

# SCIJ Event 2018

## The most affordable skiing in Europe at Pamporovo

- It is ugly, isn't it, Irishman Liam comments the Snejanka tv tower erecting at the top of the hill.  
 - Well, compared with the surrounding nature, it is ugly. However it deserves its existence with at least three facts.

Text and photos: Rauli Storm

1. The beautiful scenery opens up from its terrace, all the way to Greece and the Aegean sea.
  2. You cannot lose your family or friends in Pamporovo. All the ski lifts come to the tower.
  3. The slopes are easy to find; they all start at the foot of the tower.
- Well, yeah. Even Eifel Tower was to be demolished after the Paris World Fair, but it's an excellent mark for orientation.

Is the ugliness in the eye of the watcher? How should a TV tower look like? Isn't its functionality the most important feature?

I think Snejanka is almost beautiful.

### Skis on your shoulder, shoes on, boots in a bag

After ten minutes in the free skibus, I land at Malina skiing village, that houses a ski rent, ski school, Irish bar, a café and a couple s.c. family hotels.

Boots on, shoes on a shelf in the ski rent, boots on the bindings, a few pushes downhill, and the holiday is on.

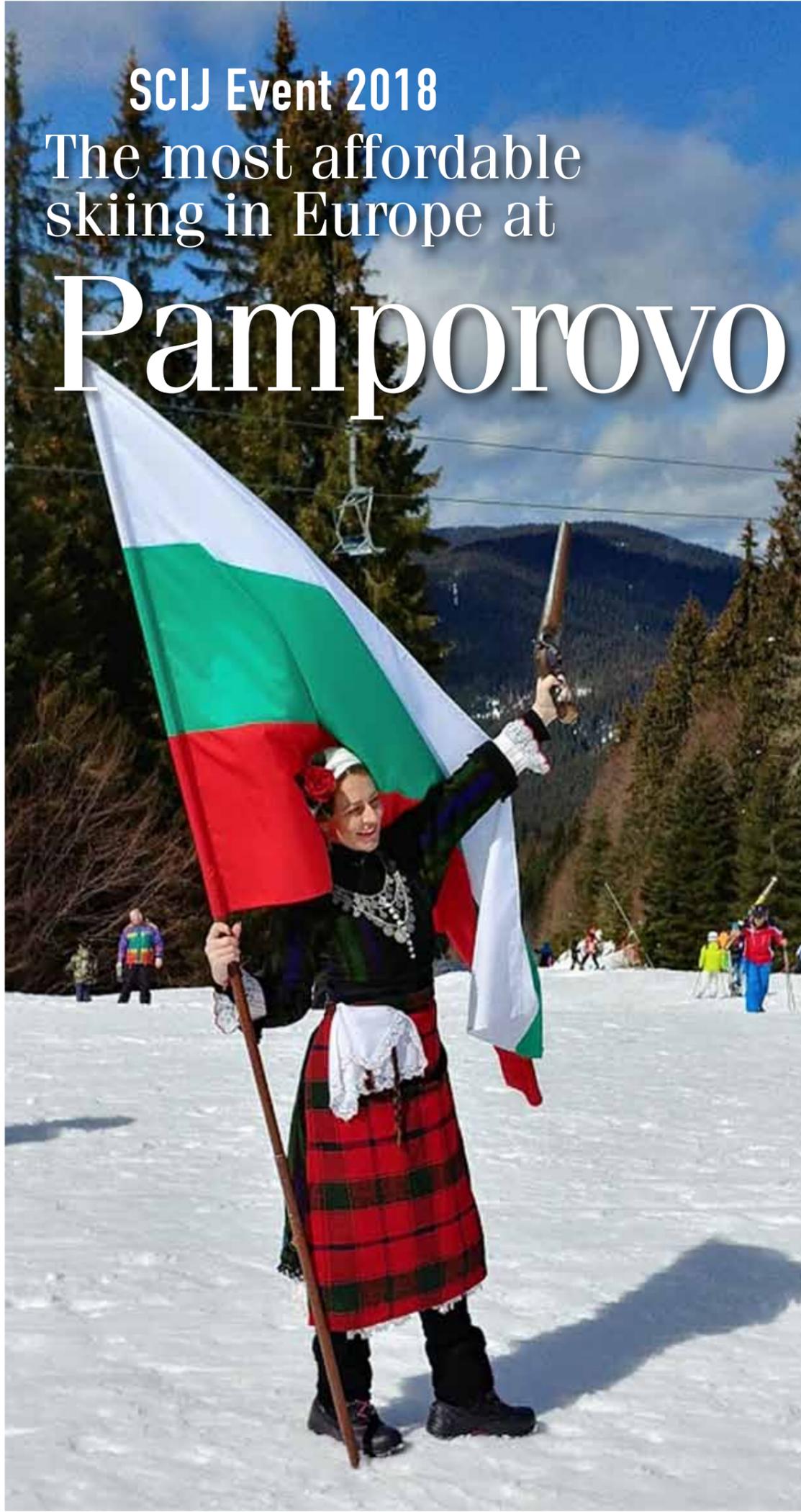
The nearest ski lift is some 300 m downhill from Malina. A nice, gentle slope to check the tightness of your boots. That's what I did and stopped at a second Irish bar to adjust my boots.

The aforementioned Liam was sitting there having his early lunch and told about his thirty years long experiences in different resorts on the Alps.

- This Pamporovo is a find. Even this Irish stew is better than at home, and tis Guinness cost less than half of its price in Dublin.

### Solidarity among the oppressed

I told Liam that I had just come to Pamporovo, but that I've skied before in Bansko,



◀ These Italian cavalieri carry the same colours as the Bulgarians. ▲ The TV tower helps navigating in Pamporovo.  
 The shepherds always carried a gun because of wolves and thieves. ▶ There is an art gallery worth visiting in Shiroka Luka.

where charter flight came at least from the UK.

- Well, in that case, that's not a place I'm going, hah-hah-hah-haaa!

The Irish have a similar warm attitude towards the old master that we Finns have towards Russians. The Bulgarian's attitude is similar to Romans, Turks, Germans and Russians.

I leave Liam at his Irish stew and slide the last hundred meters to the Malina ski lift.

With my sleeve pocket I brush the ski card reader, which opens the gate. Simultaneously my face is registered. The next time the face sensor compares my face with the card information.

Nobody else but my identical twin brother

er (who does not exist) can enter with my card. Together with five foreigners (you cannot avoid them abroad) on a six-person ski lift, and in a few minutes I'm at the foot of the afore-mentioned ugly TV tower.

### **Greed on the first day can ruin the whole week**

After a non-ski year it's wise to check the co-operation skill of your legs before the six-hour task of up-down-up-down-up-down...

So, I head northwest and slide painlessly almost to the Stoykite village, where old, grey stone cottages mix with new little hotel and villas.

The slope gives me almost 4000 meters horizontal and 460 m towards the centre of the Earth.

The length and the vertical drop are almost identical to Ylläs, the highest resort in Finland. Somehow it reminds me of an old description of a slope: A field lifted a bit at the other end.

However, the slope seems to earn its existence. It's well populated, quite a few children learning, often in company of evidently their grandparents.

Stoykite is no party village, but a peaceful village for families.

Six km from Stoykite lies 3300 years old village of Gela, where Orpheus, the legendary singer was born much before the village was founded.

Back to the tower on a six-man chairlift covered with a windshield.

The next, red slope gives me permission to carve, and the next four black slopes force me to it, and seriously.

The southernmost slope is a competition slope and the its left half is reserved for races and training. It's incredible how fast some skinny kids in the early teens and even younger race down the track.

The slope leads to an action square surrounded by several hotels and restaurants.

### **A soup is often the only fast food**

A T-bar takes you to the top of the competition start. No need to go all the way to the tower.

Close to the lower station of the next ski lift you'll find Bohemi Grill&Bar, a restaurant praised in TripAdvisor. I'm supposed to find

► The richest man in the village has the biggest bells and belly.

On Baba Marta smal thetre and dance groups gather in Shiroka Luka, 6 km from Bamboro.

▼ Excellent food can be found around, so no use to have Wiener-schnitzel and fries. First shopska salad.

▼▼ Best off-pistes are around Mechi Chal, where free skiobus takes one in five.



four friends of mine there, and there they are, queuing in front of the door. I ask them to keep a seat for me, and take a T-bar ski lift to a close-by red piste that looks almost deserted. People are not fans of T-bars. I ski down twice and notice that my buddies have gone inside. I take another run and to the restaurant. My buddies have already ordered.

Bohemi is full and the waiters run and perspire... I order goulash soup, receive it and red-hot bread. I eat my soup and leave my friends to wait for their steaks. Experience tells that every slope restaurant has a huge kettle boiling with some soup. You get it fast and don't eat too heavy.

There are budget restaurants at the foot of the TV tower and at the end of every slope. Many kettles.

### **Great service in the ski rent**

I take the 4-seater ski lift to the tower and spend the rest of the day the four black runs. Number 3 starts so steep, that when I gather speed from some meters behind it I even get mid-air for a sec or two.

Half an hour before the ski lifts are due closing I ski to the Malina ski rent. I'm allowed to leave my own skis and boots there to dry up and walk out in my shoes. Great

system. No need to stumble in my boots and spoil the new carpets of the hotel.

Great day. Tomorrow I'll take the ski buss to Mechi Chal. With the same ski card I reach a vertical drop of 718 meters.

I sit down in Tony's bar for a beer to wait for the bus and my friends.

The bus comes, but there's no sight of the Swedes. I wonder if they are still waiting for their steaks. Busses go in every 15 minutes, after closing time they fill quickly.

### **Well, you have to live somewhere**

The circles for ten minutes from one hotel to another and stops in front of Perelik.

The hotel has been opened only a week ago after total refurbishment and everything is like new.

I'm attending a congress and we have seminars in the evenings. The rest of the time is reserved for skiing and visit to several places of interest.

A large but meandering restaurant, lobby bar with sofas, biljard bar, disco, sauna area with 200 m swimming pool... The whole complex is at least 200 m long.

The congress and negotiation rooms are equipped with state of art technique. The buffet dinner every night tells about half pension. Alcohol isn't free, so all-inclusive-drinks don't bother us. Well, a beer costs a fourth of what in Finland. So, an urge to get blasted doesn't lead to bankruptcy.

One has really no need to go anywhere except skiing and a walk. However, if this perfection gets boring, there are the restaurants Gloria Mar and Vila Rija and a small supermarket on the opposite side of the street and Irish bar Dak's around the corner.

### **My own choice**

My own idea of a ski hotel sits at the bottom of a ski run. Just of curiosity I visited a few so-called ski out/ski in hotels. Some of them are in Scandinavian design, for instance Lapland and Finlandia. Some others are over-decorated in Russian fashion. The five star Orlovetz is stylish, and the fleet of cars in its garage is not from lower part of the price range.

A bit further there are unpretentious family hotels.

There is also an interesting village within some 500 m from Malina.

It looks like a village of cottages, but the cottages are well-equipped holiday properties.

You may have your breakfast in your own kitchen or in the high-grade restaurant of a giant cottage.

### Hotel skeletons

A sad phenomenon is unfinished hotels, where nothing is happening. Some of them look very ready, other have only concrete elements. The projects are mostly in building ban area. The builders have got permission with bribes. Then the bribed official has got the sack, and the next official was honest or wanted more. There are no means to demolish the buildings and the skeletons remain as memorial of corruption.

### Something else near-by

First of March is the feast of Baba Marta in Bulgaria. Baba Marta is a mythical character who brings the spring. The third of March is the day of Bulgaria's National Liberation Day. Together with Baba Marta it form a three-day party and a reason to party and dance for three days. People in National dresses make you dance and bind red-white friendship ribbons in you wrist. Hundreds of women and men in national outfits pose for tourist's cameras. Thousands of selfies fly to the bit space.

A big Baba Marta festival takes place in Shiroka Luka, fourteen kilometres from Pamporovo in the beginning of March. Tens of group dressed in traditional or monster outfits dance and perform traditional plays of circulation in food production and fight against the Frost Devils

Six kilometres south of Shiroka Luka 1500 m high in Gela village hundreds of bagpipers gather on the first Saturday of August. The age of the pipers is from 5 to 85. One can only guess that the 85-year old is stone deaf. More than 100 bagpipes don't play pianissimo.

### FACTS

**Pamporovo.** A ski resort in South Bulgaria, at the Eastern end of the Rhodopi mountain, some 20 km fro Greece.

Panporovo is situated the first or second in a list of budget ski resorts in the World in the Finnish Snowball web site.



On the three days between Independence day and first of May (Baba Marta) people dance in national dress all over Bulgaria.



Unfortunately too many traditional houses are for sale in the faraway villages.

A reknown school of traditional music and dance works in Shiroka Luka



13 slopes, longest 400 m, highest vertical drop 460 m. All slopes inside forest.

Same ski cart is valid in Mechi Chal, with 718 vertical. Four long pistes.

**Flight:** Sofia airport – Plovdiv 2 hours by motorway. Plovdiv – Pamporovo 1+ hour,

depends on snowfall. We stopped to put the snow chains on.

**Hotels** have special offers every now and then: in March one week in \*\*\* or \*\*\*\* double room 230 – 550 euro. Better check several times before booking.

### Combined competition results

#### WSS

- 1 Lena Hoeglund SWE 3+1 4
- 2 Barbra Jermann SLO 1+4 5
- 3 Dana Emingerova PravdovaCZE 4+3 7
- 4 Barbara Goio ITA 2+6 8
- 5 Hana Salajkova CZE 7+2 9
- 6 Marica Finnsjö SWE 5+5 10
- 7 Jana Janku SVK 8+7 15
- 8 Branka Malnar-Travas CRO 6+13 19
- 9 Renata Rehorovska SVK 9+10 19
- 10 Veselina Marinova BUL 10+9 19
- 11 Andree Ducharme CAN 11+8 19
- 12 Olga Kmetova-Stajkova SVK 13+11 24
- 13 Catherine Jouault FRA 12+15 27
- 14 Lamarche Ginette CAN 17+12 29
- 15 Elisabeth Mathieu BEL 14+16 30
- 16 Milena Dimitrova BUL 15+18 33
- 17 Risa Weinreb Wyatt USA 20+14 34

#### WS

- 1 Gisella Motta ITA 1+4 5
- 2 Sonia Arnal SUI 3+3 6
- 3 Malin Kvist SWE 6+2 8
- 4 Helena Orá ová CZE 4+6 10
- 5 Vassela Vladkova BUL 2+14 16
- 6 Myriam Fimbry CAN 7+9 16
- 7 Jitka Bojanovska CZE 15+1 16
- 8 Darja Groznik SLO 8+10 18
- 9 Tatiana Pigariova ESP 11+7 18
- 10 Lidija Kosi SLO 13+5 18
- 11 Ana Raic-Knezevic CRO 5+15 20
- 12 Dana Nováková CZE 9+11 20
- 13 Anastassiya Naumetskaya KAZ 23 23
- 14 Barçın Yinanç TUR 16+12 28
- 15 Hristinka Pencheva-Balinska BUL 30
- 16 Gamze Dusmez TUR 17+17 34

#### WJ

- 1 Petra Lesjak Tusek SLO 2+3 5
- 2 Diana Bolognini ITA 1+5 6
- 3 Linda Salajková CZE 4+2 6
- 4 Maja Grgic SLO 7+1 8
- 5 Fournier Anne SUI 5+4 9
- 6 Julia Pavesi FRA 3+8 11
- 7 Cris Gibert ESP 8+7 15
- 8 Barbara Strbac CRO 11+9 20
- 9 Jana Hajickova CZE 12+11 23
- 10 Cathy Senay CAN 18+6 24
- 11 Nina Malnar Travas CRO 13+12 25
- 12 Vasilena Chonova BUL 15+14 29
- 13 Eszter Herskovits HUN 17+13 30
- 14 Zornitza Kratchmarova ITA 23+10 33
- 15 Audrey Ronlez BEL 17+20 37
- 16 Sivan Raviv ISR 21+18 39
- 17 Dora Onody-Molnar HUN 24+15 39
- 18 Erla Björg Gunnarsdóttir ISL 25+16 41

Very nice large bungalows are some 500 m from the nearest skilift. One can ski down from the slopes. All services one can hope for are in a larger bungalow.

#### MSS

- 1 Luigi Brecciaroli ITA 1+1 2
- 2 Gregor Pucelj SLO 4+4 8
- 3 Mauro Della Valle ITA 5+5 10
- 4 Axel Odelberg SWE 8+2 10
- 5 Gytis Markauskas LIT 10+6 16
- 6 Hubert Guy-Couttet SUI 9+8 17
- 7 Dario Cavaliere ITA 2+16 18
- 8 Petr Kubka CZE 16+3 19
- 9 Anders Malmsten SWE 14+11 25
- 10 Pascal Magnin SUI 15+13 28
- 11 Pierre Sormany CAN 22+7 29
- 12 Pierre Nussle SUI 11+18 29
- 13 Jaroslav Kopic CZE 19+14 33
- 14 Rauli Storm FIN 26+9 35
- 15 Eric Boever BEL 21+17 38
- 16 Michael Prowse GBR 20+20 40
- 17 Patrick Kinsella IRL 23+21 44
- 18 Smail Israil KAZ 35+10 45
- 19 Vasko Mihaylov BUL 18+28 46
- 20 Michael Cousins GBR 17+30 47
- 21 Alexander Pumpyskiy RUS 48
- 22 Csaba Bartha SCIJ 27+22 49
- 23 Gérard Leclerc FRA 25+27 52
- 24 Nikolay Popov RUS 30+23 53
- 25 Danijel Popovic CRO 29+24 53
- 26 Rom Nachman ISR 42+15 56
- 27 Peter Moeller Christensen DEN 63
- 28 Vilaro Ramon ESP 31+34 65
- 29 Tihomir Sholev BUL 34+31 65
- 30 Borislav Kosturkov BUL 37+28 65
- 31 Sukru Kucuksahin TUR 39+33 72

#### MS

- 1 Andrea Mugnaini ITA 1+2 3
- 2 Daniele Benvenuti ITA 4+4 8
- 3 Lubomir Boyadjiev BUL 7+1 8
- 4 Tom Dubravec CRO 3+7 10
- 5 Frederick Wallace CAN 8+3 11
- 6 Srdan Vrancic CRO 6+8 14
- 7 Bojan Glavic SLO 9+6 15
- 8 Heged s István HUN 11+9 20
- 9 Olivier Lucazeau FRA 17+5 22
- 10 Darin Jankovic CRO 13+10 23
- 11 Norbert Pálinkás HUN 10+14 24
- 12 Miljan Vitomirovic SRB 15+12 27
- 13 Lars Christian Wallace NOR 16+11 27
- 14 Yoav Alexandre Kessary ISR 19+13 32

#### MJ

- 1 Tomaz Okorn SLO 1+3 4
- 2 Petr Mlch CZE 2+2 4
- 3 Christophe Ungar SUI 3+4 7
- 4 Uros Esih SLO 6+1 7
- 5 Martin Št rba CZE 7+5 12
- 6 Matej Voncina SLO 4+11 15
- 7 Bruno Schmitz BEL 8+10 18
- 8 Sam Thomson GBR 12+8 20
- 9 (Kolbeinn) Tumi Dadason ISL 15+7 22
- 10 Serkan Ocak TUR 13+12 25