



## A Visit to Kosovo

**T**his month I have penned a few words about my short visit to Pristina, Kosovo 7-9 May 2003. I flew inexpensively from Cairo to Pristina on Turkish Airlines via Istanbul. Nothing can really compensate for the 8-hour layover in Istanbul on the northbound trip after not having slept the previous night unless perhaps one uses those hours in downtown Istanbul en route. But at least the experience is made all the more pleasant by Istanbul's wonderful new airport terminal.

*The university (above) constitutes Pristina's most interesting piece of modern architecture*

The rich agricultural lands near Pristina have been tilled continuously for some 6,000 years. The Roman town of Ulpiana was built there upon an earlier settlement. This was later fortified by Justinian in 518. The present name of the city has evolved from "Justiniana" to "Istiriana" to "Pr + Istirina," today pronounced "Prish-tee-na."

With a population of some 600,000 in 1999, Pristina occupies a central point on the Kosovo plain. Pristina is surrounded by low hills, and from the outskirts of town one can see snow-covered mountains in the distance. Pristina contains a central core with some Ottoman buildings. There are mosques built in the Turkish architectural tradition and a nineteenth century Ottoman clock tower. Unfortunately the small collection of the Pristina Museum happened to be closed during the week of my visit. The museum is said to



Pristina's central core contains some Ottoman-era buildings, including this mosque.



Built in 1321 by King Milutin of Serbia, this church contains a series of frescoes which is said to be a masterpiece of medieval art. Gracanica is a 15-minute drive from downtown Pristina.