering cross-cultural exchange.

5.5 A Platform for Freedom and Creativity

Park Ravne 2 is not merely a physical transformation but a living experiment in social architecture. It offers a platform for personal expression, artistic creation, historical education, and cultural celebration. Most importantly, it gives people something increasingly rare in modern societies: freedom. Freedom to explore, to gather, to heal, to express identity, and to reconnect with nature, history, and community.

6. Archaeological Discoveries and Underground Access Points

While Park Ravne 2 was originally envisioned as a cultural and recreational space, its location adjacent to the Bosnian Pyramid Complex has made it a fertile ground for archaeological discovery. (9) Over time, the park has revealed not only its surface beauty but also a hidden, layered history beneath the ground. Multiple access points to prehistoric underground tunnels have been discovered within its boundaries, adding unique scientific value to the site and reinforcing its role as a living archaeological field.

6.1 Ravne 2 Tunnel Entrance: A Deeper Layer of the Underground Network

The discovery of the Ravne 2 tunnel entrance, situated 5 meters beneath the main Ravne Tunnel Complex, confirmed for the first time that the prehistoric tunnel network extends through multiple stratigraphic levels. This finding implies a more sophisticated design than previously thought and suggests that ancient builders may have constructed multi-tiered infrastructure for ceremonial, energetic, or transportation purposes.

Ravne 2 tunnels, still under excavation, show the same pattern of filler material and dry-stone walls found in other tunnel sections. Its relative depth below the known Ravne system opens questions about chronology, spatial planning, and the possible presence of undisturbed chambers.

6.2 Ravne 3 Tunnel Complex: The Oldest Subterranean Structure in Europe?

Perhaps the most remarkable archaeological find within the park has been the Ravne 3 Tunnel Complex. In-situ dry-stone walls, constructed using river pebbles, have been discovered beneath the layers of speleothem deposits (stalagmites). Scientific dating conducted by independent laboratories yielded U-Th results of **19,000 ± 1,000 years**, and radiocarbon results indicating a minimum age of **26,200 years BP**, both from calcite formations formed after the walls were built.(7)

These results suggest that the Ravne 3 structures may predate other known subterranean architectures in Europe, challenging conventional narratives about prehistoric engineering capabilities. Over 3,300 ceramic and metallic artifacts have been catalogued from this area, hinting at long-term human activity and intentional usage.

6.3 Ravne 4 and Ravne 6: Unexplored Tunnel Segments

In addition to Ravne 2 and 3, the Foundation's team has uncovered two additional tunnel complexes Ravne 4 and Ravne 6. Both exhibit dry-stone wall construction, precise spatial orientation, and evidence of anthropogenic design. Ravne 4 features approximately 65 meters of open tunnels, while Ravne 6 reveals over 70 meters of corridors with meticulously crafted walls and preserved sediment layers.

Excavations are ongoing and adhere to strict archaeological and conservation protocols in coordination with the local Visoko Museum and the Ministry of Culture of Zenica-Doboj Canton.

6.4 Preservation, Research, and Public Access

All archaeological activities within Park Ravne 2 are conducted under permits issued to the non-profit NGO “Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation,” registered with the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Artifacts are processed and catalogued in cooperation with the Visoko Municipal Museum, and the Foundation ensures ethical stewardship, public education, and long-term site preservation.

In addition to active research, guided tours and educational installations allow the general public to explore the tunnels responsibly, enhancing awareness of prehistoric achievements and the need to protect cultural heritage.

7. Art, Symbolism, and Historical Memory in Park Design

Park Ravne 2 is not only an ecological and archaeological sanctuary it is also a dynamic cultural canvas. Through curated installations, sculptures, and educational pavilions, the park presents an open-air narrative of the region’s deep cultural memory, ancient wisdom, and modern humanistic values. Art and symbolism are intentionally embedded in the park’s design, offering both aesthetic engagement and intellectual reflection.

7.1 Sculptural Heritage and Historical Figures

The park features over 60 sculptural installations that honor historical figures from Bosnia and the broader South Slavic and European heritage. These include:

- **Illyrian Queen Teuta**, whose legend as a wise and courageous ruler from the 3rd century BCE reflects pre-Roman sovereignty in the Balkans.
- **Bosnian King Tvrtko I Kotromanić** and **Kulin Ban**, celebrated for statecraft, diplomacy, and regional unity.
- Symbolic representations of **Bosnian fairies**, archetypes drawn from folklore, bridging myth with the reverence for nature and femininity.

These sculptures were created by artists from the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, and their placement is carefully considered to reflect symbolic and historical alignment within the park’s landscape.

7.2 Cultural Legacy of Poets and Scientists

One of the park’s most compelling features is the **Alley of Poets and Scientists**, a tribute to both global literary giants and distinguished intellectuals of the region. Bronze reliefs and plaques celebrate the works and lives of poets such as:

- **Rabindranath Tagore, Pablo Neruda, Federico García Lorca, Sergey Yesenin, Rumi, and Edgar Allan Poe**
- Regional poets like **France Prešeren, Mak Dizdar, Ivo Andrić, Meša Selimović, Miroslav Krleža, Tin Ujević Aleksa Šantić, and Desanka Maksimović**

On the scientific front, the park honors inventors and thinkers such as **Nikola Tesla, Milutin Milanković, Mileva Marić-Einstein, Lavoslav Ružička, Vladimir Pelog, Muris Osmanagić Mihajlo Pupin, Ruđer Bošković, and Jožef Štefan**. These individuals represent the spirit of innovation, freedom, and interdisciplinary curiosity that the park aims to foster.

7.3 Thematic Pavilions and Historical Civilizations

Several pavilions throughout the park are dedicated to prehistoric and ancient civilizations, illustrating a continuum of cultural evolution. These include:

- The **Vinča Pavilion**, showcasing replicas of artifacts from one of Europe's earliest civilizations, notable for early metallurgy, symbolic writing, and artistic achievement.
- The **Starčevo and Vučedol Pavilions**, which highlight agricultural, astronomical, and architectural developments in Neolithic Europe.
- The **Carantania Pavilion**, referencing the first South Slavic state, as well as **Illyrian pantheons and sacred geometry models**.

Each installation not only educates but evokes a deeper appreciation for the intellectual legacy embedded in the region's archaeological past.

7.4 Integrating Symbolism: Energy, Geometry, and Healing

The spatial design of the park incorporates sacred geometry principles hexagons, spirals, circles to channel and amplify perceived energetic properties. Notable examples include:

- **The Rose Labyrinth of Love**, with six petals representing Belief, Purpose, Kindness, Harmony, Happiness, and Overcoming.
- **The Pyramid of Green Crystal**, designed with cardinal orientation and quartz crystal foundations, reported to generate elevated levels of beneficial negative ions.
- **The Chakra Installations**, where geometric forms, megaliths, and natural elements combine to symbolize energy centers and human harmony.

These features aim to blend artistic expression with the park's healing mission, offering a contemplative experience for visitors.

8. Educational Impact, Volunteerism, and Social Inclusion

From its inception, Park Ravne 2 has evolved into a unique educational and civic space that fosters learning, inclusivity, and cultural pride. Through a range of programs and participatory activities, the park has become a living classroom and a vehicle for empowerment, connecting diverse communities around shared values of sustainability, heritage, and human connection.

8.1 Educational Programs and School Visits

One of the park's defining achievements is its outreach to the youth. Between 120 and 160 schools from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia visit Park Ravne 2 each year, bringing tens of thousands of students. These educational visits provide children with exposure to:

- **Clean, safe, and green environments**, far from urban pollution and noise.
- **Hands-on learning** about archaeology, ecology, and cultural heritage through guided tours, workshops, and exhibitions.
- **Values of respect and stewardship**, reinforced through interactions with the park's installations, gardens, and volunteers.

Special attention is given to age-appropriate content, encouraging curiosity about ancient civilizations, environmental care, and the importance of community responsibility.

8.2 Volunteerism and International Participation

The park thrives on the support and contributions of **international volunteers** who come from dozens of countries each year to take part in excavation, restoration, landscaping, and hospitality. Volunteers actively participate in:

- **Tunnel clearing and archaeological support**, particularly in Ravne 3, 4, and 6 tunnel networks.
- **Daily park maintenance**, including gardening, trash removal, and installation upkeep.
- **Event organization**, offering language support, logistics, and visitor engagement.

Their involvement strengthens cross-cultural bonds and fosters a spirit of global solidarity centered on shared vision and human connection.

8.3 Social Inclusion and Free Public Access

Park Ravne 2 operates on a **non-commercial, inclusive model**:

- There are **no entrance fees, no parking charges**, and all concerts and events are **free to the public**.
- Special programs are organized annually for **children from foster homes**, including transportation, meals, and full access to park facilities and activities.
- Events feature **motivational talks by athletes**, artists, and educators, offering inspiration and support to underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.

This model of **civic generosity** aims to restore dignity, agency, and joy to every visitor, regardless of background or economic status.

8.4 Integration of Local and Global Communities

Park Ravne 2 has become a place where **local identity meets global participation**. Through music festivals, international conferences, artistic residencies, and spiritual retreats, it draws people from all walks of life. It has become:

- A platform for **dialogue between generations**, as elders and youth collaborate on historical preservation and environmental care.
- A venue for **peaceful coexistence and multiculturalism**, promoting values of tolerance, respect, and mutual support.
- A **model for other communities** seeking to rejuvenate neglected spaces through shared vision and grassroots effort.

The park's inclusive design and participatory spirit ensure that it is not merely a physical space—but a living testimony to the possibility of positive cultural transformation through collective action.

8.5. Visitor Growth and Cultural Reach

Since its creation in 2016, Park Ravne 2 has experienced exponential growth in visitation, reflecting its rising relevance not only as an archaeological and ecological site but also as a regional cultural and spiritual landmark. In its inaugural year, the park welcomed approximately **10,000 visitors**, growing to **20,000 in 2017**, **40,000 in 2018**, and **50,000 in 2019**. Despite the global pandemic in 2020, the number still climbed to **76,000**, followed by substantial increases in **2021 (134,000)**, **2022 (155,000)**, and **2023 (195,000)**. In **2024**, Park Ravne 2 surpassed **245,000 visitors**, marking a **25-fold increase** from its opening year.

This trajectory illustrates not only the broadening recognition of the park's cultural, historical, and natural value, but also the effectiveness of its inclusive, non-commercial model. The Foundation operates **without state or international funding**, offering **free access to all park features**, including educational installations, performances, trails, pavilions, and parking. The steady rise in visitor numbers is a testament to the grassroots appeal and transnational cultural resonance of the Park Ravne 2 experience.

Visitor Growth at Park Ravne 2 (2016–2024)



Figure: The exponential rise in annual visitors to Park Ravne 2 in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2016 to 2024 demonstrates its growing appeal as a cultural, ecological, and archaeological site.

9. Festivals, Sports, and Cultural Programming

Park Ravne 2 has established itself as a dynamic cultural and athletic center that unites thousands of individuals through meaningful and joyful communal events. With its guiding ethos of free access and community benefit, the park has hosted an impressive array of festivals, sports tournaments, and artistic events that transcend boundaries of age, nationality, and social status.

9.1 Annual Festivals and Cultural Celebrations

Each year, the park organizes several high-profile festivals that bring together local residents, regional visitors, and international guests:

- **Summer Solstice Festival:** Celebrated around June 21st, this flagship event marks the beginning of summer and is rooted in ancient seasonal traditions. It includes open-air concerts, workshops, and ceremonies with spiritual and ecological themes.
- **Organic Food Fair:** Showcasing local agricultural products, the fair promotes healthy eating, sustainability, and support for small farmers.
- **Art and Sculpture Festivals:** These include live sculpting events and art installations, featuring artists from countries including the USA, Germany, Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, and Czech Republic, many of whom create permanent contributions to the park.

These festivals are entirely **free of charge**, with no tickets, parking fees, or restrictions on access, creating a truly democratic and inclusive cultural experience.

9.2 Sports as Community Building

The park is home to a variety of sporting events that highlight physical wellness, teamwork, and youth engagement:

- **Pyramid Trail Race:** Held annually, this event draws hundreds of runners for a 5 km family-friendly race and a more challenging 20 km trail competition.
- **Pyramid Cup Tennis Tournament:** Hosted on the park's professional tennis stadium, this event welcomes top WTA players from the region, as well as junior players from Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Italy, and Macedonia. The grand opening in 2022 was attended by 2,500 spectators and over 70 media outlets from around the world.
- **Basketball, Handball, and Volleyball Tournaments:** The park hosts 3x3 basketball events, junior handball tournaments, and team-building volleyball games, encouraging youth participation and inter-city cooperation.
- **Martial Arts Demonstrations:** Taekwondo programs for children and adults are held regularly, emphasizing discipline and health.

All sporting events are **organized and financed by the Foundation**, further reinforcing the park's mission to serve the community.

9.3 Music, Theater, and Lecture Programming

The park serves as a vibrant **stage for creativity**:

- **Open-Air Concerts:** Featuring some of the region's most beloved performers, the concerts bring together thousands under the stars in a peaceful and celebratory setting.
- **Theater and Dance:** Performances and artistic showcases promote cultural exchange and the expression of regional folklore, classical traditions, and contemporary arts.
- **Lecture Pavilion and Movie Theater:** Equipped with a multifunctional space, Park Ravne 2 regularly hosts lectures, seminars, book promotions, and film screenings, including award-winning documentaries such as *Park Ravne 2 – Unique European Energy Park* (2020) and *Miracle in the Heart of Bosnia* (2024).

This blend of recreational, cultural, and intellectual offerings positions Park Ravne 2 as a **model cultural oasis** a place where community, history, creativity, and wellness harmoniously converge.

10. Archaeological Features and Tunnel Discoveries

Beyond its surface beauty and cultural vitality, Park Ravne 2 is also home to a significant body of archaeological work that has uncovered multiple levels of prehistoric tunnel networks, thousands of artifacts, and structural elements previously unknown in this region. These discoveries confirm that the park is not merely a recreational and cultural venue, but a site of serious scientific and historical importance.

10.1 Multiple Tunnel Networks

Since the park's development began in 2016, four separate entrances to underground tunnel systems have been discovered within its boundaries:

- **Ravne 2 Tunnel:** Located five meters below the main Ravne tunnel network, this discovery confirmed the existence of **multiple subterranean levels**. Its artificial fill and dry-stone support walls mirror those of the main Ravne system, but its deeper elevation suggests **an even older construction phase**.
- **Ravne 3 Tunnel:** This site has revealed the **oldest known subterranean dry-stone structure in Europe**, with stalagmites growing atop man-made stone walls. Radiocarbon and U-Th dating methods indicate the structure is **older than 26,200 years**, establishing a new prehistoric benchmark for megalithic engineering on the continent.
- **Ravne 4 and Ravne 6 Tunnels:** These newer tunnels, measuring over 60 meters in length, feature dry-stone walls, megalithic elements, and segments of undisturbed fill. Their architecture and continuity with other parts of the tunnel complex suggest intentional design, with archaeological potential still being explored.

10.2 Artifacts and Cultural Layers

Excavations within Ravne 3 have yielded over **3,300 artifacts**, including fragments of ceramics, metal tools, ornamental objects, and unidentified implements. Some of these items show stylistic or technological parallels to **Neolithic and Eneolithic cultures** in the Balkans and Central Europe, though a comprehensive typological study is ongoing.

The discovery of such objects in stratified, undisturbed contexts indicates that Park Ravne 2 sits atop **a once-inhabited cultural zone**. The presence of stalagmites atop structural walls and artifacts further strengthens the hypothesis that parts of the tunnel system were **intentionally closed off and preserved** for millennia.

10.3 Archaeology as Civic Participation

What sets the archaeology of Park Ravne 2 apart is its **public accessibility and participatory model**. Since the earliest days of excavation, the work has involved not only professional archaeologists but also trained volunteers from over **50 countries**, students, and citizen scientists.

The NGO “**Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation**” leads these projects under valid permits from the **Ministry of Culture of Zenica-Doboj Canton**, in cooperation with the **Museum of Visoko** for artifact preservation. This civic archaeological model combines **scientific rigor with inclusive engagement**, allowing thousands to learn about and contribute to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s heritage.

10.4 Educational and Interpretive Infrastructure

To share these findings with the broader public, the park includes:

- A **museum exhibit** showcasing tunnel materials and artifacts,
- Guided tours through accessible tunnel segments,
- Educational signage and installations linking archaeological content to broader historical and cultural narratives.

Through these measures, Park Ravne 2 offers a **living archaeological experience**, where visitors do not just learn about the past they witness its unearthing in real time.

11. Wellness, Spirituality, and Energy-Based Practices

Park Ravne 2 was envisioned not merely as a physical transformation of neglected land but as a holistic sanctuary aimed at the rejuvenation of the human body, mind, and spirit. In alignment with the broader mission of the Archaeological Park Foundation, this green haven fosters a multidimensional experience grounded in wellness, sacred geometry, and subtle energy enhancement.

One of the key features of the park is its integration of sacred architectural principles such as the orientation of structures according to cardinal points, the use of geometric forms like spirals and

hexagons, and the construction of energetically aligned installations. Notably, the **Green Crystal Pyramid**, constructed on-site, utilizes quartz crystal, an ancient material known for its energy amplification properties. Scientific measurements conducted by the Foundation indicated that the concentration of negative air ions within the structure's central chamber increased dramatically from a baseline of 1,000 NAI/cm³ to over 15,000 NAI/cm³ approaching levels associated with therapeutic environments such as waterfalls and pristine forests.

The **Rose Labyrinth of Love**, **Labyrinth of Purification**, and **Labyrinth of Energy** each follow precise geometric designs and symbolic frameworks. These installations are intentionally designed to guide visitors through meditative, emotionally cleansing, and energetically harmonizing journeys, respectively. They also function as community-built spaces, maintained by local and international volunteers, adding layers of shared intention and cross-cultural resonance.

Spiritual practices are organically woven into the life of the park. Yoga sessions, meditative walks, breathing exercises, sound healing, and energy work are regularly held on the **Hexagonal Yoga Stage** and other serene locations throughout the grounds. These practices, often hosted free of charge, have made the park a magnet for wellness seekers, spiritual groups, and healers from the region and abroad.

The symbolic content of the installations also supports spiritual reflection. From the installation representing the opening of the fourth chakra (love and compassion) to the sacred pavilions honoring ancient civilizations and esoteric wisdom, Park Ravne 2 invites its visitors to not only explore physical beauty but to connect with deeper currents of meaning and energetic resonance.

Through this multidimensional approach fusing environmental regeneration with ancient knowledge and contemporary holistic practices the park stands as a rare model of **civic spirituality**: a space that respects personal beliefs while fostering universal values of harmony, peace, and inner transformation.

12. Festivals, Gatherings, and Community Events

At the heart of Park Ravne 2's dynamic character lies its rich calendar of festivals, cultural events, educational programs, and community gatherings. These recurring activities have established the park as a regional epicenter for celebration, creativity, and human connection fostering a collective spirit of inclusion, inspiration, and shared purpose.

One of the flagship events is the **Pyramid Trail**, a multi-distance outdoor running event (5 km and 20 km trails) that draws hundreds of athletes and families from across the Balkans. Designed to combine sport, nature, and heritage, the trail follows paths through forested areas, energy points, and along archaeological features making physical activity both scenic and meaningful.

The park also hosts the **Pyramid Cup**, an **international women's tennis tournament** recognized by the regional tennis federations. Featuring professional WTA players, this event brings high-level competition to Visoko while promoting youth involvement and sports diplomacy. Additional tournaments in **handball for children** and **3x3 basketball** further expand opportunities for young athletes.

In the cultural domain, Park Ravne 2 serves as an **open-air festival venue**, with concerts featuring some of the most celebrated musical acts from the region. From jazz and classical ensembles to rock bands and spiritual music performances, all concerts are free to the public. With no entrance fees, no parking charges, and a welcoming atmosphere for all ages, these events embody the park's founding philosophy: **freedom, access, and service to the community**.

The park is also home to **seasonal celebrations** such as the **Summer Solstice Festival**, which marks the longest day of the year with music, storytelling, dance, and rituals celebrating the natural cycle. These events honor ancestral traditions while providing a space for contemporary expression and joy.

Workshops, book launches, motivational talks, and lectures are held year-round in the park's **multifunctional lecture pavilions** and amphitheaters. Particularly notable are events dedicated to children from foster homes, for whom the Foundation organizes special programs that cover transportation, meals, and gifts reinforcing the park's mission as a place of social care and compassion.

Moreover, the park is a **hub for schools and educational groups**, hosting more than 120 schools annually from Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. Tens of thousands of students experience hands-on learning in history, ecology, archaeology, and holistic wellness making the park a living classroom.

Through this vibrant spectrum of activities, Park Ravne 2 not only supports artistic, athletic, and intellectual expression but also cultivates a unique form of **participatory citizenship**, where residents and visitors alike become active co-creators in a shared cultural landscape.

13. Integration of Art, History, and Education

Park Ravne 2 is more than a recreational green space it is a living museum and outdoor classroom that integrates artistic expression, historical education, and cultural revival in a deeply engaging format. Across its expansive grounds, over 60 permanent installations transform the landscape into the **largest open-air cultural gallery in Southeast Europe**.

Sculptural tributes to historical figures serve as visual anchors for the educational mission of the park. Statues of **Illyrian queen Teuta**, **Medieval Bosnian rulers such as Kulin Ban and King Tvrtko I**, and mythological representations of **Illyrian and Slavic fairies** connect visitors to Bosnia's ancient heritage. These figures are not chosen at random; each represents **sovereignty, wisdom, and resilience**—values that align with the park's philosophy of freedom and identity.

In addition to local heritage, the park pays homage to global culture and scientific achievement. The **Alley of Immortal Poets** features busts of legendary literary figures such as **Tagore, Neruda, Poe, Jesenin, Rumi**, and Balkan poets including **Aleksa Šantić, Mak Dizdar, and Tin Ujević**. Nearby, the **Alley of Scientists** honors Nobel laureates and pioneers from the region such as **Lavoslav Ružička, Mileva Marić-Einstein, Ruđer Bošković, Milutin Milanković**, and others making science and discovery tangible and inspirational for younger generations.

Dedicated pavilions further expand the park's educational offerings. Structures are devoted to **Vinča civilization, Starčevo and Vučedol cultures, and Nikola Tesla**, blending archaeology, mythology, and innovation. These areas often include replicas of artifacts, didactic panels, and interactive features that promote learning through experience.

The park also includes specialized installations such as the **Geopuncture Circle**, an arrangement of 24 carved megaliths created by sculptors from six countries. Each stone is engraved with symbols of harmony, healing, and elemental balance, serving both as an artwork and a functional energetic structure rooted in geomancy.

Botanical features such as the **spiral herbal garden** and the **Rose Labyrinth of Love** provide immersive lessons in ecology and sacred geometry. Maintained by international volunteers, these gardens represent **belief, purpose, kindness, harmony, happiness, and overcoming** qualities embedded in the park's physical and philosophical design.

Educational events are held regularly in the **amphitheaters and movie pavilion**, including seminars, book launches, and documentary screenings. Two award-winning documentaries about Park Ravne 2 *Park Ravne 2: Unique European Energy Park* and *Miracle in the Heart of Bosnia* have been screened globally and offer visual narratives of the park's transformation and mission.

By fusing art, archaeology, science, ecology, and education, Park Ravne 2 models a unique **interdisciplinary approach to heritage interpretation**. It proves that meaningful education doesn't require formal classrooms it thrives where creativity, community, and context meet.

14. Global Recognition and Cultural Diplomacy

The transformation of Park Ravne 2 from a neglected swamp into a celebrated cultural destination has not gone unnoticed. Over the past decade, the park has emerged as a model for **grassroots cultural diplomacy** and **international recognition of heritage innovation**, driven by vision rather than state sponsorship.

One of the most visible markers of this recognition has come through the **international film industry**. Two documentaries focused on Park Ravne 2 *Park Ravne 2: Unique European Energy Park* and *Miracle in the Heart of Bosnia* have garnered **international acclaim**, winning awards at **film festivals in Berlin, San Diego, Brisbane, Vancouver, Paris, Tokyo, Amsterdam, and London**. These cinematic works have introduced the story of Ravne 2 to a global audience, portraying its core themes of cultural awakening, ecological renewal, and spiritual freedom.

Beyond film, the park has drawn widespread attention from **volunteers, artists, and spiritual practitioners** from across six continents. Dozens of embassies and international delegations have visited the site, often remarking on its **unique integration of archaeology, ecology, and community spirit**. Multilingual signage, diverse programming, and the involvement of international sculptors and scholars further reflect its **global, inclusive orientation**.

Events like the **Pyramid Trail, Pyramid Cup Tennis Tournament, and the Summer Solstice Festival** attract thousands of participants annually, including athletes, artists, scientists, and

cultural enthusiasts from the Balkans and beyond. These gatherings, free and open to the public, function as informal but powerful instruments of **regional cooperation and cultural exchange**, fostering a sense of shared history and collective future.

Importantly, Park Ravne 2 has emerged as a platform for **alternative diplomacy** one that emphasizes **peace, creativity, and grassroots solidarity** over geopolitics. The park's installations convey universal messages: statues of poets promote dialogue, historical figures teach resilience, and open-air workshops emphasize collaboration. This approach allows visitors regardless of nationality, religion, or political stance to connect through **a shared human heritage**.

While the park has yet to be formally recognized by major heritage institutions, its **organic, bottom-up success** stands as a compelling challenge to conventional models of cultural authority. It redefines what cultural diplomacy can look like in the 21st century: not curated by bureaucracies, but cultivated by communities.

In this sense, Park Ravne 2 is more than a local attraction. It is a **soft-power beacon for Bosnia-Herzegovina**, demonstrating that **vision, dedication, and inclusivity** can turn forgotten land into a **symbol of global cultural harmony**.

15. Conclusion

Park Ravne 2 in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina stands as a powerful testament to what can be achieved through vision, dedication, and community spirit. From its origins as a neglected, swampy, and polluted landscape, the site has been transformed into a flourishing ecological, cultural, and archaeological sanctuary entirely without government funding. Driven by the mission of the non-profit NGO *Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation*, the park exemplifies how grassroots action can shape spaces of beauty, learning, and freedom.

Through the discovery of multiple tunnel complexes including Ravne 2, 3, 4, and 6 Park Ravne 2 has also contributed to the expansion of archaeological understanding in Southeastern Europe. With over 3,300 artifacts recovered and ongoing excavations underway, the park represents a dynamic fusion of heritage preservation and original research. These findings challenge conventional narratives about prehistoric infrastructure and provide invaluable material for regional and global scholarship.

Beyond its archaeological contributions, the park has redefined public engagement with heritage through participatory, inclusive, and non-commercial programming. Annual events such as the Pyramid Trail, tennis tournaments, solstice festivals, and school visits, along with free concerts and wellness workshops, have cultivated a diverse and multigenerational visitor base. The design of the park with installations honoring scientists, poets, ancient civilizations, and mythological figures serves as an open-air cultural curriculum that promotes pride, education, and peaceful coexistence.

The park's organic development model driven by volunteers, artists, donors, and spiritual seekers offers a rare counterpoint to institutional heritage governance. It proves that cultural infrastructure

can be built on the foundations of **freedom, ecology, community, and vision**, without dependence on state structures or private commercial interests.

As a living, evolving environment, Park Ravne 2 continues to inspire not only those who visit, but those seeking models for how public space can serve both **cultural remembrance and human renewal**. It is both a sanctuary and a symbol a reminder that the most powerful legacies are not inherited, but created through collective will.

16. Comparative Perspectives: Park Ravne 2 and Global Models of Integrative Cultural Parks

While Park Ravne 2 in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a singular example of civic initiative, archaeological discovery, and ecological transformation, it exists within a broader global trend that redefines how heritage, spirituality, and public space converge. Several international parks and centers of cultural heritage share foundational values with Park Ravne 2, namely: ecological regeneration, sacred or symbolic design, volunteer and community-based management, and multi-use public programming.

16.1 Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa, Portugal

Located in northern Portugal, the Côa Valley Archaeological Park preserves one of the largest open-air collections of Paleolithic rock art in Europe. Like Ravne 2, it balances archaeological preservation with public access and nature conservation. It integrates educational tourism, guided visits, and landscape appreciation offering a model of heritage-based cultural sustainability (Zilhão 2002).

16.2 Çatalhöyük, Turkey

One of the most iconic Neolithic settlements, Çatalhöyük integrates archaeological excavation with a public-facing education strategy. Field laboratories, on-site museums, and reconstructions allow visitors to connect with prehistory while researchers engage in long-term excavation. This approach mirrors Ravne 2's blend of active scientific work with inclusive public experience (Hodder 2006).

16.3 Fort Ancient Earthworks, USA

The Fort Ancient site in Ohio, constructed by the Hopewell culture, features ceremonial mounds and geometric earthworks. Its modern role as a nature preserve and cultural education site aligns closely with Ravne 2's sacred geometry, ecological care, and community events (Lepper 2006).

16.4 Damanhur Sacred Woods Temple, Italy

Nestled in northern Italy, the Sacred Woods Temple of Damanhur combines artistic installations, sacred geometry, and spiritual philosophy in a forested park. Built collaboratively by the community, its thematic art and landscape layout echo Ravne 2's integration of sculpture, spirituality, and participatory art (Introvigne 2008).

16.5 Auroville, India

Founded in 1968 as an experiment in human unity, Auroville features community-led ecological projects, cultural pavilions, and spiritual architecture. Like Ravne 2, it rejects commercialization and centers collective well-being and cultural identity, maintained by international volunteers and visitors (Kapoor 2013).

16.6 Butrint National Park, Albania

Combining Greco-Roman archaeological ruins with wetland ecosystems, Butrint emphasizes both natural and cultural preservation. Its heritage trails, interpretive centers, and integration with ecological tourism provide another point of resonance with Ravne 2 (Hansen 2007).

16.7 Tamera Peace Research Center, Portugal

Tamera functions as a living model of eco-spiritual community, with permaculture landscapes, artistic pavilions, and sacred spaces intended for education and transformation. Its emphasis on peace, regeneration, and non-commercial community life strongly parallels the ethos of Park Ravne 2 (Baring 2014).

16.8 Summary of Global Alignment

Across these global examples, Park Ravne 2 stands out in its **multi-functionality**: simultaneously archaeological site, ecological park, community space, educational platform, and artistic exhibition. Its visitor growth from 10,000 in 2016 to 245,000 in 2024 testifies to the power of vision-led transformation. While other sites may focus more heavily on institutional management, religious function, or formal conservation, Ravne 2 uniquely combines **grassroots leadership, inclusivity, sacred geometry, and cultural freedom**, offering a replicable model for other regions where heritage and community intersect.

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The author, Dr. Sam Osmanagich, Ph.D., is solely responsible for the conceptualization, site acquisition, development oversight, archaeological supervision, project implementation, data collection, visual documentation, manuscript drafting, and editing of this article.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest in the research, development, and publication of this work.

Data Availability

All data, photographs, and project documentation used in this article are part of the author's private archive and the official records of the *Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation*. Data and visual material are available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.