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## Guča, The Balkans' Woodstock

Established in 1961, the Guča festival makes up the largest assembly of orchestras in the country. For more than 40 years the 'gyps brass band', a group of wild gypsies, have come to take part in this concert that takes place on a site with natural acoustics; the valley of Guča. The festival's aim is to discover the 'best trumpeter' and the 'best orchestra'. It is the Woodstock of the Balkans; the last big gathering that is worthy of this name. In the beginning 4 brass bands competed for the prize of the 'golden trumpet', today there are 20 different bands who arrive having qualified in other similar festivals that take place all over Serbia.

Here is the only place in all of the Balkans where you can see so many brass bands playing for such a long time. Night and day the music flows through the village up to the surrounding camps. On the café terraces and under restaurant tents, where pigs and lambs are roasted on spits, brass instruments that at first sound solemn and overwhelming burst out with great skill in a fervent *cocek* (tchotchek), a traditional dance.

It is here that trumpet maestros such as Fejet Sejdic or Boban Markovic Orkestar, now musicians of international fame known as the stars of Emir Kusturica's films 'Underground' and 'The Time of the Gypsies', were first noticed.

Every August the village of Guča with its 1500 inhabitants welcomes the biggest assembly of European brass bands.

For four days around 350,000 spectators come to party and to listen to around fifty brass bands. In the restaurants or on the terraces there will sometimes be as many as twenty or thirty musicians playing at different tables. The trumpets vibrate like a swarm of bumblebees in madness and then at once their full power is unleashed. If an orchestra plays louder than its neighbours, the musicians will walk away with more money. The instruments are at their most brilliant when a group, having made it through to the final, practices in public on the last day.