



EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE!



GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA



GOVERNMENT OF BULGARIA



# RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION ROMANIA-BULGARIA

## GUIDE

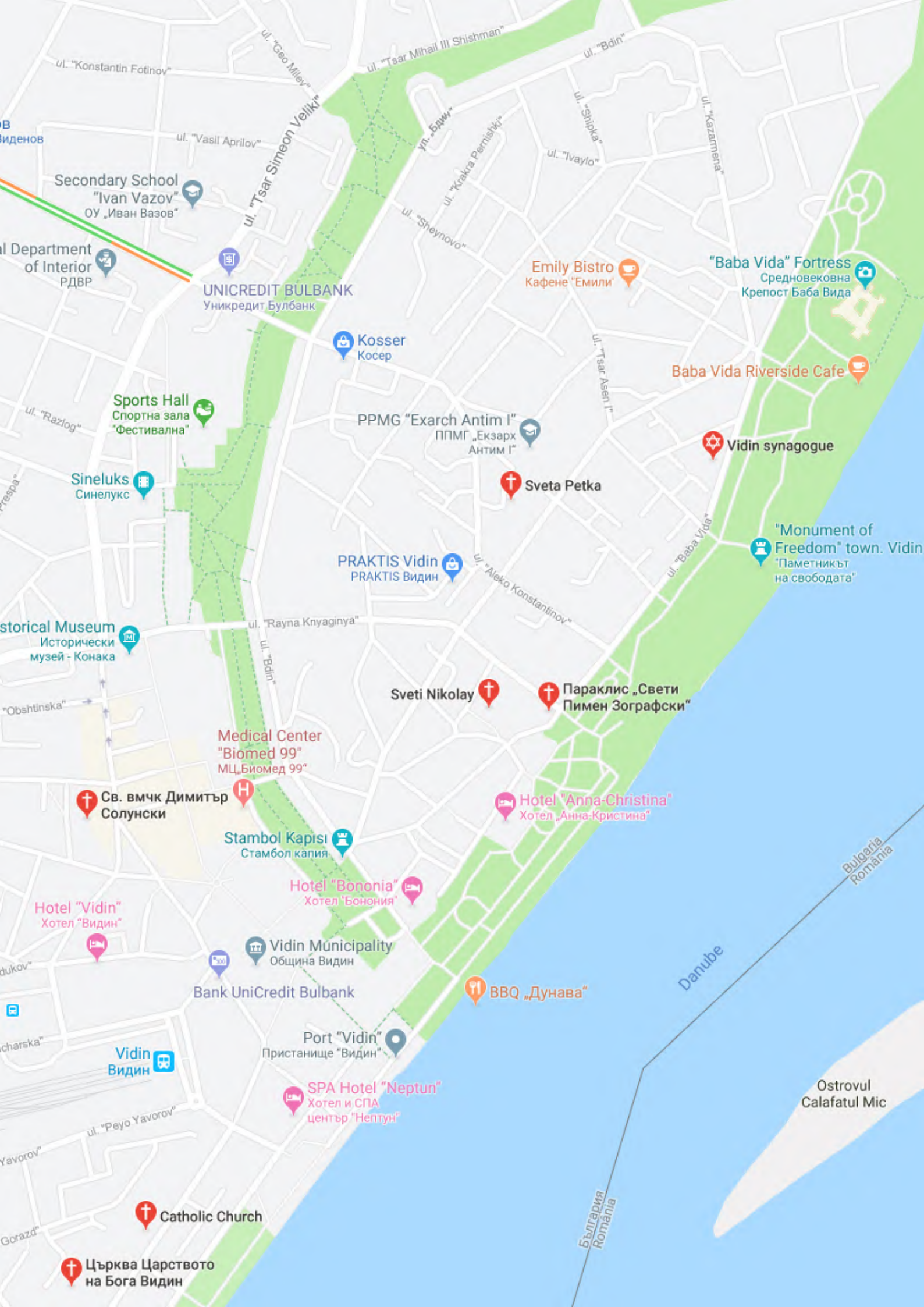




# BULGARIA







Secondary School  
"Ivan Vazov"  
ОУ „Иван Вазов“

Department of Interior  
РДВР

UNICREDIT BULBANK  
Уникредит Булбанк

Kosser  
Коцер

Emily Bistro  
Кафене "Емили"

"Baba Vida" Fortress  
Средновековна  
Крепост Баба Вида

Baba Vida Riverside Cafe

Vidin synagogue

PPMG "Exarch Antim I"  
ППМГ „Екзарх  
Антим I“

Sveta Petka

PRAKTIS Vidin  
PRAKTIS Видин

"Monument of  
Freedom" town. Vidin  
"Паметникът  
на свободата"

Historical Museum  
Исторически  
музей - Конака

Medical Center  
"Biomed 99"  
МЦ „Биомед 99“

Св. вмчк Димитър  
Солунски

Sveti Nikolay

Параклис „Свети  
Пимен Зографски“

Stambol Kapisi  
Стамбол капия

Hotel "Bononia"  
Хотел "Бонония"

Hotel "Anna-Christina"  
Хотел „Анна-Кристина“

Hotel "Vidin"  
Хотел "Видин"

Vidin Municipality  
Община Видин

Bank UniCredit Bulbank

BBQ „Дунава“

Port "Vidin"  
Пристанище "Видин"

SPA Hotel "Neptun"  
Хотел и СПА  
център "Нептун"

Catholic Church

Църква Царството  
на Бога Видин

Bulgaria  
Romania

Danube

Ostrovul  
Calafatul Mic

България  
Romania

## VIDIN DISTRICT

### Introduction

Vidin district is located in the northwest of Bulgaria, on the border with Serbia (west) and Romania (northeast). The district has an area of 3,032 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 2.73% of the total area of the country. Vidin has the lowest number of inhabitants / km<sup>2</sup> compared to other districts in Bulgaria, the population of the area being 86,927 inhabitants in 2018, according to Eurostat. The district is structured into 10 municipalities on the territory of which 7 cities were constituted - the administrative center is Vidin city located on the Danube river bank.

Vidin district has a rich and turbulent history, considering its strategic and geographical importance for the consolidation and definition of the Bulgarian state since the Middle Ages, the territory being a military, transport and commercial center for over 2,000 years. Thus on its territory there are numerous archaeological remains, among the most famous being the Baba Vida Fortress (the only medieval castle in Bulgaria fully preserved, over 2,000 years old), the Castra Martis Fortress (built during the Roman and Byzantine periods, centuries I-VI), the Kaleto Fortress (among the best preserved fortresses in Bulgaria), the ruins of the Roman city Ratiaria (an important gold trading center). The Regional History Museum in Vidin is also an important element of cultural and historical heritage. In the Vidin district numerous pilgrimages can be made, the most famous places of religious worship located in this area being Albotina Monastery in the Danube Plain (dug in the rock), Monastery "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary" (in whose courtyard there is a spring with curative properties). The district is the spiritual center of the Vidin Metropolis. In the city of Vidin one can also visit the Cathedral "St. Martyr Dimitar", the second largest Bulgarian Orthodox church of national importance.

From the perspective of natural heritage, the Belogradchik Rocks are the best known tourist objective in the area, being nominated in 2009 in the campaign for the "Seven natural wonders of the world". Other points of interest can be the Venetsa Cave, the Lepenitsa Cave (integrated in an ecotourism route) and the Magura Cave (inside which the largest exhibition of cave paintings in Europe was discovered).

The Vidin district has many cultural and natural tourist objectives, the tourism sector having the potential to generate a sustainable economic growth of this territory.

## SAINT DEMETRIUS CATHEDRAL

Titular saint: „Holy Martyr Demetrius”

Localization/address: Street Ekzarh Iosif I nr. 2, in the center of Vidin, Vidin district

Access road: D1, then Ring Vidin, Panonia Boulevard, asphalt in very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.987187 / 43°59'14" N – 22.874447 / 22°52'28" E

Cathedral St. Demetrius is the business card of Vidin. The church is the second largest in Bulgaria and the third largest in height, measuring 33 meters. The first building was built on a wooden structure, which collapsed over time, so it was necessary to build a new large church, built between 1885-1926. It was a realization of Antim, the first Bulgarian exarch, and the construction was made with the efforts of all the believers in the city. Proiectul apar ine unui maestru al colii din Tryavna i unui arhitect italian. It is a basilica with three naves, in the form of a cross, with a large interior space. To keep track of time, one of the bells has a clock built in 1900.

The interior space of the building is divided into three planes. The iconostasis is an artistic work of the Debar School, with the help of the famous Philipovci family, made in 1923. The church is beautifully painted by a team led by artist Zhelyazkov, from Repin's Russian school. In addition to the icons of the Bulgarian saints, there are also several Bulgarian national heroes in the holy place. The painting "Gifts from the Tsar Peter (927-970) to St. John of Rila" is found only in this church.





## CHURCH SAINT NICHOLAS

Titular saint: „Saint Nicholas the Miracle doer”

Localization/address: Street Baba Vida nr. 11, on the seafront of Vidin, Vidin district

Access road: D1, then Ring Vidin, Street tefan Karadzha, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.988133 / 43°59'17" N – 22.880875 / 22°52'51" E

The church is part of an eparchial complex, next to the Church of St. Pantelimon, the Cathedral of Vidin and the Mausoleum of the Exarch Antim. The first church was built in 1799, on the ruins of the old bell tower, being an annex of the Church St. Pantelimon. The new church was built under another project in 1926. It is a basilica with three intersecting naves, with apse and pronave, with two galleries, north and south, and one to the west. From the outside, the church is impressive, with a large dome, two towers located symmetrically above the central entrance, as well as beautiful facades, with round and vaulted windows.

XXXXXX



## BABA VIDA FORTRESS

GPS coordinates: 43.992622 / 43°59'33" N – 22.884983 / 22°53'6" E

Address: Street Baba Vida, Danube promenade, Vidin, district Vidin

Baba Vida Fortress is considered to be the most representative historical monument in the entire region, due to the fact that it is a fortified medieval fortress that has been preserved almost entirely. The first historical data show that on this location there was at the beginning a Roman fortification with the name of Bononia, built for observation. The fortress was then enlarged during the Byzantine and medieval periods, due to the strategic position that allowed the control of the traffic on the Danube, the surveillance of the commercial roads, but also the military defense of the city. The oldest existing walls date from the tenth century, from the period of the Bulgarian Empire. Baba Vida Fortress was the residence of Tsar Ivan Stratimir, the founder of the last Bulgarian dynasty.

The castle has two surrounding walls, an inner courtyard and two outer courtyards. The interior walls have a height of over 2 meters, being supported by 9 defense and observation towers, the entire surface occupied by the fortress covering about 9,500 square meters. During its time under Bulgarian rule, the fortress was permanently enlarged and strengthened, many of the constructions and fortifications since then being kept intact to this day. In 1689, under the rule of the Turks, the fortress was modified for the use of artillery, being also used as a weapon and military storage facility, but also as a prison. After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the castle became the seat of military authority, being opened to the public only in 1927, and in 1964 it was declared a historical monument of national importance, entering the compulsory circuit of each tourist. The fortress is sometimes used as a setting for movies, theater, concerts or various artistic representations.

### The Konak History Museum

GPS coordinates: 43.989145 / 43°59'21" N – 22.874987 / 22°52'30" E

Address: Street Obstinska nr. 2, Vidin, Vidin district

Located right in the center of Vidin, the building of the current history museum is a building of particular historical importance, known as "Konak". The construction, with a remarkable architectural plan, dates from the middle of the 17th century. During the Ottoman occupation, here was the residence of the military chief of the city, many of the architectural elements being of Eastern inspiration. After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the building became the headquarters of the municipality of Vidin. The building has two floors and has undergone numerous repairs over time, which is why many of the original elements have been lost. In 1956, this building was transformed into a museum, under the name of the Vidin History Museum. In the courtyard around the building there are some archaeological remains from the Roman period, most of them found after the excavations from the Ulpia Ratsiaria Colony, from the fortress of Bononia and from the Roman fortress Martis. Inside the museum are exhibited several collections of objects, grouped onto period of time. We find here objects from the Iron and Bronze Age, such as stone and bronze objects, jewelry remnants and various tools, but also cult objects. The museum also houses collections from the Roman, Byzantine and medieval periods, ceramic, metal and silver objects, household items, but also some documents. Another part of the museum presents some landmarks from the more recent history of the city, namely the struggles to liberate the country from the Ottoman rule of 1878.



## ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM - CROSS BARRACKS

GPS coordinates: 43.990526 / 43°59'26" N – 22.881406 / 22°52'53" E

Address: Street Knyaz Boris I nr. 26, Vidin, district Vidin

This building is a symbol of the historical heritage of Vidin. It was built relatively recently, at the beginning of the 19th century, between May 25, 1800 and May 14, 1801, by the order of the then ruler of Vidin, Pasha Osman Pazvantoglu. The purpose of the building was to be the seat of the Ottoman military garrison. The building is built of stone and brick, having a unique cross shape, to facilitate the defense in case of attack. The walls are massive, the outer ones are 100 cm thick, and the inner ones are 70 cm. At each of the 4 wings there is an entrance, the main gate being the one from the north, where there is a well, for drinking water supply. On the ground floor was the food and water warehouse, the horse barn and a weapons workshop. Upstairs were the soldiers' bedrooms and kitchen. After the release of Bulgaria, the building was used as a court of law. In 1965, after a complete restoration, the ethnographic museum of the city of Vidin was arranged inside.

## Kaleto Fortress of Belogradchik

GPS coordinates: 43.623747 / 43°37'25" N – 22.676645 / 22°40'36" E

Address: Street Colo Todorov, Belogradchik, district Vidin

The Kaleto Fortress of Belogradchik is one of the most spectacular tourist attractions in the area. The total area covered by this fortification is over 10,000 square meters. The first military construction belonged to the Romans, who in the 1st - 3rd centuries used the fortress to guard the strategic roads in the area. The Roman engineers have used with great skill the surrounding rocks and the configuration of the place to ensure the defense of the whole area.

The highest part of the fortress is known as the Citadel, and here are traces of defense walls and military buildings dating from both the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. This fortress was one of the last fortresses that fell under the Ottoman occupation at the end of the fourteenth century. After the conquest, the Turks placed a large garrison here, which played an important role in defending the western part of the country and suppressed the periodic revolts of the Bulgarians.

During the period from 1805 to 1837, the fortress was extended and rebuilt by the Ottoman regime, with the help of French and Italian engineers, to allow the use of firearms. The fortress has two gates, named Vidin and Ni. In some places, the walls have a base thickness of about 2.5 meters and between 3 and 15 meters high. Along the walls there are over 400 openings through which you could shoot with rifles or artillery. Usually the garrison here numbered about 1,000 soldiers, but during the war the number of defenders could reach 3,000. Belogradchik Fortress is one of the best preserved fortresses, being declared a cultural monument of national importance in 1985.

## THE ROCKS OF BELOGRADCHIK

GPS coordinates: 43.623747 / 43°37'25" N – 22.676645 / 22°40'36" E

Address: Street Colo Todorov, Belogradchik, district Vidin

The rock formations near the village are considered the most famous natural tourist attractions in Bulgaria. The area where they are spread is very large, about 30 km long and between 3 and 5 km wide. However, the largest and most beautiful of these wonderful creations of nature are on the hills on the outskirts of Belogradchik. Geological studies have shown that at the end of the Paleozoic this region was invaded by the sea, on the bottom of which were deposited sand, gravel and clay. The intense reddish color comes from iron oxide and hydroxide.

As a result of the ice age, this rocky complex rose above the water, following a natural erosion process that led to the strange rocks we can see today, formed over millions of years. Through the action of the water and the wind, amazing shapes, animal figures, human figures or mythological creatures have been born, and each rock has a legend behind it that tries to explain its shape and beauty.

## Belogradchik Museum of History and Ethnography

GPS coordinates: 43.990526 / 43°59'26" N – 22.881406 / 22°52'53" E

Address: Street Knyaz Boris I nr. 1, Belogradchik, district Vidin

The Belogradchik History Museum is located in the central area of the city, in a traditional house of historical value, called the Panov House, which presents architectural features from the Bulgarian Renaissance period. It was built in 1810, and since 1970 it has been transformed into the current museum, now with over 8,000 objects in storage. On the ground floor there is a collection of ethnographic elements and traditional household objects, which illustrate the daily life of the inhabitants of the area.

Upstairs we can admire a few exhibitions of historical objects, covering all eras, namely objects from the prehistoric period, the Roman period and the medieval era. A special emphasis is placed on the events carried out during the Bulgarian war of independence from 1877-1878, in this sense there are numerous exhibits and documents that illustrate the unfolding of the military events in this area.

## MĀGURA CAVE

GPS coordinates: 43.726918 / 43°43'37" N – 22.583816 / 22°35'1" E

Address: on the outskirts of Rabisha village, Vidin district

The Māgura cave, located in the village of Rabisha, is one of the 30 caves in the region and is also one of the largest caves in Bulgaria. The entire interior route is very well arranged for visiting, being electrified. The main gallery, with a south-north orientation, has a length of 1,750 meters and together with its 3 main branches, it is over 2,500 meters long. Inside you can see unique karst formations, of rare beauty, covered by delicate lace. Here is also the largest stalagmite in Bulgaria, called the Fallen fir tree, with a height of 11 meters, with a circumference at the base of 6 meters. The largest room inside is the Triumphal Hall, which has a length of 128 meters, an opening of 58 meters and a height of 28 meters, covering a total area of over 5,700 square meters.

Archaeological research began in 1972 and continued until 1996. Remnants of prehistoric life were discovered in the cave, traces of settlements dating back to 12,000 years ago, from the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, as well as various tools and objects of worship made of stone, ceramic or bone. The most important discovery is that of a collection of rock drawings, unique to the caves of the Balkan Peninsula, made from guano. The gallery containing these paintings has a length of about 300 meters, being structured into several rooms, passages and openings, in which the primitive people who lived in this cave made over 700 drawings, representing different human figures, especially of women, animals, hunting scenes, religious rituals or war scenes.

### Hotel-restaurant Bononia

GPS coordinates: 43.985908 / 43°59'9" N – 22.878338 / 22°52'42" E

Address: Street Bdin nr. 2, Vidin, district Vidin

### Hotel-restaurant Anna Kristina

GPS coordinates: 43.987128 / 43°59'13" N – 22.8800887 / 22°52'48" E

Address: Street Baba Vida nr. 2, Vidin, district Vidin

### Hotel-restaurant Skalite

GPS coordinates: 43.625265 / 43°37'31" N – 22.687262 / 22°41'14" E

Address: Street Hadji Dimitar nr. 1, Belogradchik, district Vidin

### Accommodation-restaurant complex Māgura

GPS coordinates: 43.725067 / 43°43'30" N – 22.590214 / 22°35'24" E

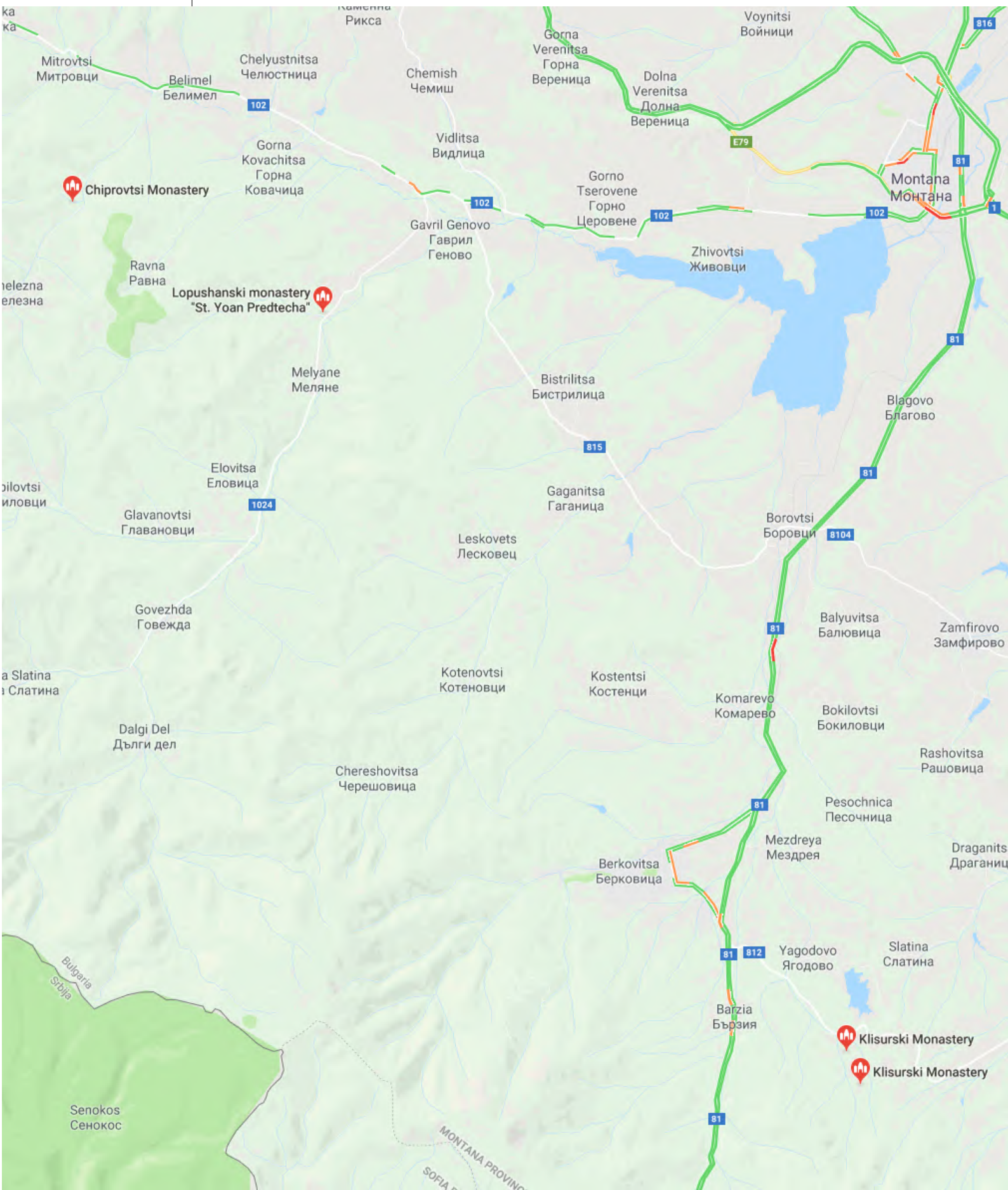
Address: at the exit of Rabisha village, Vidin district

### Hotel-restaurant Han Madona

GPS coordinates: 43.597539 / 43°35'51" N – 22.779690 / 22°46'47" E

Address: on leaving Falkovets village, Vidin district





## MONTANA DISTRICT

## Introduction

Montana district is located in the northwest of Bulgaria and covers an area of 3,635 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 3.27% of the country's total area. The district is contiguous to the north with Romania, the border being the Danube river, and to the northwest with Serbia. According to Eurostat, in 2018, the Montana district had a population of 132,214 inhabitants. At the national level, the Montana district is third in number of inhabitants (after Plevna and Vratsa) and area. The administrative and business center of the district is Montana. The district consist of 11 municipalities and 134 settlements.

From the point of view of cultural heritage, in the Montana district there are 600 historical monuments of national and local importance, most of them being archaeological sites (with objects from prehistory, antiquity, the Middle Ages, as well as from the Renaissance period), artistic monuments or public buildings with a special architecture. The most important cultural objectives are: Fortress "Kastru ad Montanezium" (archeological site from the Roman Empire period), The archaeological exhibition "Lapidarium" (archaeological exhibition on local culture from the 2nd to the 3rd centuries), the Ethnographic Museum in the city of Berkovitsa (where you can visit collections dedicated to traditional crafts - e.g. the Berkovska pottery, the Chiprovtsi carpets, the latter being included in the UNESCO World Heritage). From the perspective of religious places of worship, the most famous are the Klisura Monastery (the fourth largest in Bulgaria, built during the second Bulgarian empire - the year 1240; in the monastery there is an icon painting workshop where the techniques of the ancient school of Ohrid are being taught) and the Church "St. Nicholas Chudotvorets" (in Berkovitsa). On the territory of the district there are 138 churches and 4 monasteries, these are among the oldest in the country.

The cultural heritage found in the Montana district is represented by two theaters, a regional library and a regional museum, museum-houses and a municipal museum. There are also 100 cultural centers and numerous art galleries in the district. The most well-known areas in terms of cultural objectives found in or near their territory are Chiprovtsi, Berkovitsa and Lom. In the Montana district, various festivals and fairs are organized periodically, which contribute to increasing its tourist visibility.

The relief of the district is varied, including the fields and plateaus, hills, mountains and valleys. The most important objectives of the natural heritage are: The Berkovitsa marble cave, the waterfalls Zanojene and Rayski kat and the "Kotlya" Rock Massif.

Vârset is the most popular tourist destination in the district of Montana, being the vacation destination of over 55% of the total number of tourists in the district.

## THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN RILSKI OF CHIPROVTSI (CIPROVITI)

Titular saint: „Saint John Rilski”

Location / address: at the entrance to Jelezna village, near Chiprovtsi, Montana district

Access road: D 102, then D 1022, then deviation about 1 km, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.403680 / 43°24'13" N – 22.933457 / 22°56'0" E

Ciproviti Monastery is one of the oldest monasteries in Bulgaria, according to historical sources, being called Jelezni Monastery, due to its proximity to the locality of the same name, on the Ogosta river valley. It was founded in the tenth century and played an important role in the revolutionary movements for the liberation of Bulgaria. Throughout the centuries, generations of priests have been formed here, manuscripts and religious books have been written and copied. The monastery is linked to the first battles against the oppressing Turks, being a place of refuge for all the tzars of the Second Bulgarian Empire from the fourteenth century. Here were deposited the relics of St. John of Rila, when they were brought from Hungary. The existence of the monastery is closely linked to the older history of the region, reminiscent of the Thracian, Roman and medieval times. In the 16th-17th centuries, the local population of Orthodox and Catholics, grouped around the Ciproviti Monastery, participated in the battles against the Turks. The monastery witnessed six uprisings against the Turks, serving as a refuge for the outlaws. For this reason it was burned six times, but it was redone every time, remaining one of the most solid landmarks of the Orthodox faith in the past centuries.

The monastery has a very rich library with Slavonic books and manuscripts, being sought by specialists in the field. Located at the foot of the Balkans, the monastery complex was last reconstructed in 1876, having a rectangular shape. The last rehabilitation of the church was made in 1829, of stone, in the shape of a nave with an apse, a style borrowed from Gothic architecture. Beside the central gate of the complex are located two apartment buildings with two floors, the space of the egumen, a tower with ossuary and chapel and the bell tower, where the remains of some freedom fighters in northwestern Bulgaria are buried. Above is the sanctuary of St. John of Rila. In the past, in the complex there were stables and warehouses. The exterior facade of the church is covered with pictures and inscriptions carved in stone. The iconostasis is splendid, made by an unknown craftsman, and the icons are painted by Hristo Enceva from Koprivtiza. In the western wing of the monastery is the chapel of St. Anastasius the Great, made in 1880, with murals representing local saints. Every year, during the feast of the patron saint (October 19), a great agape is celebrated in the honor of St. John of Rila. The entire monastery is restored, with central heating and sanitary spaces. It is a cultural monument of national importance, inscribed on the list of 100 monuments.







#### Chiprovtsi History Museum

GPS coordinates: 43.383742 / 43°23'1" N – 22.879665 / 22°52'46" E

Address: Street Vitosha nr. 2, Chiprovtsi, district Montana

The history of this museum began in the year 1968, when the first two collections, the historical and the artistic one, were set up within the "Probuda" Culture House. On May 20, 1986, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Chiprovtsi uprising, the creation of the Chiprovtsi History Museum was announced, and the already existing collections were transferred to the City History Museum. Nowadays the museum exhibitions are presented onto sections, located in different thematic rooms: Metal extraction, Gold School, 17th Century History, Carpet Hall and Renaissance Art. There is also an ethnographic exhibition, as well as the only collection in Bulgaria with plants from which paint for wool and carpets is produced.

#### Hotel-restaurant Kiprovets

GPS coordinates: 43.383876 / 43°23'2" N – 22.880202 / 22°52'48" E

Address: Street Ivan Stanislavov nr. 14, Chiprovtsi, district Montana

## LOUPSHANSKI MONASTERY

Titular saint: „St. John the Apostle”

Location / address: at the exit of Georgy Damyanovo village, Montana district

Access road: D102, then D1024, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.376843 / 43°22'36" N – 23.020922 / 23°1'15" E

Loupshanski Monastery, dedicated to "St. John the Forward-walker", is located in the western part of the Balkan mountains, near the river Dalgopolska Ogosta. The present buildings are built over an older monastery from the 14th century. Often burned down and devastated by the Turks, the monastery was long uninhabited, hence the name of Desert Monastery. In 1850, the monks Dionysius, Gideon and Gherasim began the reconstruction of the monastery. A monastery school was also opened, and secret meetings were held in the church between the rulers of the region, one of the conspirators being the Archimandrite Dionysius, abbot of the monastery.

The entire monastery complex, with the church, the residential and household buildings, the chapel with the ossuary and the shrine, was created by the master Lilo from the Slavine School, who has twice visited the Rila Monastery for this purpose. The monastery church thus became practically a copy of the one in Rila, being the third largest in the country, with three naves, three apses, a pseudo-basilica, two lateral chapels and stone reliefs depicting soldiers, animals, birds. The church, large and imposing, has an iconostasis, a magnificent sculpted art achievement of the Samokov School, as well as splendid icons painted by brothers Stanislav and Nicola Dospevski, the successors of the renowned painter Zaharia Stoianov from Samokov. Particularly impressive are those with Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, made in 1863 by Stanislav Dospevski.

The monastery is famous for the icon of the Virgin Mary, a miracle worker, who saved and healed many people, but also for the armored icon of the Virgin Mary, found built into an old wall. In the courtyard of the monastery, besides the marvelous fountain of 1856, ornamented with embossings, there is also the new church, similar to the old Roman one near the monasteries, as well as the exhibition of icons.





## KLISURSKI MONASTERY

Titular saint: "Saints Kiril and Metodiul"

Location / address: fork at D 812, between Spancevtzi and Iagodovo, Montana district

Access road: D81, then D812, then deviation about 2 km, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.183361 / 43°11'0" N – 23.205413 / 23°12'19" E

The holy place, located on the hill in the center of the complex, has the shape of a church with three naves, a crucified tower, with three apses, a dome with an eight-walled barrel in the middle, an outer nave and two bell towers on the north and south. The splendid iconostasis is the work of master Stoiceo Fandakov from Samocov. From the tenth century until today, the monastery has served as a true spiritual center in the region.

Repeatedly, it was set on fire, plundered, destroyed and rebuilt by locals. In the modern era, only in 1867, Ilia Stoyanov from Dragani a village, following a vision of St. Nicholas, begins the restoration of the holy place, managing to involve the local population in this work.

His successor, Alexandar Damianov from Bercovita, later became the abbot Antim, being the son of a rich man, dedicating his life and personal wealth to the development of the monastery, so that from 1887 to 1890, the church was built. Supported by the surrounding Orthodox population, he manages to buy a large number of monastery land. The abbot Antim dies at the age of 95, after spending 55 years in this monastery. In 1891, the talented painter Nikola Obrazopisov (1828-1925), a connoisseur of the traditions of Mount Athos, is called to paint the new icons donated by the founders.

Between 1936-1937, the successor of the Russian painter Repin, Gospodin Jeliakov, his daughter Olga and his son-in-law, prof. Gherghi Bogdanov, paint the place again. Subsequently, the archimandrite Antep, the current protozoan of the Metropolis of Vidin, begins extensive work on the infrastructure of the monastery complex. Visitors can learn about the history of the monastery by visiting the church museum, which contains valuable exhibits, photographs, documents, church utensils, service books and icons.

Here you can also see the ruins and objects of the first Bulgarian and Metropolitan exarch of Vidin, Antim, as well as those of the Metropolitan of Vidin, Dometian.



Coordinate GPS: 43.195515 / 43°11'44" N – 23.197184 / 23°11'50" E

Address: fork at D812, between Spancevtzi and Iagodovo, Montana district

## CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS IN VARSHETS

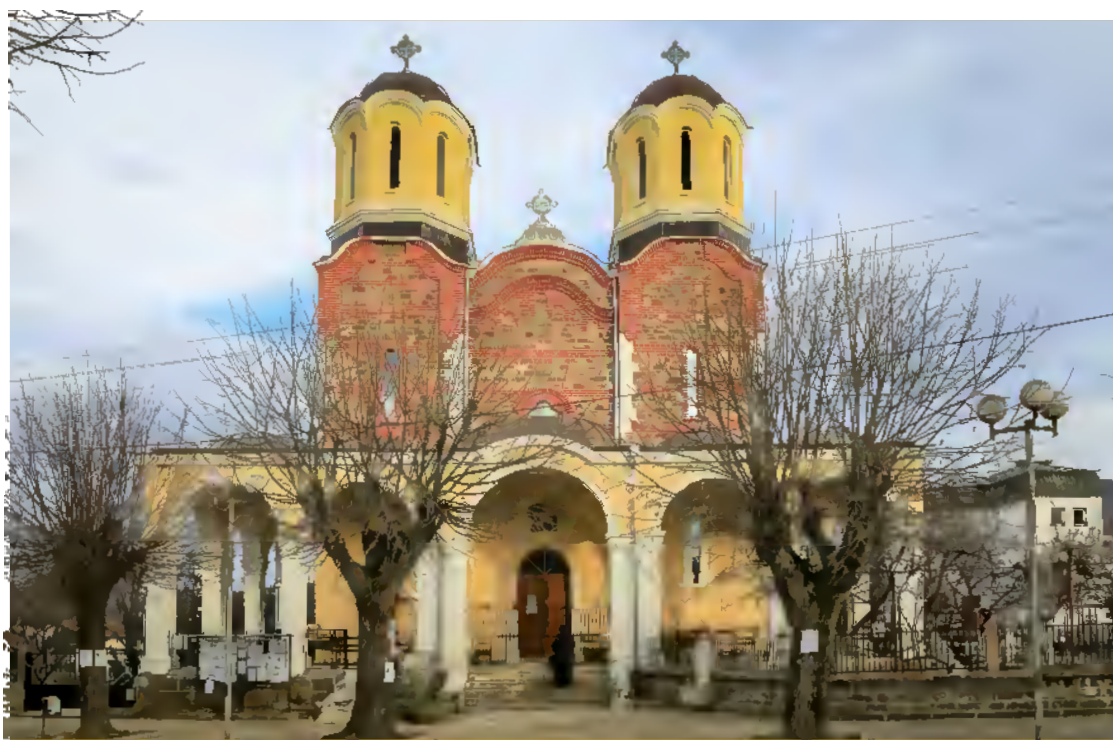
Titular saint: „Saint George”

Localization/address: Street Republicii no. 31, downtown Vrashets, Montana district

Access road: D81, then D812, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.198565 / 43°11'55" N – 23.290062 / 23°17'24" E

The Church of St. George the Victorious is found on the main street, close to the centre of the locality. It was built in 1902, being a cross basilica, with three domes, with open porch and brick masonry on the facade. It was consecrated in 1906. The iconostasis is the work of an unknown local craftsman, and inside are still old icons from the 17th and 18th centuries. The newest ones are made by the academic Ivan Stefanov. Interesting are the four chapels and two candlesticks, brought from Jerusalem and Constantinople. In 1992, the church was painted, and in 2018, it was completely renovated. At present, the church is run by the theologian doctor Petko Baldzhiev. The settlement is visited by many believers, due to the fact that the town of Vrashets is a mountain resort highly sought after by tourists.



Hotel-restaurant ATA SPA

GPS coordinates: 43.186530 / 43°11'11" N – 23.281487 / 23°16'53" E

Address: Street Dr. Constantin Penev nr. 1A, Vrashets, district Montana

## CHURCH OF SAINTS KIRIL AND METHODIUS FROM MONTANA

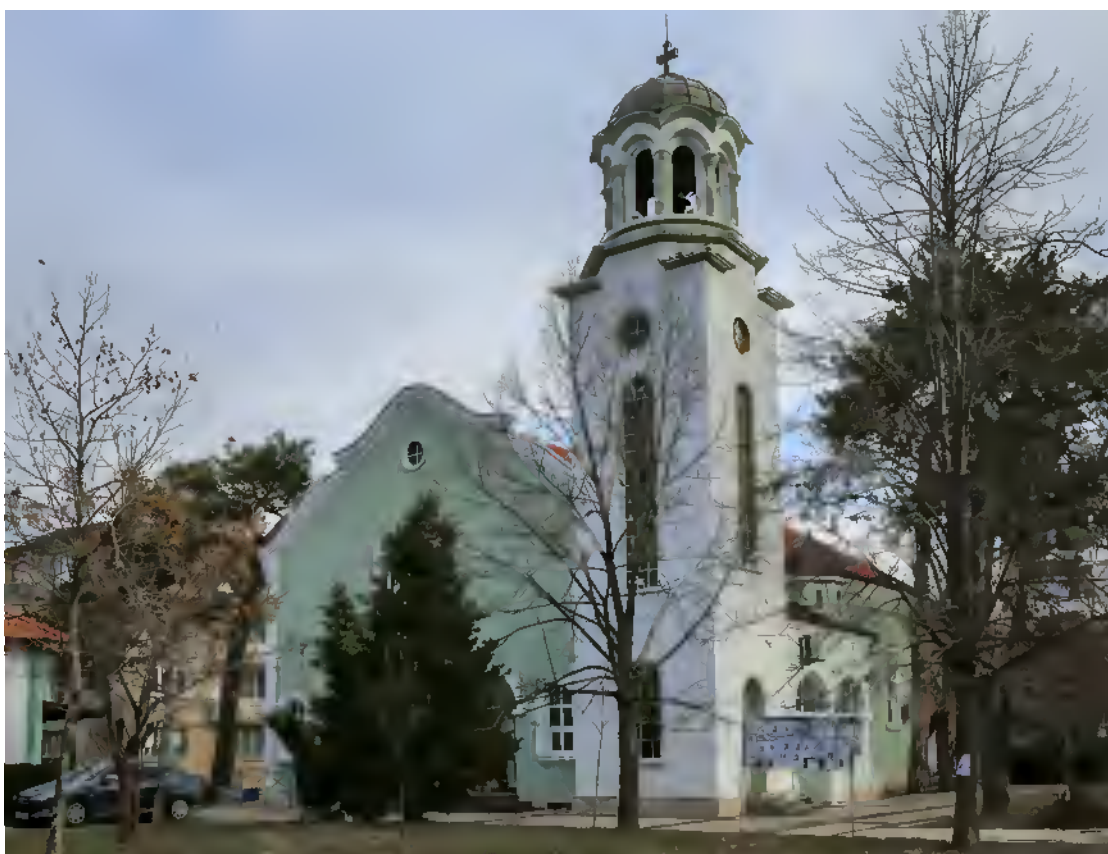
Titular saint: "Saints Kiril and Methodius"

Localization/address: Street Kiril si Metodiul, intersection with Cherkovna Street, downtown Montana, Montana district

Access road: D1, D102, then Street Kiril si Metodiul, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.404474 / 43°24'16" N – 23.221313 / 23°13'16" E

The church is located in the old part of the city, at the foot of Montanezium fortress, in an urban complex that includes a Roman necropolis, an Orthodox church and a Jewish synagogue, a few mosques, a school, Roman and Turkish baths. After the withdrawal of the Russian Temporary Administration from Bulgaria in 1879, the local government adopted the proposal that an Orthodox church be erected instead of a mosque. So one night, the Bulgarian inhabitants demolished the minaret and transformed it into an Orthodox church. The old church on the slope, with a low and flat ceiling, no longer corresponded to the needs of the city, so the edifice was rebuilt from the wall, with two towers, with large, spacious spaces, being consecrated in 1898. In the following years the bell tower with four bells was built, the administrative building and the monastery garden with exotic plants. Subsequently, it was restored several times to finally reach its current form. The iconostasis dates from 1879 and was made by craftsmen from the Samokov School. The church has some icons from 1879, painted by the renowned craftsman Hristo Enceev, who studied in Florence, being born in the town of Koprivsti a. The whole church is painted by prof. Ilia Pefev and by Apostol Apostlov, artists trained at the Debar School.





### Fortress Castra ad Montanezium

GPS coordinates: 43.402111 / 43°24'7" N – 23.217449 / 23°13'2" E (at the entrance) or 43.400419 / 43°24'1" N – 23.220806 / 23°13'15" E (for the parking)

Address: Street Izvora nr. 91, Montana, district Montana

The fortress Castra ad Montanesium is located in the northwestern part of the city, on Kaleto hill. In the area, numerous prehistoric archaeological evidence has been discovered about the first inhabitants of the stone age and the copper age. Later, ancient Thracian tribes lived on the hill until the 1st century BC. From the constructions made by them, there were traces of stone walls, which protected them against the attackers, having a thickness of more than one meter wide. Attracted by the rich deposits of various ores in the area, including gold, located along the Ogosta River, at the end of the first century BC, the place was conquered by the Romans. They gave the name of the city, which comes from the Latin word Mons, meaning mountain.



### Montana Regional History Museum

GPS coordinates: 43.406171 / 43°24'22" N – 23.226815 / 23°13'36" E

Address: Street Graf Ignatiev nr. 3, Montana, district Montana

Initially this museum was created as a museum of the Revolution of September 1951, but with all the Communist accent from the beginning, the museum has a collection consisting of various valuable exhibits, representing the rich history of the entire region. Since 1991, the institution has been transformed into a true historical museum. Inside, the museum has the following sections: archeology, ethnography, history of Bulgaria centuries XIV-XIX, modern history, current history and cultural heritage. The museum presents to the tourists valuable discoveries from the Neolithic era, the Thracian age, the Roman era, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period of Bulgaria. A special value is represented by the Yakimov silver treasure, a copy of which is displayed here. The museum's exhibits are placed in various locations in the town of Montana, such as the Exhibition Hall, Mihailov House, the Lapidarium Archaeological Exhibition and the Ancient Fortress.

## LAPIDARIUM OUTDOOR EXHIBITION

GPS coordinates: 43.403955 / 43°24'14" N – 23.221906 / 23°13'19" E

Address: Street Dimitar Talev, in the park near Kiril and Methodius Church, Montana, Montana district

The Lapidarium is an open-air archaeological exhibition of epigraphic monuments from the Roman era. A number of 56 monuments discovered in the old Roman settlement of Montanesium (present-day Montana) are located in the middle of the park in Popska Garden. The marble inscriptions represent extremely valuable testimonies for the culture and history of this region from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD. They are the only written sources for this provincial Roman city and provide information about the ancient cult for the goddess Diana, who was the protective goddess of Montana, the god Apollo, Esculap, Hygiea, Latona, Silvan and other deities, but also important historical data about the visitors here, as well as the military units stationed in this garrison.

The inscriptions carved in stone and marble also speak of the glory of the Roman emperors, of the rulers and governors of the province of Lower Mizia, as well as of the fighting facts of some military and civilians.

### Hotel-restaurant Jithomir

GPS coordinates: 43.408911 / 43°24'32" N – 23.223893 / 23°13'26" E

Address: Street Jeravitsa nr. 1, Montana, district Montana

### Hotel-restaurant Vesta

GPS coordinates: 43.408684 / 43°24'31" N – 23.219929 / 23°13'11" E

Address: Street Tsar Samuil nr. 10, Montana, district Montana

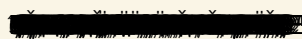
### Hotel-restaurant Ring

GPS coordinates: 43.389178 / 43°23'21" N – 23.216836 / 23°13'0" E

Address: on the shore of Lake Ogosta, Montana, Montana district

## VRATSA DISTRICT

## Introduction



Numerous buildings of cultural and historical heritage are found in Vratsa district. Some of the most well-known cultural buildings are the "Radetski" National Naval Museum (the only floating museum in Bulgaria), the Kaleto archaeological complex (it has a history of more than 70 centuries; at the site were discovered the ruins of two fortified settlements from the end of the copper-stone and eneolite era, dated between the end of the 5th millennium and the first half of the 4th millennium BC), the Ivan Zambin Museum-House (with exhibits presenting the artistic trades and traditional trades in the Vratsa area). The most important archaeological discoveries made in Vratsa district come from the Thracian period.

As for the religious buildings on the territory of Vratsa district, the largest and most impressive is the Cherepish Monastery which is located on the picturesque Iskar River Gorge - the monastery is classified as an objective of cultural heritage of national importance and is dated in the 17th century. Other monasteries in the Vratsa district that can be integrated into a tourist circuit are the Strupetski Monastery "St. Ilie" and the Gradeshnitsa Monastery. In the city of Vratsa are located the headquarters of the Metropolitan of Vratsa, as well as the Cathedral "St. Apostles" (built in 1898).

The district has a rich natural heritage, among the best known objectives mentioning Vrachanski Natural Park, Vrachanski Karst Reservation, Ledenika Cave of international importance (which houses 53 species of animals and inside which cascades have been formed), Vratsa Gorges nearby Vratsa city, Skaklya waterfall (141 m high), Ritlite rock formations (near Cherepish Monastery).

From the perspective of tourism development, the Vratsa district can accommodate different types such as speleological, adventure, rural, cultural or religious tourism.

## IVAN PUSTI MONASTERY

Titular saint: „Saint Ivan Pusti“

Localization/address: deviation from D1 a few km. from the entrance in the city of Vratsa, Vratsa district

Access road: DN1, then unmarked road, asphalt relatively good condition, steep uphill slope

GPS coordinates: 43.243510 / 43°14'36" N – 23.463407 / 23°27'48" E

Located not far from the road that connects Vratsa with Montana, the monastery is part of the spiritual centers on Mount Vico, at the foot of the Balkan mountains. Built around an ancient Thracian sanctuary, erected several millennia before Christ, the monastery was the spiritual center of the medieval fortress Kasina. It was destroyed several times by the Turks, being restored as today between 1894-1928. There was a school here to educate the poor children in the area. Over time, it bore many names: Kasinets Monastery, St. John the Theologian, St. John of Rila, Pustii. In 2008, the monastery was renovated again. The church is a basilica with a nave, with the dome covered with split plates and six buttresses to the north and south.

Around the monastery there are caves where monks lived. In one of them lived St. John of Rila, the heavenly protector of Bulgaria and Europe, and the walls of this cave there are still paintings. The icons and iconostasis were made by Todor Manyov, from the Treyava School. In the mural painting there are three distinct layers: from the eleventh century, from the sixteenth century and from the nineteenth century.

In the 17th century, the craftsmen Nikola, Pala and Kostadin from Chiprovtsi, representatives of the famous Golden Crafts School in Chiprovtsi, came to work here. The golden cross is kept, with colored stones and with the two lions and the inscription "for the Kasinets Monastery, craftsmen Nikola and Pala from the village of Kiprovtsi [...] the bishop of Târnovo, Gavriil, 1612", but also two gospel covers. This gold workshop has made an important contribution to the development of crafts in the last 200 years. During the Renaissance, the monastery was not only a craft center, but also a great literary and spiritual center.





## CHURCH SOFRONII VRACHANSKI IN VRATSA

Titular saint: "Ascension to Heaven"

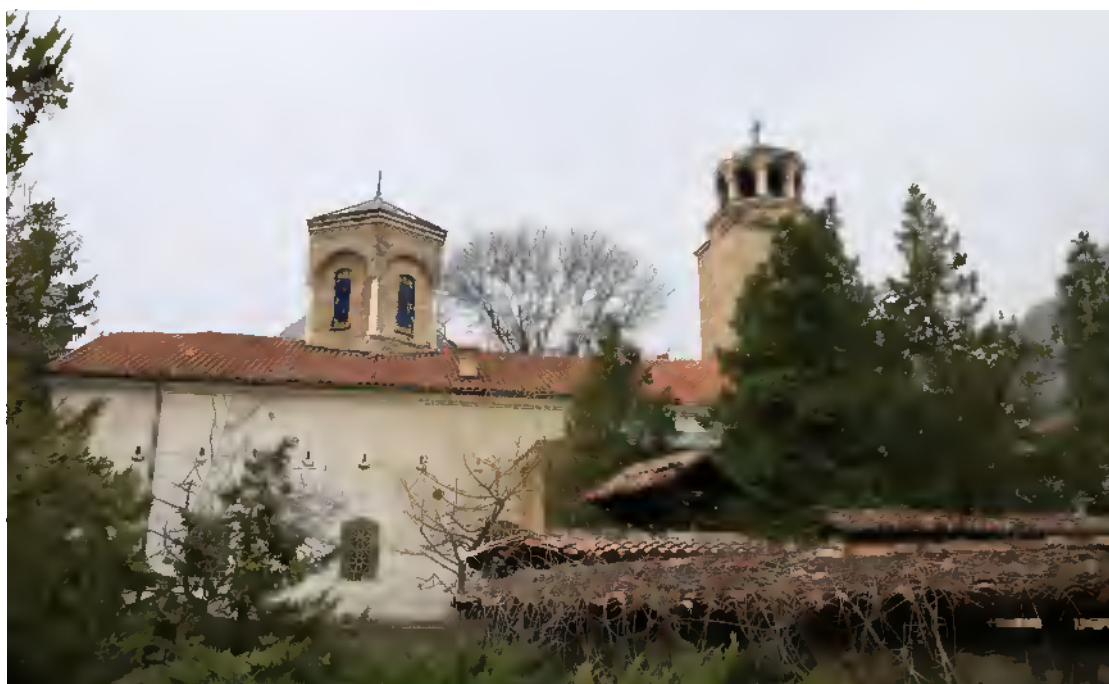
Localization/address: Street General Leonov nr. 3, downtown Vratsa, district Vratsa

Access road: D15, then D 1002, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.202564 / 43°12'9" N – 23.550727 / 23°33'2" E

The church is part of a museum complex, together with the Ethnographic Museum and the Museum of carriages and traditional houses from the Renaissance Period. It dates from 1848, being built over an older church and is the oldest religious monument in the locality. Through its entire existence it has been a center of great importance for the spiritual and political life of Vratsa district, and its name is linked to remarkable Bulgarian personalities: Vasil Levski, Sofronii Vrachanski, Paisii Hilendarski. The building is shaped like a basilica with three naves, on the west side there is the bell tower. The iconostasis and the royal gates represent an exceptional work of art belonging to the famous Debar School. The icons are painted by Anton Stanishev and the great master of Samokov, Dimitri Zograf.

In 1989, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the birth of the Renaissance educator, Bishop Sofronie Vrachanski of Vratsa, by a decision of the Diocesan Council of the Bishopric of Vidin, the church was declared a "Memorial monument to Bishop Sofronie of Vratsa (Vrachanski)". Sofronie Vrachanski is the spiritual protector of Vratsa. After the major restoration of 2002, every year on June 2, a service commemorating Hristo Botev and the fallen heroes for the freedom of Bulgaria takes place. In the church is organized an exhibition with the theme of ancient Bulgarian art from the Vratsa region, consisting of icons, church objects and wood carvings. The complex is managed by the Vratsa Regional History Museum.



## ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH IN VRATSA

Titular saint: "Saint Nicholas"

Localization/address: Boulevard Hristo Botev no. 1, Vratsa, Vratsa district

Access road: D15, then D 1002, through Boulevard 2 lunie, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.200297 / 43°12'1" N – 23.549865 / 23°32'59" E

Located in the city center, this church was built between 1865-1867. It is called metropolitan because inside is buried one of the metropolises of Vratsa. Inside it has beautiful frescoes and wonderful icons painted by Stanislav Dospevski from the Samokov School and Zhelyazkovi Kashev. The iconostasis is the work of a master from the Debar School, Anton Stanishev. It has the shape of a large basilica, with a three-storey bell tower, on the dome being painted Jesus Christ the Pantocrator, and on the pendants - the four evangelists.



## CHURCH OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND ELENA OF VRATSA

Titular saint: "Saints Constantine and Elena"

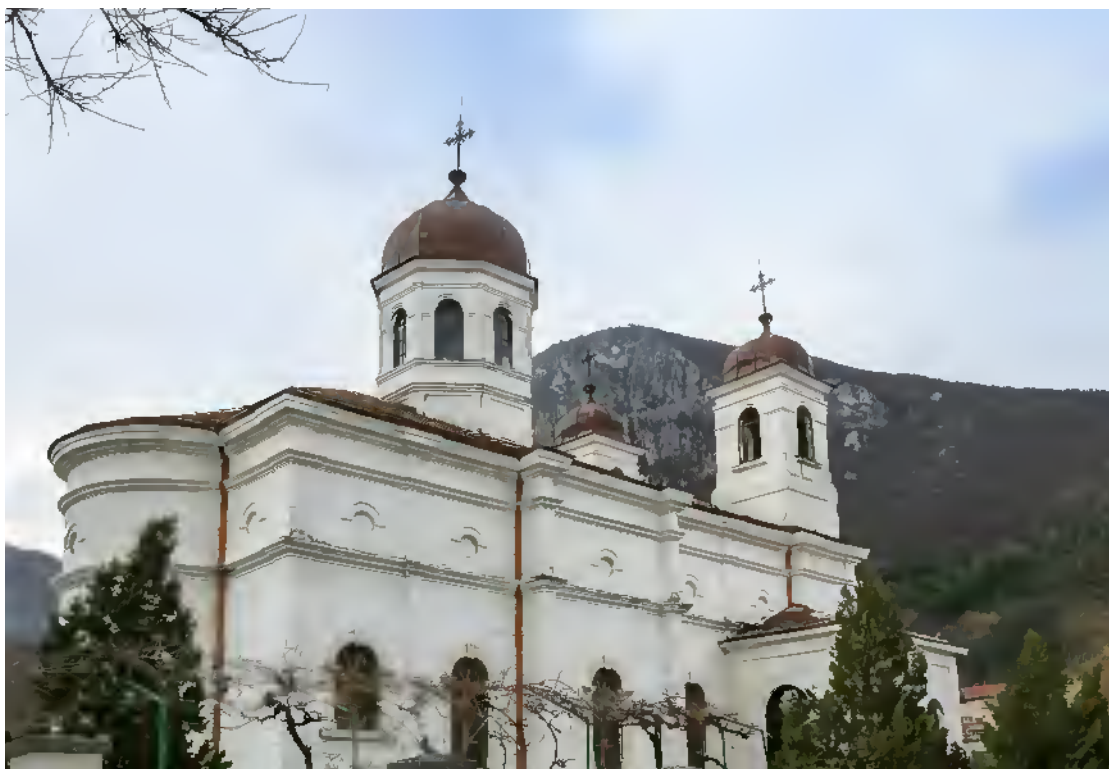
Localization/address: Street Petropavlovskia nr. 84, Vratsa, district Vratsa

Access road: D15, then D 1002, then Grancharska street, asphalt in good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.201252 / 43°12'4" N – 23.546703 / 23°32'48" E

The locals call this settlement "St. arevi", in worshiping the St. Emperor Constantine and his mother Elena. The present church was built on the site of an older one, dating from the 16th century, which was dug in the ground. The new church was built between 1910-1915, based on a project of the architect Pencho Koichev, famous at the time, also

designing the Pleven mausoleum, courts, railway stations and many other buildings. The building is a triple paved basilica, with a transverse axis, with two bell towers above the pronaos, with a dome in the central body and apse. The facade is built in neoclassical style. Iconostasul este din zid, iar sculptura în lemn este făcută la Vidin. The icons are made in Byzantine Orthodox style, with western influence. It is a typical urban church, with a spacious courtyard and a lot of tranquility. The church is located in the center of the town, close to the regional library "Hristo Botev".



### CATHEDRAL OF SAINT APOSTLES IN VRATSA

Titular saint: "Apostles Peter and Paul"

Localization/address: Boulevard Hristo Botev nr. 45, downtown Vratsa, district Vratsa

Access road: D15, then D 1002, then Ivan Vazov street, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.205744 / 43°12'10" N – 23.547790 / 23°32'57" E

The church is located right in the center of Vratsa. Built on the site of an older church from the 17th century, it is the largest and most imposing church in the city. It has the shape of a large basilica with three naves, three apses and a dome with eight walls. The three altars inside are dedicated to Paisie Hilendarski of Hilandar and the Holy Sophronie of Vratsa (Vrachanski). The painting is frescoed, and the iconostasis and the episcopal chair are adorned with floral ornaments and decorative motifs with animals. A beautiful wood carved crucifix can be found on the pulpit. It is designated a cathedral for the Metropolitan of Vratsa, where the solemn liturgy is celebrated.





### Sofronii Vrachanski Ethnographic Complex

GPS coordinates: 43.202564 / 43°12'9" N – 23.550727 / 23°33'2" E

Address: Street Dimitraki Hadjitoshev nr. 12, Vratsa, district Vratsa

The ethnographic complex is part of the Regional History Museum in Vratsa and includes an architectural and ethnographic exhibition created between 1972 and 1987. It is located in the center of Vratsa, between three traditional Bulgarian Renaissance houses. These buildings are declared architectural, historical and cultural monuments. Upon entering the complex, visitors will discover the impressive statue of Sofroniy Vrachanski, made by sculptor Krum Damyanov. Inside the museum there are some collections of great value from the point of view of popular traditions, such as peasant tools, household and ceramic objects, folk costumes, carpets and other fabrics.

Old handicrafts characteristic of this region, such as goldsmithing, viticulture, winemaking, silverware and silkworm growing are presented in Ivan Zambin's house. There is also an exhibition dedicated to the founder of the band in northwestern Bulgaria, Diko Iliev, as well as a collection of carriages. In the Dimitraki Hadjitoshev house we can see a restoration of a house from the middle 19th century. The "Children's World" exhibition from the late 19th and early 20th centuries is hosted in Grigoriya Naydenov's house.

### Vratsa Regional History Museum

GPS coordinates: 43.200981 / 43°12'3" N – 23.547608 / 23°32'51" E

Address: Boulevard Hristo Botev no. 2, Vratsa, Vratsa district

The museum was founded in 1953 and is one of the 100 national tourist attractions of Bulgaria. The exhibitions are presented onto sections in separate rooms, which follow different stages of the region's development. In the Prehistory hall, ceramic objects, household items, work tools and weapons are exhibited, from the earliest times of antiquity to the Roman era. The Antiquity Hall presents artifacts from the early Roman and Byzantine times (cent. I-VI). In the Middle Ages hall are displayed old Bulgarian jewelry typical for the Bulgarian Middle Ages (7th-14th centuries), painted icons, amulets, silver tabernacles for holy relics, household items and traditional tools. In the Thracian Treasures hall you can admire the gold and silver jewelry, objects of value found in the Vratsa region, such as the Rogozen treasure, the mosaic in the village of Galatin, etc. Valuable copies of the School of Literature, Iconography and the School of Goldsmiths are presented in the Bulgarian History room from the cent. XV-XIX. The exhibition dedicated to the legendary military troops of the revolutionary poet Hristo Botev (1848-1876)

is organized in the Botev Hall. The Rainbow stone room contains samples of minerals, precious and semi-precious stones, fossils of flora and fauna. The economic, political and cultural development of the Vratsa region until 1918 is presented in the New History Hall.

#### Hotel-restaurant Hemus

GPS coordinates: 43.20200 / 43°12'7" N – 23.548685 / 23°32'55" E

Address: Boulevard Hristo Botev no. 1, Vratsa, Vratsa district

#### Hotel-restaurant Chayka

GPS coordinates: 43.191503 / 43°11'29" N – 23.537166 / 23°32'14" E

Address: when exiting the town on D 1002, Vratsa, Vratsa district

#### Okolchitsa peak

GPS coordinates: 43.154236 / 43°9'15" N – 23.584046 / 23°35'2" E

Address: when exiting Vratsa, towards the village Pavolce, deviation D1004, Vratsa district

Mount Okolchitsa is probably Bulgaria's most treasured historic place. It is the place where the army of revolutionaries led by Hristo Botev fought heroically against the Ottoman army and not far from this place, Hristo Botev himself died in battle. The peak has a height of 1048 meters, and here is built a memorial monument, marked by a huge cross, erected in 1926, with a height of over 25 meters. At the base of the cross there is a chapel dedicated to Saint George. Every year, on June 2, there is an impressive pilgrimage involving thousands of people who want to honor the memory of the great Bulgarian revolutionary and his struggle for independence.

#### The Citadel Mezdra archaeological complex

GPS coordinates: 43.139870 / 43°8'23" N – 23.704888 / 23°42'17" E

Address: exiting the town of Mezdra, deviation from D1, Mezdra, Vratsa district

The fortified complex called Citadel is located on a natural protected hill, located where the main commercial roads intersect, used since long ago. The area of the Iskar River is inhabited since the end of the Stone Age and the beginning of the Copper Age, respectively the second half of the 5th century BC. After these prehistoric populations, who lived in the first known historical period of the area, the ancient Thracians were established here. In the I century the place was conquered by the Roman Empire, and in the seventh century, with the great migration of the peoples of Asia, came here the Slavs, and later the Bulgarians of Asparuh.

In the eleventh century, the Byzantine emperor Vasile the Great conquered the northwestern Bulgarian lands. The area was then included in the Ottoman Empire for several centuries. In 2013, the entire complex is restored and tourist routes are built. You can see the remains of the fortified settlements of different times, the "Sanctuary of the Tour", a pagan worship center from the 3rd century. In a permanent exhibition hall are exhibited objects and archaeological discoveries from the 5 historical periods and a model of the Roman fortress "Kaleto", dating from the 2nd-5th century. In a separate building are the handicraft workshops, the information center and the souvenir shop.

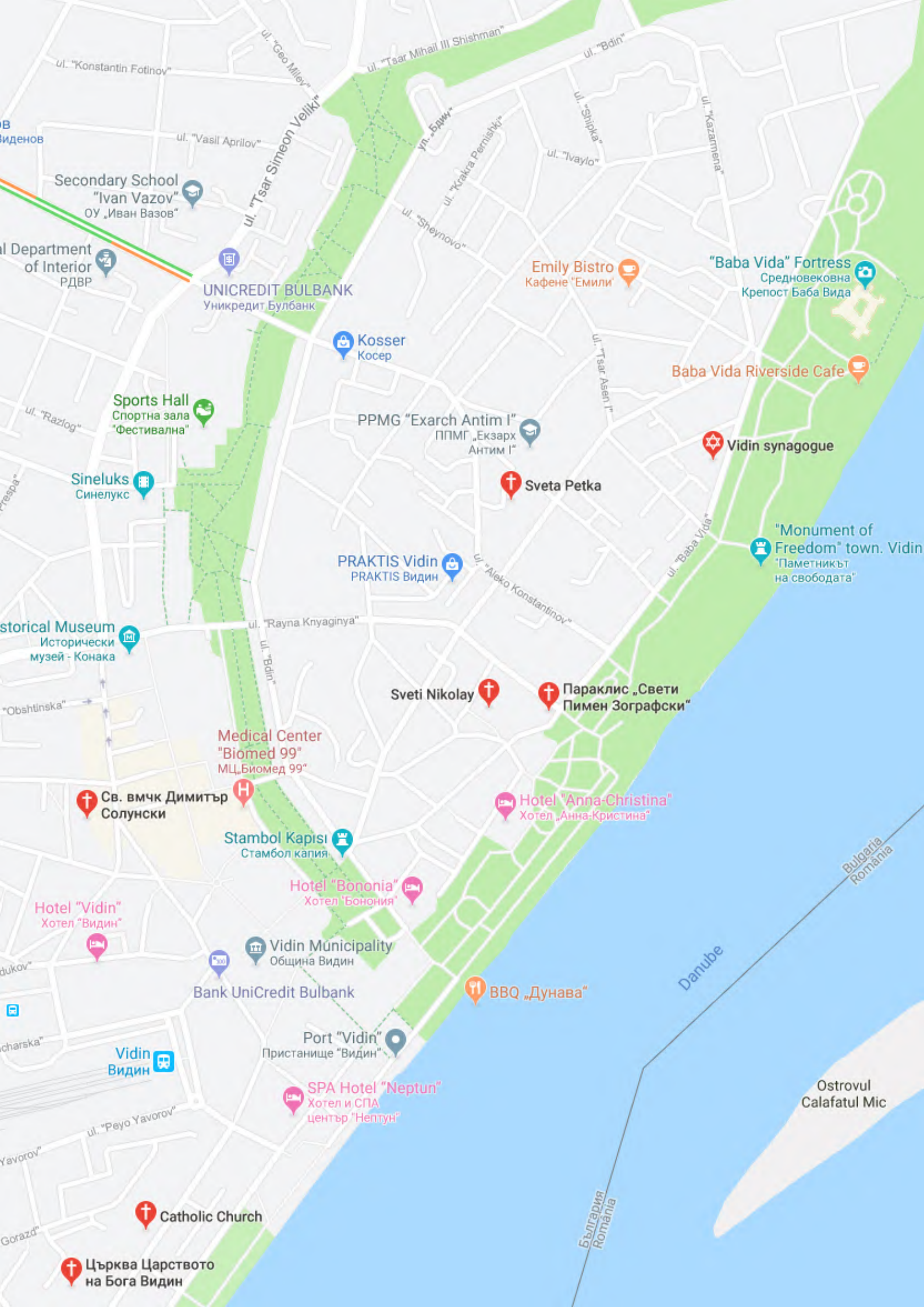
#### Ritlite rocks

GPS coordinates: 43.107229 / 43°6'26" N – 23.624721 / 23°37'29" E

Address: on the banks of the Iskar River, in Liutibrod village on DN 16, Liutibrod village, Vratsa district

Ritlite is a natural attraction, part of the territory of the "Vrachanski Balkan" Natural Park, located on the rocky slope above the Lyutibrod village, on the left bank of the Iskar River. This wonderful work of nature consists of four almost parallel vertical walls, with a length between 200 and 500 meters and a thickness between 3-7 meters. The rock is formed 120 million years ago from durable limestone, from the deposits on the seabed that covered these areas and formed by folding the Alps-Himalayan mountain range. Similar formations exist on the opposite side of the river, but they are smaller in size.

Legend has it that long ago there was a massive iron door that closed the path to the old Bulgarian city of Serdika. The objective derives its name from the fact that arrangement of the rocks looks like the side walls of a cart drawn by ritli oxen. Since 1938 these rock formations have been included in the Register of protected territories and protected areas in Bulgaria.



Secondary School  
"Ivan Vazov"  
ОУ „Иван Вазов“

Department of Interior  
РДВР

UNICREDIT BULBANK  
Уникредит Булбанк

Kosser  
Косер

Emily Bistro  
Кафене "Емили"

"Baba Vida" Fortress  
Средновековна  
Крепост Баба Вида

Baba Vida Riverside Cafe

Vidin synagogue

Sveta Petka

PPMG "Exarch Antim I"  
ППМГ „Екзарх  
Антим I“

PRAKTIS Vidin  
PRAKTIS Видин

"Monument of  
Freedom" town. Vidin  
"Паметникът  
на свободата"

Historical Museum  
Исторически  
музей - Конака

Medical Center  
"Biomed 99"  
МЦ „Биомед 99“

Св. вмчк Димитър  
Солунски

Sveti Nikolay

Параклис „Свети  
Пимен Зографски“

Stambol Kapisi  
Стамбол капия

Hotel "Bononia"  
Хотел "Бонония"

Hotel "Anna-Christina"  
Хотел „Анна-Кристина“

Hotel "Vidin"  
Хотел "Видин"

Vidin Municipality  
Община Видин

Bank UniCredit Bulbank

BBQ „Дунава“

Port "Vidin"  
Пристанище "Видин"

SPA Hotel "Neptun"  
Хотел и СПА  
център "Нептун"

Catholic Church

Църква Царството  
на Бога Видин

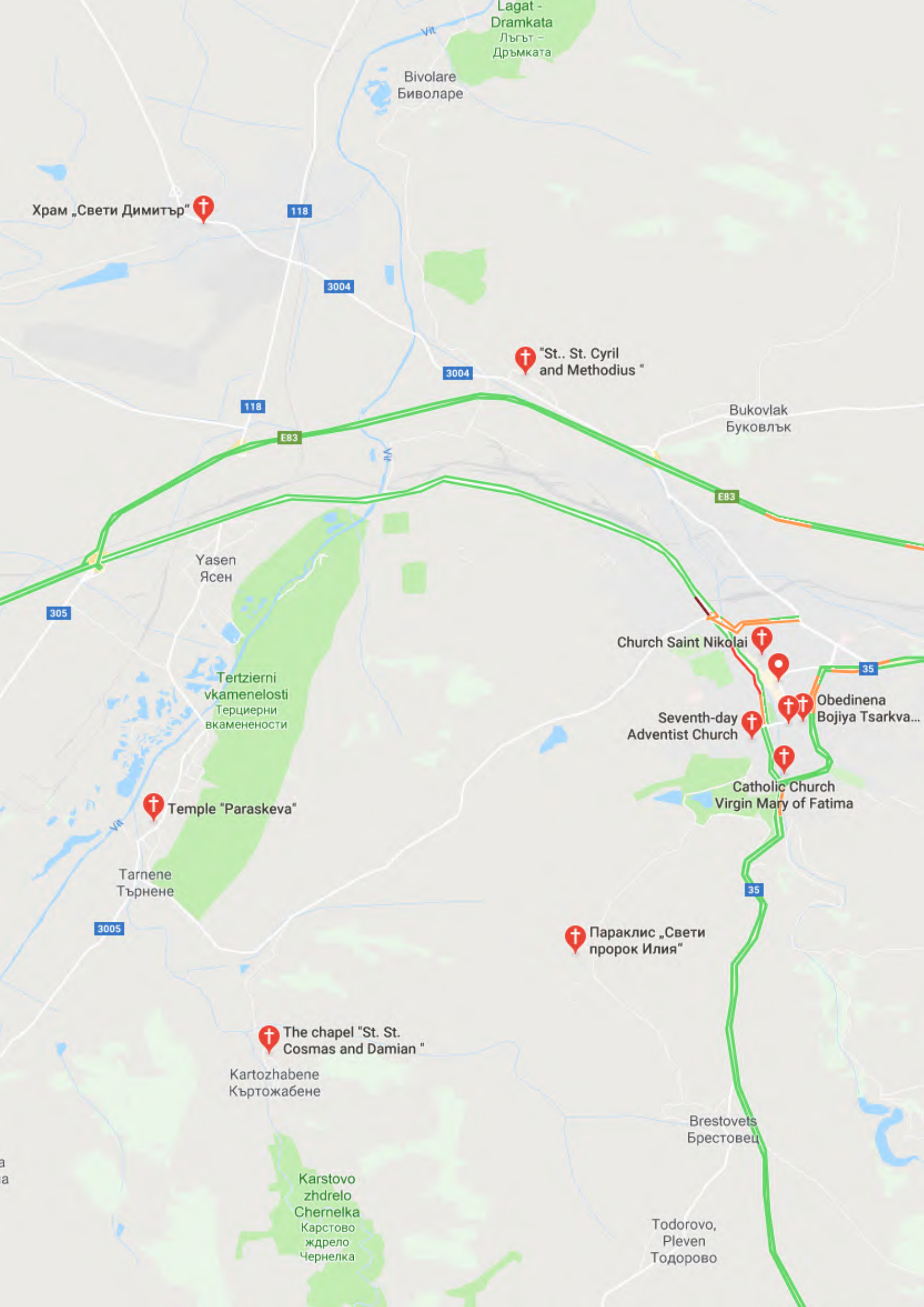
Bulgaria  
Romania

Danube

Ostrovul  
Calafatul Mic

България  
Romania





Храм „Свети Димитър“

118

3004

Bivolare  
Биволаре

Lagat -  
Dramkata  
Лъгът -  
Дръмката

“St.. St. Cyril  
and Methodius ”

3004

118

E83

Bukovlak  
Буковлък

E83

Yasen  
Ясен

305

Tertzierni  
vkaменelosti  
Терциерни  
вкаменености

Temple “Paraskeva”

VII

Tarnene  
Търнене

3005

The chapel “St. St.  
Cosmas and Damian ”

Kartozhabene  
Къртожабене

Karstovo  
zhdrelo  
Chernelka  
Карстово  
ждрело  
Чернелка

Church Saint Nikolai

Seventh-day  
Adventist Church

Catholic Church  
Virgin Mary of Fatima

Obedinena  
Bojiya Tsarkva...

35

Параклис „Свети  
пророк Илия“

Brestovets  
Брестовец

Todorovo,  
Pleven  
Тодорово

## PLEVEN DISTRICT

### Introduction

Pleven district is located in the north central part of Bulgaria, in the geographical area of Mizia, in the middle of the distance between the Danube river and the Stara Planina Mountains. The district covers an area of 4,653 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 4.19% of the total area of the country. According to Eurostat, in 2018, in the Pleven district there was a population of 244,209 inhabitants. The district is composed of 11 municipalities. The main administrative center of the area is the city of Pleven (the seventh largest nationally, located approximately 100 km from the capital Sofia).

From the point of view of cultural heritage, 400 historical and cultural monuments of local and national importance are registered in the Pleven district.

Among the most well-known cultural heritage objectives we can find: Panorama building "Plevenska epopeya 1877-1878" (built in 1977 for the 100th anniversary of the liberation of Pleven from Ottoman domination), "Storgoziya" Fortress (where the ruins of a fourth-century Christian basilica were discovered), the ruins of the Roman city Ulpiya skus (located on the route of a bicycle touring circuit), the Nikopol Fortress (the most important fortified citadel during the Second Bulgarian Empire). The archaeological discoveries of the Pleven district date from prehistoric, Thracian, ancient, Middle Ages. From the point of view of religious places of worship, there are numerous churches and monasteries in the district, the most famous being Skalna tsarkva „St. Stephen "(former monastery complex from the X-XI century, at present there is only one church carved in the rock; on the walls of the rocks one can admire Christian frescoes dating from the III-IV centuries).

The natural heritage of the Pleven district includes many sights that can be visited, the most known being: Park "Kaylaka" (with an area of 10 ha, located near Pleven city), Persina Natural Park (the only natural park in Bulgaria placed along the Danube river), Chernel canyon (within which a tourist route has been arranged for ecological visits), the "Kupenite" rock formations (near which the Skoka waterfall and Kaleto forest park can be visited).

The Pleven district has numerous cultural and natural tourist objectives for practicing cultural, religious, spa, sports etc.

## CHURCH OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL OF NIKOPOL

Titular saint: "Saints Peter and Paul"

Localization/address: street parallel to Vasil Levski street, in the center of Nikopol, district Pleven

Access road: D34, then the local road parallel to D52, relatively good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.704653 / 43°42'16" N – 24.896127 / 24°53'46" E

The church dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul in Nicopol is known by the locals as "the small monastery". Situated at the base of the city's fortification, the church is a medieval building, probably built somewhere between the 13th and 14th centuries, certainly existing during the Second Bulgarian Empire. It first appeared in the historical references in 1871, in a record of Felix Kanitz, who notes that it was used at one time as the cathedral of the local Catholics. In another historical writing by George Bals in 1914, the church is presented as being already in ruins. It is only in 1927 that it is declared a historical monument. It is a small building, about 10 x 7 meters, with the entrance on the south side of the nave. The inner nave of the church is shaped like a cross. The exterior is made of false red brick arches and white stone. Unfortunately, the state of construction is not very good, the western part is almost completely ruined.





### Hotel-restaurant Gold

GPS coordinates: 43.701660 / 43°42'6" N – 24.895055 / 24°53'42" E

Address: deviation from Vasil Levski street, Nikopol, Pleven district

## THE CHURCH-MAUSOLEUM OF ST. GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS IN PLEVEN

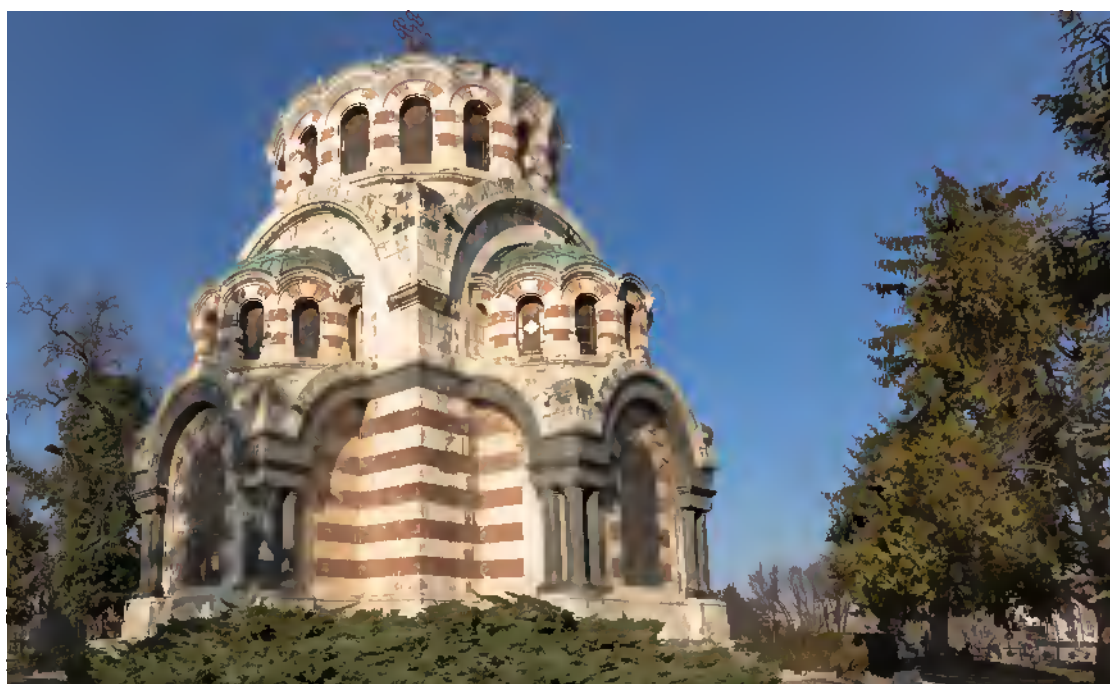
Titular saint: „Saint George"

Localization/address: Renaissance Square, in the center of Pleven, Pleven district

Access road: E83, then D35, then Kiril si Metodiu street, towards the center of Pleven, Pleven district, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.407924 / 43°24'28" N – 24.619368 / 24°37'9" E

Built in memory of the Russian-Turkish Liberation War of 1877-1878, the Sf George Chapel of Orthodox Rite honors the memory of the fallen soldiers in the 1878 siege of Plevna. The remains of the 31,000 Russians and 7,500 Romanians are buried in the mausoleum crypt. The mausoleum was built in 1903-1907, for the 30th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria. The project is elaborated by the architect Penceo Koicev, and the iconostasis is the work of the painters Ivan Markvichka and Anton Mitov. The chapel has a Bulgarian-Byzantine style, with cross domes. It has a central dome 24 m high and four more side domes. The facade is built with horizontal brick and stone belts on an area of 452 square meters. The chapel is part of the 100 national monuments of Bulgaria.





## THE CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS IN PLEVEN

Titular saint: "Saint Nicholas"

Localization/address: Stambolov Square, in the center of Plevan, Plevan district

Access road: E83, then D35, then Ruse Boulevard, then Dimitar

Konstantinov street, Plevan, Plevan district, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.412827 / 43°24'46" N – 24.616626 / 24°36'60" E

It is located in the city center, near the Theater Square and near the Tsar Osvoboditel Museum House. It is a valuable monument of Christian architecture, being built on the site of a 13th century chapel, built by traders from Dubrovnik. In 1834 a new place of worship was built, in the form of a basilica with three naves. Important moments from the struggle for church and national independence are linked to its name. The iconostasis and archery throne, as well as icons of the painter Demetrius Zograf are preserved. It has the largest collection of icons, 68 pieces, belonging to the Samokov School of Painting.



## THE HOLY TRINITY CHURCH IN PLEVEN

Titular saint: „Holy Trinity“

Localization/address: Street San Stefano, no. 7, in the center of Plevan, Plevan district

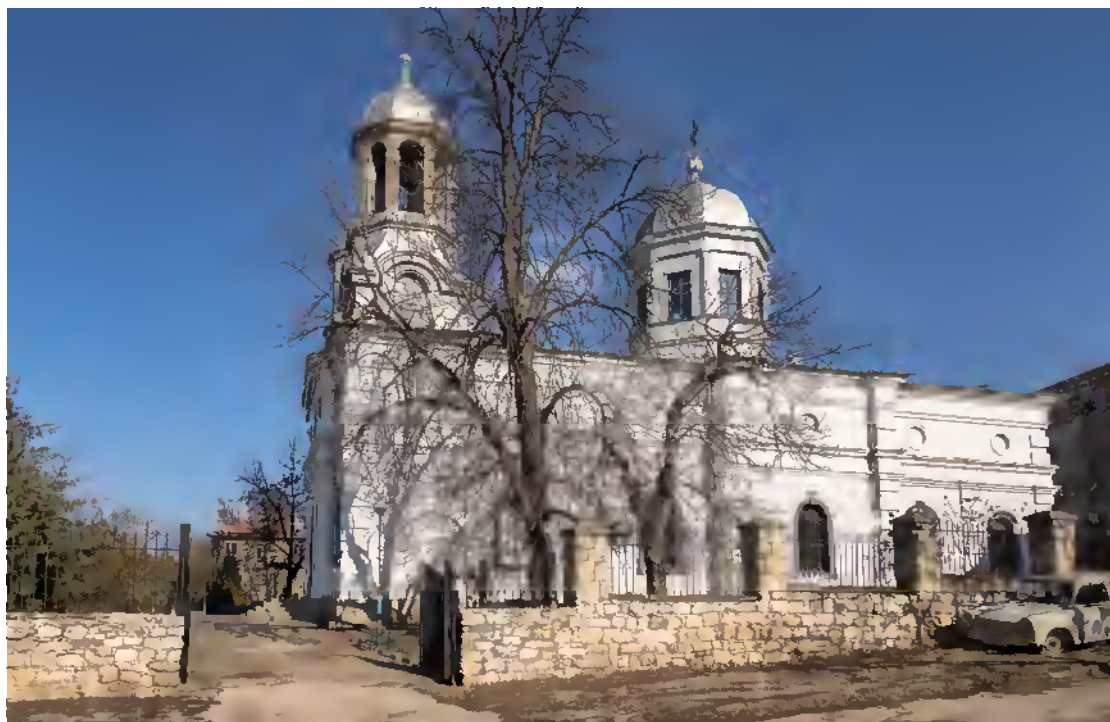
Access road: E83, then D35, then Boulevard Hristo Botev, then Shipka Street, Plevan,

Plevan district, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.404925 / 43°24'17" N – 24.620909 / 24°37'15" E

Until 1870, in place of the church Holy Trinity there was a small old church and a school. The desire of the entire society in the city was to have a new place of worship, so between 1893-1898, the architect Vyachelslav Gavarda made a

new project, and the construction was done by the entrepreneur Ivan Okoliyski of Tryavna, under the patronage of the town hall. The construction was completed in 1912, resulting in a tall, massive church made of stone and brick, in the form of a majestic basilica with three naves, an apse and pronaos, and three domes. The columns in the nave are of Roman origin. The iconostasis is high, and the icons come from Galicnik (Macedonia) school masters Danail Nestorov, his cousin Oventiy Isachev, Aleks Vassilev and Adolf Sedov. The interior was painted by prof. Iliya Pefev, also descendant of the masters of the Debar School, between the years 1940-1946.



## SAINT PARASCHEVA CHURCH IN PLEVEN

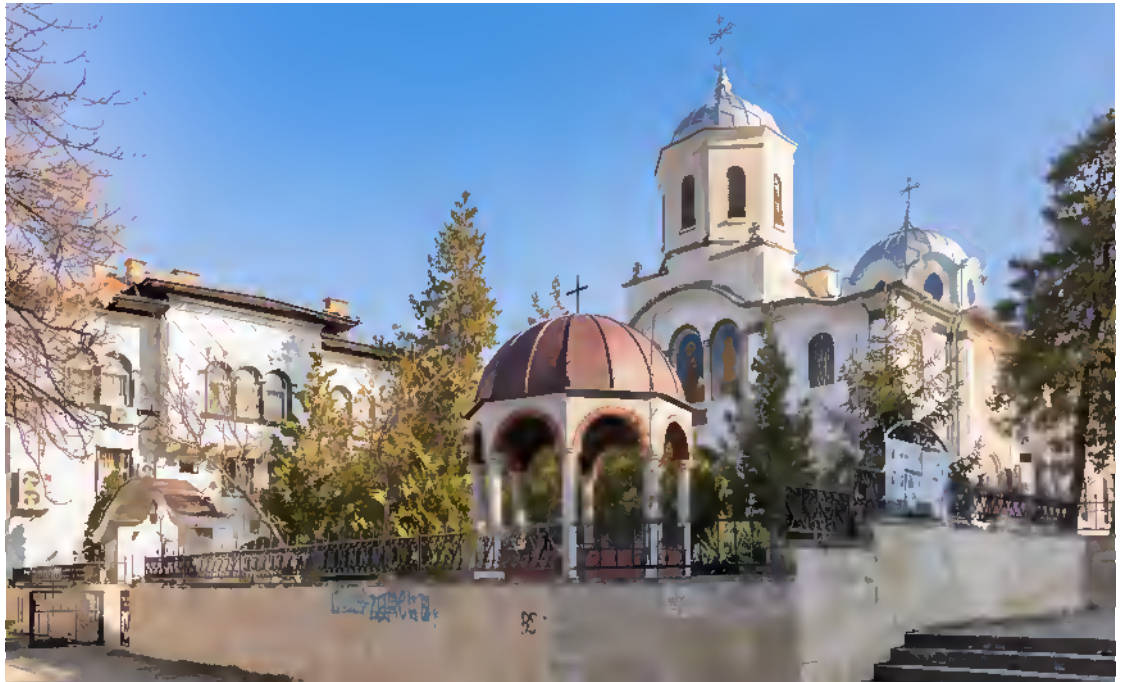
Titular saint: „Saint Parascheva”

Localization/address: St. Parascheva Street no. 1, in the center of Plevna, Plevna district

Access road: : E83, then D35, then Boulevard Georgi Kochev, then Grenaderska street, then Petko R. Slaveykov street, Plevna, Plevna district, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.415828 / 43°24'57" N – 24.617164 / 24°37'1" E

The first church dedicated to Saint Parascheva has been erected since 1523, being a wooden construction, next to a monastery school attested in 1857. The building was rebuilt between 1870-1879 and transformed into a basilica with three naves, a nave supported by three old columns and two domes, with an ante-temple and two side spaces, the execution being entrusted to craftsmen belonging to the Triavna School. The church was consecrated by the first Bulgarian exarch, Antim I. The icons were donated by artisans from the region, and the mural icons were painted by the painter Serbezov. There is a Sunday school for children and a center for social activities near the church.



#### Museum of the Epic Panorama 1877

GPS coordinates: 43.398876 / 43°23'56" N – 24.607181 / 24°3'25" E

Address: Skobelev Park, Pleven, Pleven district

This unique museum in Bulgaria was raised in honor of liberating Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. Construction began on January 19, 1977, and the official opening took place on December 10, 1977, exactly 100 years after the liberation of Pleven. The authors of the architectural design are the architect Plamena aceva and its colleague Ivo Petrov.

The museum is built right on the battlefield, in the Skobelev Museum-Park. The Panorama Museum is part of the monuments built in memory of the Russians, Romanians and Bulgarians who died in the Russian-Turkish liberation war and is included in the 100 national tourist objectives.. The building is shaped like a cone trunk, framed by four stylized bayonets. A bayonet ring symbolizes the city blockade, and the three horizontal rings represent the three attacks on the town of Pleven. The museum is organized into four halls:

- Introductory Hall - includes 4x3.60 meters paintings, reflecting the period of Ottoman oppression, the April Rebellion, the Saint Petersburg Manifesto in support of the Bulgarian people, the Russian Army crossing the Danube River, the protection of the flag of Samara, the Battle of Shipka.

- The Panoramic hall - on a panoramic linen cloth, with a total area of 2,375 square meters, was recreated the bloodiest battle of Pleven, the third assault on the redoubt from September 11-12, 1877.

- Diorama projection hall - on a canvas sized 17 x 5 meters was presented the

last battle for Pleven, fought at night on the valley of the Vit river, on December 10, 1877.

- The final hall –on two paintings sized 4 X 3.60 meters, is presented the capitulation of Osman Pasha and the crossing of the Balkan Mountains by the Russian army in the middle of winter.

Also, in the museum we can see many exhibits related to this historical moment, weapons, uniforms, personal belongings of officers and soldiers, documents with unique value.

### Skobelev Park

GPS coordinates: 43.398876 / 43°23'56" N – 24.607181 / 24°3'25" E

Address: Skobelev Park, Pleven, Pleven district

This open-air park is dedicated to the Russian general Skobelev, being officially opened on September 3, 1907, in the presence of the Bulgarian king Ferdinand I, as well as numerous high-ranking guests from Russia, ministers, deputies, citizens and guests of Plevna. This park has been declared a cultural monument of national importance. It was created at the initiative of the "Tsar Alexander II" Committee, with Stoyan Zaimov as chairman.

It is located on the spot where the troops led by General M. D. Skobelev carried out the heaviest fighting during the third assault on the city of Plevna on December 11-12, 1877. The main entrance represents a stylized cannon. In the center of the park was built a mausoleum with the role of an ossuary, called the Brotherhood Hill, above which are cannons from the Russian-Turkish war, and at the top is located the cross of St. George for bravery. The names of the soldiers in the regiments of the division led by General Skobelev are inscribed in elliptical medallions, and their bones are stored in a polished black granite sarcophagus.

### Kaylaka Natural Park

GPS coordinates: 43.391960 / 43°23'31" N – 24.622266 / 24°37'20" E

Address: the entrance at the end of San Stefano street, on the outskirts of Plevna, Pleven district

Kaylaka Park is a protected green area with a total area of about 10 square km, on the outskirts of Plevna. The canyon of the Tuchenitsa River is a suitable home for rich and diverse flora and fauna, being a place where there are numerous species of protected animals and plants, all included in the Red Book. There are fossils of ancient aquatic organisms in the limestone rocks. In its first part, the one immediately after leaving the city, the park is arranged for



leisure, being a suitable place for walks, recreation and entertainment. In the park there are lakes and artificial dams, boats and bicycles, swimming pools, hotels, bars, cafes, restaurants, discos, playgrounds, tennis courts, a zoo and a summer theater.

The fitting of this natural area in a park began in 1946, at the initiative of General Ivan Vinarov and under the leadership of the Kaylaka Construction Committee. The first designer of the park was the architect Tiholov. The urbanization and systematization process lasted about twenty-five years, and now this park offers a unique combination of recreation and entertainment possibilities, even for those who prefer extreme sports, because the high rocks over 200 meters are suitable for practicing recreational mountaineering.

#### Wine museum

GPS coordinates: 43.357101 / 43°21'25" N – 24.635630 / 24°38'19" E

Address: inside Kaylaka Natural Park, on the outskirts of Pleven,  
Pleven District

The Wine Museum, located in Kaylaka Park, is a project unique in Bulgaria, being arranged inside a cross-shaped cave. It was established in 2008 and is the result of a collaboration between Bulgarian and French architects, wine experts from Pleven and the Pleven History Museum. The town of Pleven was chosen for the implementation of this project because it is considered as the first center of the Bulgarian wine industry.

The first professional school of viticulture and oenology in Pleven was started in 1890, and in 1902 the National Wine Institute of Bulgaria was created. The collection inside the museum is arranged into five cave galleries, with a total area of over 650 square meters and contains more than 7,000 bottles, from all known varieties in Bulgaria, some wines between the ages of 90 and 40 years. Visitors have the opportunity to taste and learn about wine history and different varieties of wine.

#### Hotel-restaurant Grivita

GPS coordinates: 43.413718 / 43°24'49" N – 24.691277 / 24°41'28" E

Address: entering Grivita village, near Plevn, Plevn district

#### Hotel-restaurant Rostov

GPS coordinates: 43.410761 / 43°24'38" N – 24.617896 / 24°37'4" E

Address: Street Tsar Boris III no. 2, in the center of Plevn, Plevn district

#### Restaurant Top Table

GPS coordinates: 43.410624 / 43°24'38" N – 24.618064 / 24°37'5" E

Address: Street Tsar Boris III no. 2, in the center of Plevn, Plevn district

#### Hotel-restaurant Parc Kailaka

GPS coordinates: 43.376943 / 43°22'37" N – 24.621946 / 24°37'19" E

Address: inside the Kailaka Natural Park, on the outskirts of Plevn, Plevn district

#### Hotel-restaurant Vila Kailaka

GPS coordinates: 43.357886 / 43°21'28" N – 24.635253 / 24°38'7" E

Address: inside the Kailaka Natural Park, on the outskirts of Plevn, Plevn district

## DISTRICTUL VELIKO TÂRNOVO

## Introduction

Veliko Târnovo district is located in the north-central region of Bulgaria, its territory being crossed to the north by the Danube river and to the south by the Stara Planina Mountains. The area of the district is 4,661 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents 4.19% of the area of Bulgaria. In 2018 the registered population was 239,132 inhabitants, according to data provided by Eurostat. From the administrative point of view, the district is divided into 10 municipalities. The main urban center is the city of Veliko Târnovo, which is an important hub for rail and air transport. The city is of particular historical importance, being the capital of the country during the second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1396).

Numerous buildings belonging to the cultural and historical heritage are identified in Veliko Târnovo district, of which 140 heritage objects of national importance. Most of these fall into the category of religious places of worship (churches, monasteries) and archaeological sites. Among the most important cultural objectives are: the Roman fortress Nicopolis ad Istrum (the city was established between 101-106 by Emperor Trajan), Samovodska charshya (traditional craft center), the open air Ethnographic Museum Etar (the first of its kind in from Bulgaria; it shows local architectural exhibits as well as traditions and crafts specific to the area), Bozhentzi architectural and historical reservation, Trapezitsa fortress.

The Veliko Tarnovo district is one of the three historical centers of Christianity in Bulgaria. During the period of the Second Bulgarian Empire, numerous churches and monasteries were built in this region, tourists having the opportunity to visit more than 15 of them, which are still operating. Among the most impressive places of worship are: Monastery of Dryanovo "St. Archangel Michael", Kilifarevo Monastery "Birth of the Virgin Mary", Plakovo Monastery "St. Ilie", the two monasteries in Arbanassi as well as the Church "St. 40 Martyrs".

The district occupies an important and very favorable geographical position with a varied landscape consisting of fields, hills, the Danube river and the Stara Planina mountains. There are numerous thermal springs in the district. The most popular natural sights include Devetashka Cave (structured on 2 galleries and crossed by 14 springs), Emen Canyon and Momin Skok Waterfall - the Negovan ecological trail, Zandana Rock.

## THE HOLY TRINITY CHURCH IN SVISHTOV

Titular saint: „Holy Trinity”

Localization/address: Svoboda Square, in the center of Svishtov, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: D52, then street Hr. Pavlovich, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.616101 / 43°36'57" N – 25.350880 / 25°21'3" E

The orthodox church “Holy Trinity”, located in the highest place of the town of Svishtov was built in 1867. This is one of the last works of the Koliyev master from Tryavna. The church has three naves, a central dome and three other sides, with specific decorations on the exterior facade, with false arches and stone cornices. The bell tower was built by master Genceo Novakov in 1886. The church surprises with its unique construction, with two columns at the gate that are centered near its own axis. The iconostasis is made by the master Anton Stanishev, from the Debar School. Several icons, respectively 79, are painted by Nikolai Pavlovich from Svishtov. Another 120 icons are the work of Danail Nestorov, the descendant of some craftsmen from Debar. The six bells with the face of some Christian saints are donated by the Russian Tsar Alexander II.



## MONASTERY CHANGE OF THE FACE IN SAMOVODENE

Titular saint: „Change of face”

Localization/address: between the town of Samovodene and Veliko Târnovo, on the side, access road, the district of Veliko Târnovo

Access road: E85/D5, then deviation about 3 km., asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.116802 / 43°7'0" N – 25.607288 / 25°36'26" E

The monastery is located 7 km from Veliko Târnovo, on the left bank of the river Iantra, near the town of Samovodene, being at the beginning a



metat of the Vatodedia monasteries in Sveta Gora. This is the largest monastery in the region, being founded by Tsar Ivan Shisman and his mother, Theodora-Sara, in the fourteenth century. The historical sources recall it as the monastery of Shisman or Sara. It is the fourth largest in the country. After the fall of Târnovo under Ottoman rule, in 1393, the monastery was immediately burned down. It was rebuilt by the monk Zotih in 1825, in a rectangular shape.

The monastery church was built by Dimitar Sofianliata in 1834, and after its death the works were resumed by Kolio Ficeto and Ivan Barnata, in 1837. It has three apses, shape of a cross and a dome. Kolio Ficeto builds the bell tower, and later, in 1863, the small church is built over the old chapel. The interior and exterior painting was done by another great master, Zaharii Zograf from the Samokov School, in 1851. Extremely interesting and valuable is the calendar painted with the Wheel of Life. Inside the monastery there is an exhibition with extremely valuable manuscripts and books.



## Nicopolis ad Istrum

GPS coordinates: 43.220131 / 43°13'12" N – 25.612251 / 25°36'44" E

Address: access from E85 / D5, then deviation about 3 km., between Kutina village and Polikraishte village, Veliko Târnovo district

The ancient Roman town of Nicopolis ad Istrum was founded by Roman emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus, in honor of the victory of his armies over the Dacians in the second century. The name means the City of Victory near the Danube. The city was built in the classic Romanian urban system of

orthogonal type. In the ruins around the central market, called Agora. You can still see the traces of a basilica, a small theater, a public bathroom, other public buildings and shops. There were water pipes in the city, and in some buildings there was central heating through the floor.

The town also issued its own currency. The population had a different ethnic composition. Against barbaric attacks at the end of the 2nd century, defense walls were built. Following the invasion of the Atila Huns in the fifth century, as well as the one of the damage from the beginning of the 6th century, the city was destroyed, being relatively abandoned. However, here there was a Bulgarian settlement from the X-XIV centuries of minor importance.

### Kaya Bunar Waterfall

GPS coordinates: 43.146373 / 43°8'47" N – 25.515248 / 25°30'55" E

Adresa: acces Address: access from E85 / D5, then to Samovodene on D504, then D3031 to Hotni a village and then local road about 5 km., Veliko Târnovo district

Kaya Bunar Waterfall is located in a natural area with a special beauty, at the end of the Bohot River Gorge, which runs through the highlands of Târnovo. The waterfall is spectacular, with a height of about 30 meters. This natural attraction is declared a protected area. In the area there is an ecological path, with many bridges and stairs, which allows tourists to easily explore the beautiful view because they have it in front of their eyes.

### CATHEDRAL OF THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN VELIKO TÂRNOVO

Titular saint: „Nativity of the Virgin Mary”

Localization/address: Sveti Kliment Ohridski Street, pedestrian area in the center of Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, towards the center of Veliko Târnovo, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.081225 / 43°4'52" N – 25.643379 / 25°38'36" E

The church is located in the old town center of Veliko Târnovo, at the foot of the fortress Tareve, in the Boierilor district, near the Metropolitan building of Veliko Târnovo. On the foundations of an older church, the craftsman Kolio Ficeto builds the present church, between 1842-1848, made of carved sandy sandstone and red brick, with cornices and double arches. It is unique due to the four columns, the ellipsoidal windows, and the three naves and two rows of capitals inside. The bell tower on the western wall is also built by Kolio Ficeto. The church was destroyed in the earthquake of 1913, being rebuilt in

1934, following the plans of Master Grozo. The wood carvings are by Peter Kuslev, from the Debar School, and the royal portal carved in oak is elaborated by prof. Travni ki. The painting is done by prof. Kojuharov, Peter Seferov, Atanas Veleb and D. Ghidjenov.



#### CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN VELIKO TÂRNOVO

Titular saint: „Assumption of the Virgin Mary”

Localization/address: Sveti Kliment Ohridski Street, intersection with 23 December Street, on the bank of the Yantra River, Veliko Târnovo town, Veliko Târnovo district

Drum de acces: E85/D5, apoi D514, apoi strada Sveti Kliment Ohridski

GPS: 43.085770 / 43°5'8" N – 25.649974 / 25°38'60" E

The church is located in the neighborhood of As ne ti, opposite the church "St. 40 martyrs", on the left bank of the river lantra. It is built over an old medieval church, in which Tsar Asan Kaloian received the relics of St. Filofteia from Târnovo, a holy healer. Today her relics are kept in Romania, at Curtea de Arge . In the fourteenth century, here were crowned the two wives of Ivan Alexandar, Theodora of Wallachia, the daughter of the voivode Basarab I, and Sara, of Jewish origins. In 1843, the church was renovated and painted, but by the end of the 19th century the paintings had already disappeared. In 1923, the church was restored. It has a dome and a single apse, surrounded by brick walls. The old icons are the most valuable part of this church. The icon of St. Petka the miracle doer, with inscriptions in Greek, dates from 1854 and was donated by a Turk, because the icon has cured his sick children. Most icons in the church are dated in the 16th-19th centuries, and the icons of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ the Savior date from the 16th century. It was found that some of the icons were brought from the neighboring medieval

churches. There was an old iconostasis, now disappeared, and the present one is 4 meters high and was made by Ilia Kosev. In 2005, the church was painted again.



#### CHURCH OF THE 40 MARTYRS FROM VELIKO TÂRNOVO

Titular saint: „40 Martyrs”

Localization/address: Sveti Kliment Ohridski Street, on the banks of the Yantra River,  
Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, asphalt very good

GPS coordinates: 43.085072 / 43°5'6" N – 25.649659 / 25°38'58" E

Built in the 13th century, in honor of the victory of Tsar Ioan Asan, on May 9, 1230, over the ruler of Epirus, Teodor Komnin, this church represents the most important medieval monument in Veliko Târnovo. Until then, there was an eleventh-century necropolis in this place, and probably later the "Virgin Mary" church was erected. The current church has three apses, six columns inside, an ossuary mausoleum and two galleries. In the church, a mural painting from the 13th century is kept. In the eighteenth century the Turks transformed the church into a mosque, destroying the paintings and icons. Inside the Church "40 martyrs" are buried the Tsar Kaloian (died 1207), the Tsarinas Ana Maria, Irina and St. Sava of Serbia. In the church was also found the ring and seal of the Tsar.

Over the centuries, the church has often been rebuilt. In this place, many events of national importance took place, the most important being the proclamation of the independence of Bulgaria by Tsar



Ferdinand, in 1908. The church was declared a monument of architecture of national importance, being in the administration of the Regional History Museum in Veliko Târnovo.

## THE CHURCH OF SAINT DEMETRIUS FROM THESSALONIKI IN VELIKO TÂRNOVO

Titular saint: „Saint Demetrius”

Localization/address: Tsar Ivan Shishman Street, intersection with Patriarh Evtimiy Street, on the bank of the Yantra River, Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo District

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, asphalt very good

GPS coordinates: 43.087699 / 43°5'15" N – 25.648121 / 25°38'53" E

It is the oldest church in the city, erected in 1185 and is related to an important historical event, namely the rebellion of Peter and Asan against the Byzantine rule. Here were buried the tzars of the Asenevci family, Assan - the father and Kaloian. In the 17th-18th centuries, there was a necropolis and a monastery. The church is narrow, with galleries in the north and south, with a cross shape, and cross towers. It is built with the features typical of the Middle Ages, with inserted ceramic tiles and rosettes made of stone and brick. The church itself has a special, medieval air, being particularly picturesque as architecture. It is declared a monument of national value, being administered by the Veliko Târnovo Regional History Museum.



## Tsarevets Fortress

GPS coordinates: 43.081664 / 43°4'54" N – 25.646132 / 25°38'46" E

Address: arul Asen Square, in the center of Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

The architectural and museum complex called Tsarevets is located on the hill with the same name in the old center of Veliko Târnovo. The area has been

inhabited since the year 3 BC, and in the century V-VII A.D here was the great Byzantine city of Zikideva. In the 9th century, a settlement was erected by the old Bulgarians, protected by the walls of the fortress. Târnovo was proclaimed capital of the second Bulgarian Kingdom in 1185, and the fortress became extremely important as an administrative, military, cultural, religious and commercial center. On the Tsarevets hill were located the important buildings for the administration of the country, the royal palace complex, the houses for aristocracy, monasteries, and right on top the Patriarchal Church. The fortress has three entrances, namely the main entrance, the small gate (Asen) and the Frenkhisarska gate, which was guarded by towers. The most famous is the Baldwin Tower, where the Latin emperor Baldwin of Flanders was imprisoned in 1205. The kings who ruled the second Bulgarian Kingdom in the city of Tsarevets are Asen I, Peter IV, Kaloyan, Ivan Asan II, Ivan Alexander, Ivan Shishman. A great tourist attraction is the audiovisual show of sound and light, consisting of hundreds of colored lights, music, and lasers projected on the walls of the fortress and which present moments from the history of Bulgaria.

#### Monument of Asenevtsi

GPS coordinates: 43.082050 / 43°4'55" N – 25.637887 / 25°38'16" E

Address: Sveta Gora, Alexander Stamboliyski Street, in the center of Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

The Asenevtsi monument was built in 1985 in the city of Veliko Tarnovo, for the 800th anniversary of the rebellion of the brothers Asen and Peter, of the Asenevtsi family. We are talking about 2 of the 3 brothers in this family, who ruled Bulgaria after her liberation from the Byzantine Empire. The first two, namely Asen and Petru, raised the Bulgarian population in the Târnovo region and their brother, Kaloyan, managed to make Bulgaria one of the most important forces in Eastern Europe, being the first and only Bulgarian leader to have defeated a Crusader army. The upward sword symbolizes the medieval power of Bulgaria. The monument of impressive proportions is located on a picturesque spot, near the Stambolov Bridge at the foot of Mount Athos, on the bank of the Yantra River.

#### Hotel-restaurant Panorama

GPS coordinates: 43.084682 / 43°5'5" N – 25.636306 / 25°38'11" E

Address: Stefan Stambolov Street no. 63, in the center of Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

#### Restaurant EGO 2 Pizza & Grill

GPS coordinates: 43.084634 / 43°5'4" N – 25.635782 / 25°38'9" E

Address: Stefan Stambolov Street no. 79, in the center of Veliko Târnovo, Veliko Târnovo district

## THE CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS THE WONDER MAKER IN ARBANASI

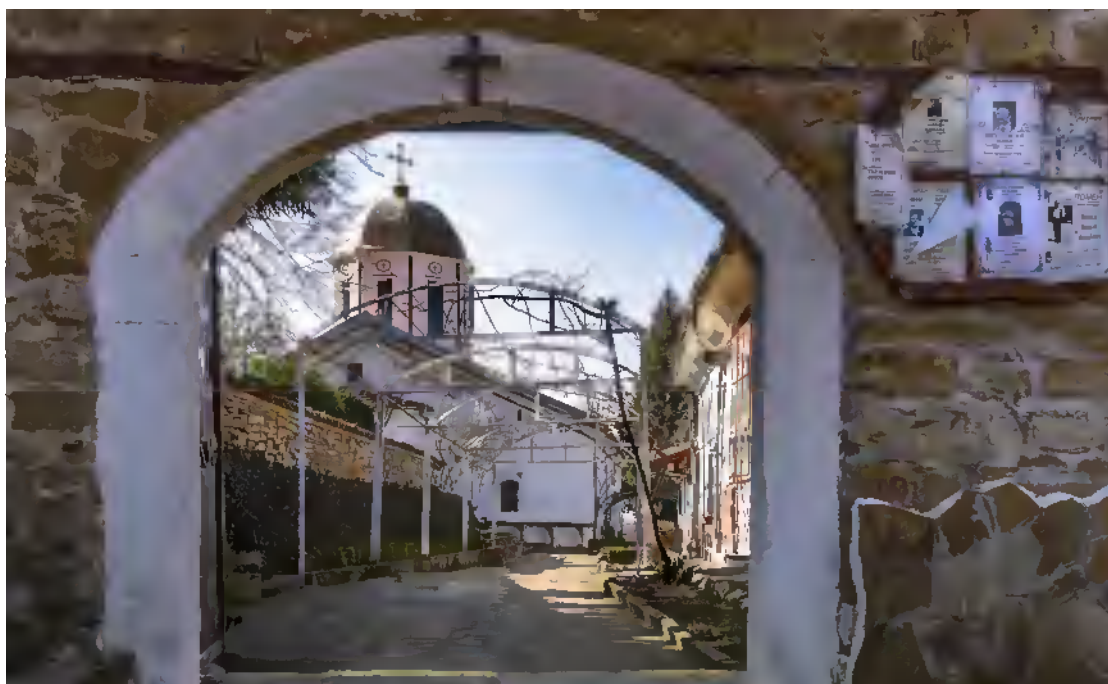
Titular saint: "Saint Nicholas"

Localization/address: St. Nicholas Street no. 11, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, direction Arbanasi, then at the entrance to the village deviation towards Sfântul Nicolae street, asphalt very good

GPS coordinates: 43.095971 / 43°5'45" N – 25.664160 / 25°39'51" E

It is 5 km from Veliko Târnovo, on the road to Gorna Oryahovitsa, at the entrance from the southwest part of the village of Arbanasi. The monastery was destroyed by the Turks and restored in 1680. The church and chapel, which is dedicated to "Saint Ilie", have well preserved frescoes, each with a unilateral semi-cylindrical vault and a nave. The iconostasis is from the 17th century, with polychromatic sculptures, and the icons in the chapel are made by a representative of the school of painting from Tryavna. Particularly valuable is the second chapel, made in 1746, where we can see the wooden cross inlaid with stones and enamel.



## CHURCH ASSUMPTION OF VIRGIN MARY IN ARBANASI

Titular saint: „Assumption of the Virgin Mary”

Localization/address: St. Nicholas Street, parallel street deviation, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, direction Arbanasi, then at the entrance to the village deviation towards Sfântul Nicolae street, asphalt very good

GPS coordinates: 43.097903 / 43°5'52" N – 25.659941 / 25°39'35" E

The monastery is located on the road between Veliko Târnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa, at the entrance to Arbansi village. The monastery was built

during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, the Shishman Dynasty. After the fall of Târnovo fortress under Turkish rule, the monastery hardly survived, but was subsequently abandoned due to repeated destruction. In the XVII-XVIII centuries, the locals rebuild it. After 1716, many residential buildings were built, and not only, which modeled the current monastery complex. The entrance is through the north side. The chapel of the church has the typical architecture of the churches in Arbanasi. The bell tower was built in 1836. The church is entirely painted mural, with two layers of painting. There are beautiful frescoes from 1600-1603 and from 1704. In the church are kept the relics of St. Modest and of St. Ecaterina. In the monastery museum several heritage objects and holy relics of silver and gold are kept.



#### CHURCH OF SAINT DEMETRIUS FROM ARBANASI

Titular saint: „Saint Demetrius”

Localization/address: Sveti Dimitar street, intersection with Kapitan Pavel Gramadov street, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D514, direction Arbanasi, then Georgi Anagnosta street, then Sveti Dimitar street, asphalt very good

GPS coordinates: 43.098341 / 43°5'54" N – 25.667766 / 25°40'4" E

It is the oldest religious monument in Arbanasi. The current church has a massive, very long form, with a double roof, glued to the mortar and wooden santrachi, with small windows and side niches. It is built of brick and stone and has a complex architecture typical for local churches. It is located in the center of the village, in a large courtyard, the land being donated by Georgi and Fragula. The painting is representative of the medieval Bulgarian period. The iconostasis dates from 1794, being worked by the Dimu and Lada craftsmen.



Currently, the mural is being restored, the church being closed for visits.



#### Hotel-tavern Izvor

GPS coordinates: 43.097887 / 43°5'52" N – 25.666021 / 25°39'57" E

Address: Opalchenska Street no. 3, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

#### Hotel-tavern Arbansi Han

GPS coordinates: 43.099743 / 43°5'59" N – 25.665750 / 25°39'56" E

Address: George Kandilarov Street no. 3, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

#### Tavern La Fântân

GPS coordinates: 43.097691 / 43°5'51" N – 25.668556 / 25°40'6" E

Address: Spiro Street Konstantinov no. 7, Arbanasi village, Veliko Târnovo district

### CHURCH OF SAINT ARCHANGEL MICHAEL OF KILIFAREVO

Titular saint: „Saint Archangel Michael"

Localization/address: in the center of Kilifarevo, Veliko Târnovo district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D55, direction Kilifarevo, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 42.994791 / 42°59'41" N – 25.617568 / 25°37'3" E

The monastery complex is on the way to Hainboaz Pass, 14 km from Veliko Târnovo and 5 km from Kilifarevo, on the banks of the Belitsa River. It was founded between 1348-1350, by Theodosius Turnovski, a prominent representative of the literary school in Târnava, assisted by Tsar Ivan

Alexander (1331-1371). The monastery was transformed into a literary center, with about 460 clerics, including Patriarch Eftimie of Târnova, Romul Vidinski and others. After the fall of Târnovo fortress in 1393, it was completely destroyed by the Turks. It was rebuilt in 1718, and destroyed again between 1793-1798. It was rebuilt in 1842, by Kolyu Ficheto, who builds the new church with the dedication to St. Demetrius and the residential buildings. The old church dedicated to the "Birth of the Virgin Mary" has become a chapel. There are interesting old frescoes and the icons are made by masters from the painting school in Tryavna. The iconostasis of St. John of Rila is worth seeing and admired. Today it is a monastery for nuns.



## MONASTERY KAPINOVO IN VELCEVO

Titular saint: „Saint Nicholas the Miracle doer”

Localization/address: on the bank of the Veselina river, on the outskirts of the Velcevo village, district Veliko Târnovo

Access road: E85 / D5, then D55, direction Kilifarevo, then D551 direction Plakovo - Velcevo, asphalt in good condition

GPS coordinates: 42.978761 / 42°58'43" N – 25.746427 / 25°44'47" E

It is one of the most beautiful monasteries in Bulgaria, being located in an area with a wonderful natural landscape, at a distance of 14 km from Veliko Târnovo and 5 km from the village of Velcevo. The monastery church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, it was built in 1272, by Tsar Constantin Asan-Tih (1257-1277) or Tsar Ivan Asan II (1214-241). After the fall of Târnovo under Turkish rule in 1393, the monastery was destroyed by the Turks and restored by the local population in the 17th

century. Abandoned in 1835, was restored by craftsmen from the city of Dryanovo. Today's church is without a tower, with an apse, a nave, an outdoor courtyard, with constructive wooden columns and a railing. The iconostasis and icons are made by representatives of the Tryavna School. The complex consists of two chapels and several residential buildings, built and grouped in the form of an arch, surrounded by a large wall.



#### Kapinovski Waterfall

GPS coordinates: 42.976649 / 42°58'36" N – 25.747901 / 25°44'52" E

Address: between the villages Velcevo and Kapinovo, district Veliko Târnovo

Kapinovsky waterfall is a small waterfall on the Veselina River, having a waterfall of only 6-7 meters. The lake below the waterfall is deep about 5-6 meters. It is at the end of the canyon near the Elena Peak.





## RUSE DISTRICT

## Introduction

Ruse district is located in the northern central region of Bulgaria, being delimited in the north by the Danube river, in the border with Romania. Its area is of 2,803 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 2.52% of the national territory, and the population registered in 2018 according to Eurostat statistics was of 221,336 inhabitants. From the administrative point of view, the district is divided into 8 municipalities. The main urban center is the city of Ruse, the fifth largest at national level, which is strategically important from the perspective of the transport and transit routes (it is a road, rail and river transport hub).

There are numerous cultural heritage objectives in the district, including an objective included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. The most popular cultural objectives are: The Freedom Monument (in the central market of Ruse), the Regional History Museum, the Kaliopa House, the Zahari Stoyanov Museum-House, the National Transport Museum, the Renaissance Pantheon, the archaeological remains of the Pristina Sexaginta fortification (where wine tastings are organized) and the city medieval Cherven (built on the site of a Byzantine fortress, the fortress was one of the most important commercial and military points in the 11th century).

Regarding the heritage objects in the category of religious places, the most popular destination in the Ruse district is the Dimitar Basabovski Rock Monastery, but of great religious importance is also the Holy Trinity Monastery in Ruse.

From the perspective of the natural resources from which the Ruse district benefits, the most well-known objectives are Lipnic Forest Park, Prista Park and Rusenski Lom Natural Park (where you can visit the Rusenski Lom River Canyon, the Tabachka Village Caves and the Orlova Chuka Cave in Pepelina Village).

In the Ruse district, numerous cultural and folklore events are also organized. The material and immaterial heritage found in Ruse confirms the potential for development of all types of tourism in this district.



## MONASTERY OF ST. DEMETRIUS BASARBOV

Titular saint: „Saint Demetrius Basarbov”

Location / address: exiting Basarbov village, Ruse district

Access road: E85 / D5, then D501, asphalt in good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.767026 / 43°46'1" N – 24.964069 / 25°57'50" E

This monastery is close to the city of Ruse, in the picturesque cliffs around the Rusenski Lom River and is the only rock monastery still functioning. It is a monument of architecture, culture and pilgrimage from the 13th century. The monastery is part of the chain of rock monasteries along the Rusenski Lom River. During the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, many monks, inspired by their faith in God and their desire to lead an honest and modest life, take refuge and live in several rock monasteries.

In the fourteenth century, the monastery was under the authority of the Bessarab I voivode of the Romanian Country, related to the Bulgarian dynasty through his daughter Theodora, the first wife of Tsar Ivan Asan (1331-1371). According to the legends, Bessarab I established this monastery, making many donations. The monastery bears the name of Demetrius Basarbov, also called St. Demetrius the New. He was a historical personality who was born and lived in Basarbovo village. In the vicinity of the village he discovered this cave monastery, where he led the life of a hermit. When he felt his end near, he sat on the banks of the Lom River between two slabs, creating his own coffin. When they removed him from the water, his body was untouched and he was buried in the village church, erected in place of his birthplace, and later his remains were moved to this monastery. After the first Russian-Turkish war of 1774, the relics of St. Demetrius Basarbov were transferred to Bucharest, whose guardian he is today, celebrated on October 26th. The construction is dug in the depth of the rock, at the entrance having a niche in which lived St. Demetrius Basarbov. The monastery is recently renovated, with railings and access steps installed, and the mural paintings have been restored. In 2005, the Romanian Patriarchate donated a small part of the relics of the saint to the monastery.



## HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY IN RUSE

Titular saint: „Holy Trinity"

Localization/address: Holy Trinity Square no. 5, Ruse, district Ruse

Access road: E70 / D2, then Shipka street, Tsar Osvoboditel street,  
General Parensov street, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.847706 / 43°50'51" N – 25.956218 / 25°57'22" E

The church is the oldest building in the city, built on the ruins of a 5th century church. It is a solid construction, a basilica with three separate seven-column naves, deeply buried in the ground. A large Russian-style cube was built behind the entrance, and the church has five bells. There are two chapels, the first dedicated to St. Alexander Nevsky, built in 1884 and where a museum exhibition is arranged, and the second one, dedicated to St. Kiril and Methodius, built in 1886. The iconostasis of the church and the icons are made by an unknown master. Between 1989-2000, extensive restoration work was carried out here. The church is declared a cultural monument of national importance.



## SAINT GEORGE CHURCH IN RUSE

Titular saint: „Saint Great Martyr George"

Localization/address: Street 6 September no. 61, Ruse, Ruse district

Access road: good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.836873 / 43°50'12" N – 25.956582 / 25°57'23" E

It was built on the ruins of the old wooden church, burned during the Russian-Turkish war of 1806-1812. After obtaining permission from the Ottoman

rulers, Major Penko Nikeoglu from Tryavna rebuilt it only in 1843. It is a large basilica, deep dug into the ground, with three altars: the one in the center is dedicated to St. George; the one on the North – to St. Diemetrius Basarbov, and the one in the South - to St. Nicholas. The nave is separated from the rest of the church by 6 wooden columns.

It is painted by Apostol Hristov, a disciple of the Debar School, and later the painting is restored by Nikola Kozhuharov and Tcanko Gheorghiev. The iconostasis is the work of the sculpture school of Tryavna, being executed by Dontcho Todorov and Bozhko Stoyanov. The icons are also an achievement of the Tryavna School, being executed by Zachary Tsanyuv and Yoanikiy Pope Vitanov, in 1842. The bell tower was erected in the complex around the church, in 1909, and in 1939 a paraclis was built, dedicated to John of Rila. There is also a large church house built, here the library and conference rooms are found. In the church a part of the relics of Saint George, chosen in 2002 as protector of the city of Ruse, is preserved.



#### Cave Orlova Chuka

GPS coordinates: 43.593430 / 43°35'36" N – 25.959808 / 25°57'35" E

Address: access from E85 / D5, then D5001, then D501 and deviation about 5 km., near Dve Moghili village and Pepelina village, Ruse district

The Orlova Chuka cave is located on the right side of the Cherni Lom river valley. It is a geological formation most likely to have appeared at

the end of the Pliocene and the beginning of the Quaternary, on the riverbed of an underground river, which has dug a complex system of tunnels, passages and openings. The cave has a total length of almost 13.5 km, thus being the second largest in Bulgaria, after the Duhlata cave. It was discovered in 1941 by a shepherd from the area, and has been open to the public since 1957. The cave is divided into several rooms: Concert Hall, Great Gallery, Great Grotto, Little Grotto, Space Hall and Rest. The cave offers visitors the opportunity to admire a wide variety of rock formations. When researched by specialists, remains of bears and artifacts from the life of cave people were found here. At the same time, the cave is home to 14 species of bats, three of which are included in the Red Book.

#### The medieval fortress Cerven

GPS coordinates: 43.622440 / 43°37'20" N – 26.025070 / 26°1'30" E

Address: access from E85 / D5, then D501 and deviation about 5 km., near Cerven village, on the Cherni Lom river valley, Ruse district

During centuries XII-XIV, the medieval Bulgarian city of Cherven was one of the most important military, cultural and religious centers of the second Bulgarian Kingdom. It was built on the site of a 6th-century Byzantine fortress, but there is archaeological evidence that the site was populated even earlier by Thracian tribes. After 1253, it became very important due to the establishment of the headquarters of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Bulgaria here. The fortress suffered great damage during the Mongol invasion of the Golden Horde and was conquered by the Byzantines between 1278-1280. The discovered infrastructure represents a fortified city, located on a large ridge of stone along the Cherni Lom River. The city was a and developed commercial and crafting center, located at the crossroads of some commercial roads in the area. When it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1388, the city was largely devastated. Archaeological excavations revealed the remains of a large feudal palace, walls of the fortress, two underground tunnels, traces of 18 churches, buildings of public administration, residential buildings, workshops, streets. One can admire a fully preserved citadel tower from the 14th century.

Cherven Fortress is declared an archaeological reserve of national importance.

#### Regional history museum in Ruse

GPS coordinates: 43.844479 / 43°50'40" N – 25.947612 / 25°56'51" E

Address: Kneaz Alexander Batenberg Square nr. 3, Ruse, district Ruse

The regional history museum in Ruse was established in 1904, through the collection of the School Museum in the city. The current building, known as

the Battenberg Palace, is one with a special historical significance, being built as the residence of Prince Alexander I Battenberg. The Regional History Museum of Ruse includes exhibitions of the History Museum, Renaissance Pantheon, House of the Ruse Gradski Museum (known as the Kaliopa House), Zahariy Stoyanov Museum- House, Toma Kardzhiev Museum-House and three outdoor exhibitions: The rock churches Ivanovski, the medieval city Cherven and the Roman fortress Sexaginta Prista. Among the most interesting exhibits are: the collection of prehistoric ceramics, a collection of prehistoric mammal bones, the Borovo treasure from the 4th century BC. , artifacts from the old Danube castle Iatrus and Sexaginta Prista, objects from the medieval Bulgarian city of Cherven, medieval frescoes, ethnographic collections, personal belongings of the Bulgarian revolutionaries, numismatics collection.

#### Eco-museum with aquarium in Ruse

GPS coordinates: 43.844479 / 43°50'40" N – 25.947612 / 25°56'51" E

Address: Alexandrovska Street no. 3, Ruse, Ruse district

"The Eco-museum with aquarium" is located in a heritage building built at the beginning of the 20th century. The Natural History Museum of Ruse was inaugurated on September 28, 2014. It is unique in Bulgaria due to the Danube fish aquarium on the floor. There is also a 15-meter scale model of the Orlova Chuka cave and the Ivanovski rock monastery. There is a rich collection of prehistoric mammal bones, including the lower jaw of Mamutus Romanos, the jaw of a cave bear and others, fossils of different molluscs, realistic dioramas. On the last floor is presented a model of the first railway line from Bulgaria, the Ruse-Varna route, the first map of Bulgaria and many more.

#### Roman fortress Sexaginta Prista in Ruse

GPS coordinates: 43.847016 / 43°50'49" N – 25.945471 / 25°56'43" E

Address: Tsar Kaloyan street no. 2A, Ruse, Ruse district

The Roman fortress Sexaginta Prista bears this name, meaning "port of the sixty ships", due to the victories over the Dacians during the wars waged by the Roman emperor Domitian (years 85-89). Then, at the mouths of the Rusenski Lom river, a Roman legion was transferred, i.e. 6,000 soldiers, for whom exactly 60 pristine ships were needed. The fortress built by the Romans appears on the ruins of an ancient Thracian settlement, where many artifacts have been found. The settlement proved an intense commercial activity during the emperor Vespasian (years 69-79). On the territory of the fortress there are remains of a Roman military headquarters, used from the first third of the 4th century



until the first decade of the 5th century, coins and ceramics, a tunnel built of stone, used during the Ottoman period, which can be reached with the help of 30 stairs. The fortress was destroyed during the attacks of the Avars and the Slavs, at the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century. During centuries IX - X on the ruins of this fortification was founded the medieval settlement Ruse, which played an important administrative and military role in the Middle Ages. Modern discoveries began with the excavation works of the Military Club, but the systematic archaeological investigations took place between 1976-1978 and 2005-2006. As a result, about 50 meters of wall of the northwest wall of the fortress and the tower, six buildings, the temple of Apollo and the Principia building, i.e. the headquarters of the military unit in Sexaginta Prista, were discovered. The structures discovered in 1976-1978 were preserved, and in 2002 the archaeological exhibition "Sexaginta Prista" was opened.

#### Hotel-restaurant Riga

GPS coordinates: 43.853023 / 43°51'10" N – 25.951217 / 25°57'4" E

Address: Pridunavski Street no. 22, Ruse, Ruse district

#### Hotel-restaurant Dunav Plaza

GPS coordinates: 43.849378 / 43°50'57" N – 25.954089 / 25°57'14" E

Address: Svoboda Square, in the center of Ruse, Ruse district

#### Restaurant La Ponton

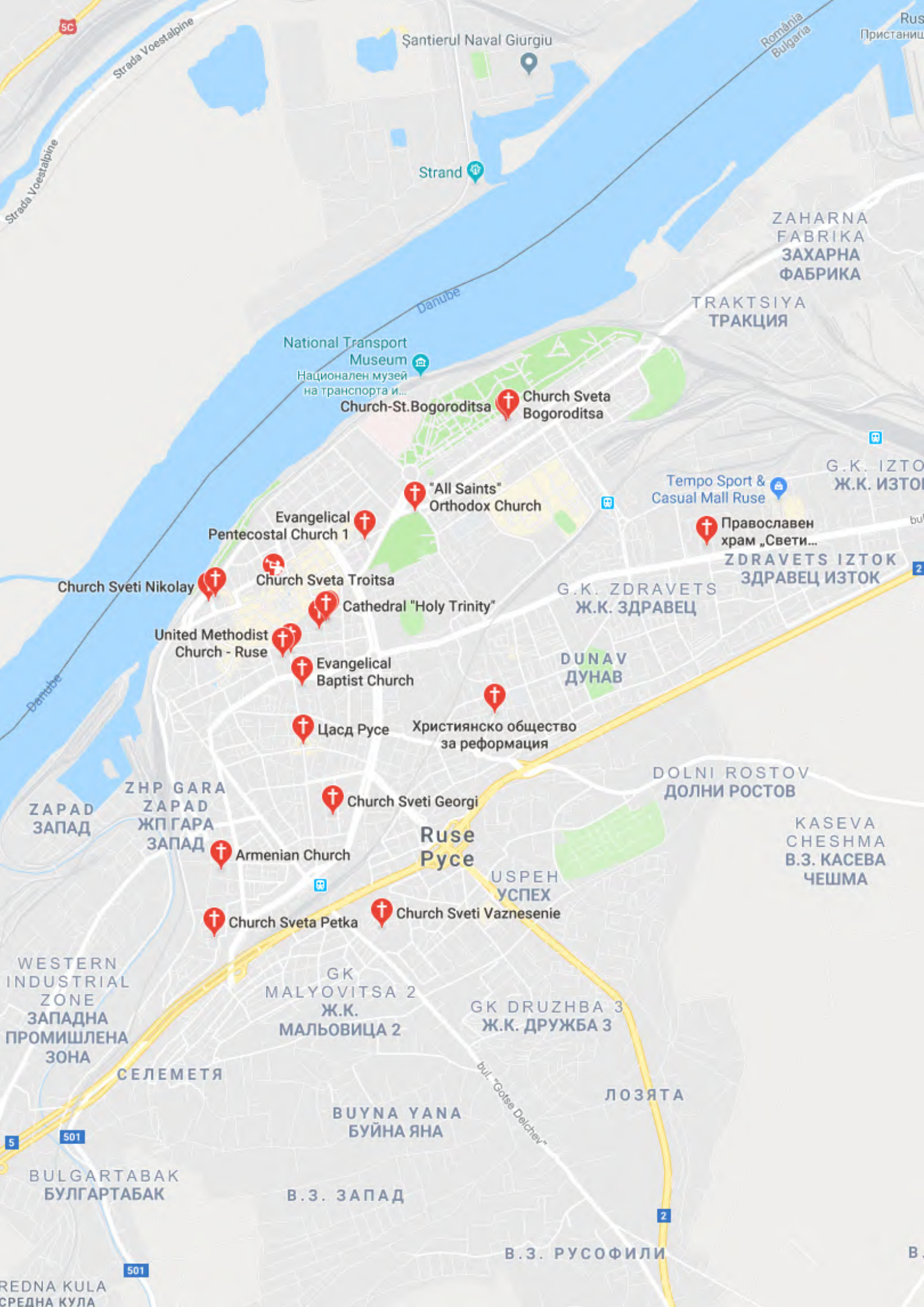
GPS coordinates: 43.854841 / 43°5'17" N – 25.952941 / 25°57'10" E

Address: Pristanishtana street no. 2, Danube promenade in Ruse, Ruse district

#### Restaurant La Street

GPS coordinates: 43.850958 / 43°51'3" N – 25.955588 / 25°57'20" E

Address: Alexandrovska Street no. 77, pedestrian area in the center of Ruse, Ruse district







# ROMANIA



## MEHEDINTI

Mehedinți district is located in the southwestern part of Romania, in the South-West Oltenia development region, on the left bank of the Danube, at its exit from the defile. It is contiguous to the south-east with Dolj district, to the west with Caras-Severin district, to the north with Gorj district, and to the south with two of the Balkan Peninsula states, respectively Serbia and Bulgaria, the Danube river forming with them a natural border along a length of 195 kilometers. Mehedinți district covers an area of 4,933 km<sup>2</sup>, occupying 2.1 % of the territory of the country, with a population of 245,120 inhabitants in 2018, according to Eurostat.

Mehedinți district comprises, from an administrative point of view, 5 towns out of which 2 municipalities, 61 communes and 344 villages. The district seat is Drobeta-Turnu Severin municipality. The other towns and municipalities are: Strehaia, Orsova, Baia de Arama and Vânju Mare.

Mehedinți district registers 700 historical monuments as part of the material cultural heritage. Of these, 23 buildings belong to religious places of national importance. The localities on whose territory these places are found are the municipality of Drobeta-Turnu Severin, Baia de Arama, Strehaia, the commune of Ilovat, the commune of Shimian, the commune of Butoiești and the commune of Izvoru Bârzii. The most famous places of worship located on the territory of Mehedinți district are: the ruins of the Medieval Church from Drobeta-Turnu Severin, the ruins of the Vodita Monastery, the Strehaia Monastery, the "Holy Trinity" Church, the "Church of the Head of Saint John the Baptist". Particular importance in relation to the religious tourism practiced at local level can also be granted to: The Wooden Church of St. Apostles Peter and Paul of Brebina (1757), the Wooden Church of St. Voivodes from Godeanu (1783), the Wooded Church of St. Voivodes from Isverna (1783), the Royal Church of Holy Trinity in Cernei (1663), the church of the former monastery St. Voivodes of Baia de Aram (1699), the Greek church in Drobeta-Turnu Severin (1803), the monastery Gura Motrului (1512), the Topolnicea hermitage of the St. Cross (1646), Monastery of Mraconia (1453).

The anthropic heritage is complemented by historical monuments, archaeological remains, memorial houses throughout the district.

The most famous buildings of cultural heritage located on the territory of Mehedinți district are: Iron Gates Museum, Drobeta-Turnu Severin Art Museum, Bibescu Mansion from Corcova, Theodor Costescu Cultural Palace, Ada-Kaleh Architectural Complex, Traian's Bridge, Drobeta Fortress, Ostrovul Mare archaeological site. A monument of particular tourist importance is the statue of Decebal's face, which is the tallest stone carved statue in Europe.



On the territory of Mehedinți district numerous festivals and feasts are organized each year, both at town level and in various communes (for example, the Lily Festival in Ponoarele commune, the Vineyard and Wine Festival in Vânju Mare commune, the traditional Otto Alscher song and dance festival in the city of Orsova, etc.).

Mehedinți district is also noted for its varied natural heritage. The district territory is largely subscribed to the relief form of the Mehedinți Plateau, which is made of crystalline and limestone shales, with altitudes between 400 and 600m. The presence of limestones has favored the appearance of karst phenomena of surface and in depth: keys, caves, valleys, natural bridges, underground courses, slopes, dry valleys, dolines, of great beauty and admired by all who visit them. Among the most famous natural formations in the Mehedinți Plateau are: Topolnita karst complex (included in a 50 hectare reserve; the most important formations are Topolnita Cave and Topolnita Gorges), karst phenomena from Isverna (include Isverna Cave, which houses a rich cave fauna and Isverna spring under Cornetu Hill), cave Gura Ponicevei. Other natural objectives of particular importance from the point of view of tourism valorization potential are the Portile de Fier Natural Park, the Mehedinți Plateau Geopark (in the perimeter of which most of the natural areas from the district level are found) and the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park.

Of particular interest for tourism is the Danube Gorge area, in the area of the Boilers, which has received its name from the successions of enlargements and narrowings (gorges) caused by the alternation of rocks. The most spectacular natural landscape of the entire Danube is the Big Boilers and Small Boilers.

Through its natural and ethno-cultural heritage, the Mehedinți area offers the possibility of developing all the main forms of tourism: scientific, cultural, religious, rest and recreation, rural, ecotourism, birdwatching, silvotourism, speotourism, cyclotourism, mountain-bike, nautical, cruise, spa.







## MONASTERY OF MRACONIA (OLD NAME MRĂCUNEA)

Titular saint: „Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel” and „Holy Trinity”

Location / address: at the exit of Mraconia Bay, Mehedinți district

Access road: DN 57, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.637316 / 44°38'14" N – 22.293386 / 22°17'16" E

Located near the town of Or ova, the Mraconia monastery has, according to some opinions, its beginnings in the eleventh century, during the Glad and Ohtum voivodes. It appears mentioned in the historical sources before the end of the fourteenth century. In 1453, because of the Turkish incursions, the monks were forced to leave the settlement. Between 1521-1523, the ruler of Severin, Nicola Gârli teanu, his wife, Anca, and their daughter, Irina, the wife of the ruler Ubul and their daughter, Nasta, re-founded the monastery. Even so, it was quickly ruined due to the numerous Turkish-Tatar incursions. Between 1658-1665, it was again repaired by monks, supported by the locals.

During the wars between the Turks and the Austrians, carried out between 1670-1682, it suffered numerous damages (in 1682 it was set on fire by the marlats). In 1690, the first attempts were made to "convert" the monks from Mr cunea to "Catholicism". In 1715, a Turkish mob killed almost all the monks (only one escaped). In 1738, it was burned by the Austrian troops, and in 1788, it was destroyed by the Turks. In 1934, through the efforts of the bishop of Caransebe , Vasile Lazarescu and of the protopop Iosif Câmpianu from Or ova, a new burnt brick church was erected, in the form of a cross and covered with metal sheet, but remained unfinished for a long time. In the first two decades of the communist regime, it functioned as a chrim church. In 1968, as a result of the work done at the Iron Gates I hydroelectric power station, the old church was covered by the Danube waters. The present settlement was built after 1989, on a new site, becoming a monastic settlement in 2007.



### Mraconia Bay - statue of the Dacian king Decebal

GPS coordinates: 44.640879 / 44°38'27" N – 22.293924 / 22°17'38" E

Address: Mraconia Bay

This impressive statue was dug directly into the rock by a team of 12 climbers, coordinated by sculptor Florin Cotarcea. The artistic creation represents the face of the Dacian king Decebal and is the largest sculpture made in nature in Europe, with a height of 55 meters and a width of 25 meters. For this impressive work was done for 10 years, between 1994 and 2004, being financially supported by the Romanian businessman Iosif Constantin Dragan, who could see his work completed 4 years before his death in 2008.

### Hotel-restaurant Steaua Dunarii

GPS coordinates: 44.674828 / 44°40'29" N – 22.321010 / 22°19'16" E

Address: Danube Street, Eselni a Commune, Mehedinti district

### MONASTERY „SAINT ANNE”

Titular saint: „Saint Anne”

Localization/address: exiting the town of Orsova, str Pamfil Seicaru

Access road: DN6 / E70, then Boulevard 1 December 1918 and Pamfil Seicaru Street, ascending up the hill to the end

Asphalt, very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.4711857 / 44°42'43" N – 22.396947 / 22°23'49" E

It was founded by the journalist Pamfil Seicaru (1894-1980), between 1936-1939, based on a project by the Bucharest architect Stefan Peterneli. Due to some misunderstandings arising between the founder and the bishop Vasile Lazarescu (the future metropolitan of Banat), the consecration of the future nun monastery with the dedication "Saint Anne" (after the name of the founder's mother) was postponed. The outbreak of the Second World War and then the establishment of the communist regime made that the monastery remained unconsecrated until December 2, 1990. Between 1993-1997, the monastery underwent restoration work.

The architecture of the monastery is in the manner of our old wooden churches, with the inherent modernization brought to the traditional Romanian rustic style. The settlement has the form of the letter "U", in the center being the church, in trilobal plane and central tower; on the two sides are the rooms which, together with the church, close an inner courtyard. In the 70's of the twentieth century, the painting was covered



with a layer of lime, today preserved in its original form only in the tower. The iconostasis, carved in lime wood (relocated in 1947, to the Timiseni monastery in Sag commune, district Timis), like the other wood carvings (including the crosses destroyed by the communists in the years 1960-1965) were executed by the Popa brothers from Bucharest.



#### Iron Gates Region Museum, Orsova section

GPS coordinates: 44.722649 / 44°43'21" N – 22.394430 / 22°23'39" E

Address: Street Portile de Fier no. 32, Orsova, Mehedinti district

Starting with December 2018, a new section of the Iron Gate Museum has opened in Orsova. Arranged in a building provided by the Town Hall, the museum is a modern space, equipped with all the facilities, in which you can admire the traces left by history in these places. It has within it three exhibition registers with distinct themes: nature sciences, history-archeology and ethnography. The collections of the objects exhibited here bring to the visitors images of the tumultuous history of these places, the life of the Turkish locals on the island of Ada Kaleh, as well as complex dioramas with the beauty and wildness of the Iron Gates National Park. There are exhibited collections of weapons of various types, as well as household objects or with cultural and religious significance. Visitors can admire a space with objects and the interior of a traditional Ottoman house. Another exhibition is dedicated to the species of plants, animals and fish that live in this region with the specific Mediterranean climate. New as a way of exposition is a hologram presenter, who appears in the form of an old Turk, and the story told by him carries the imagination of tourists in a foray into the glamorous history of these places.

#### Hotel-restaurant Meridian

GPS coordinates: 44.725141 / 44°43'30" N – 22.394466 / 22°23'40" E

Address: Street Eroilor no. 12, Orsova

#### B&B Oliver

GPS coordinates: 44.725399 / 44°43'31" N – 22.399117 / 22°23'56" E

Address: Boulevard 1 December 1918 no. 16A, Orsova

## Monastery Vodita

Titular saint: "Saint Anthony the Great" and "Birth of the Virgin Mary"

Location / address: on the Danube gorge, between the Iron Gates and Orsova

Access road: DN 6 / E60 very good asphalt, then deviation about 2 km,  
relatively good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.724274 / 44°43'27" N – 22.488537 / 22°29'20" E

It was one of the first monastic settlements with public life erected on Romanian lands, being the first founding of Saint Nicodemus in our country. It was built on the ruins of an older settlement, probably from the time of Litovoi (dead in 1273). The founding act of the monastery dates from 1374; however, it is assumed that it was ready for completion around 1369. According to other opinions, the building began in the spring or summer of 1370, the painting being done in 1371 or in 1372. The ruler of the Romanian Country, Vlaicu Voda (1364-1377) and Lazarus of the Serbs (1371-1389) contributed to its construction. St. Nicodemus lived here for a while. For a while, the abbot of Vodita and Tismana was the same person.

Vodita had a shaky existence due to political conditions; located near the Hungarian Catholic kingdom, the Banat of Severin was conquered, on several occasions, by Hungarians. The holy place had much to suffer from these protests, Catholic propaganda hampering the existence of Vodita. The last time it was mentioned in the letter of Radu the Handsome, from July 10, 1464. At the beginning of the 16th century, Vodita has been plundered, burned and crushed by the Turks. Between 1662-1667, some monks from Vodita went to Russia for help. At the beginning of the 18th century, the monks of Tismana tried to rebuild the holy place. It was ruined permanently because of the frequent wars between the Austrians and the Turks. After 1990, through the efforts of the abbot Nicodim Nicol escu, the current bishop of Severin and Strehaia, the monastery was re-established, receiving the dedication of Saint Anthony the Great, which it had, seemingly, since the time of Saint Nicodemus. The church is built of wood, in the Maramures style and was consecrated in 2001.



## MONASTERY CERNETI

Titular saint: "Holy Trinity" and "Holy Great Martyr Anastasia Romana"

Localization/address: in the commune of Imina, Cerneti village, Mehedinți district

Access road: DN 6 / E60 (Drobeta Turnu Severin belt) very good asphalt, then DJ 607A relatively good asphalt and then local road 23 relatively good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.634249 / 44°38'3" N – 22.707635 / 22°42'27" E

For a long time throughout history, the village of Cerneti was a cause of misunderstanding; the Buzesti boyars (and not only), the Govora and Tismana monasteries and, later, Cozia claimed their right to the village. While the abbots and the boyars sought justice from the ruler of Craiova, the ruler Mihnea Voda (1658-1659) started the founding of a monastery in Cerneti. The work was continued at the expense of Grigore Ghica (1660-1664), being completed before November 9, 1662. In 1663, the Cerneti monastery was dedicated to the Tismana monastery. During the reign of Serban Cantacuzino (1678-1688) and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), the monasteries Tismana (with the Cerneti monastery as subordinate), Govora and Cozia tried to acquire the Cerneti estate and village. Although on October 22, 1702, the dispute between the three monasteries ended, reaching an agreement, the Cerneti monastery will not rest, mainly due to Tismana's demands to collect all the income obtained from the Mehedinți monastery. Thus, on May 25, 1714, the ruler Stefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716) allowed the abbot of Tismana to "remove priest Stoica from the royal church in Cerneti" because he had not fulfilled his financial obligations.

On April 18, 1716, the bishop Damaschin of Ramnicu asked the Cerneti monastery to pay its dues, the priests being threatened with the exclusion. The opposition continued throughout the eighteenth century. On this occasion, on June 13, 1752, the great ruler Barbu Văcărescu, was conducting a thorough research on the Balta Verde and Batoti estates of the Cerneti monastery. This is the last time a reference is made to the monastic settlement in Cerneti, after this date we will only talk about the church in Cerneti. The main cause of the abolition of the monastic settlement was the lack of a secure fortune that would allow it to survive. The church was rebuilt in the period 1784-1794. In 2005 the settlement was re-established as a monastery for nuns. In 2007 work began on the construction of the annexed buildings.



### Theodor Costescu Cultural Palace

GPS coordinates: 44.624034 / 44°37'26" N – 22.654256 / 22°39'15" E

Address: Carol I Boulevard, no. 4, Drobeta Turnu Severin

A representative building located right in the center of Drobeta Turnu Severin is Theodor Costescu Cultural Palace, which bears the name of its founder, Professor Theodor Costescu. This remarkable culture man was at first manager of the local high school, then was elected president of the Theater Society, devoting all his energy and work to make this wonderful construction, destined to be the first public theater in the town. He managed in a few days to obtain by public subscription the entire amount of money needed to finance the building. The project was prepared by the architect Grigore Cerkez and the foundation stone was laid in 1912, the theater being completed in 1924. Immediately after the inauguration he managed to offer the spectators a new and rich artistic life.

Years had their say on the building, but starting with the fall of 2010, Theodor Costescu Cultural Palace has entered into a total rehabilitation project, which was completed in 2015, so that this symbol of culture and art now offers a picture truly worthy of its glorious past.

### The medieval fortress of Severin

GPS coordinates: 44.622047 / 44°37'19" N – 22.657042 / 22°39'25" E

Address: Port Street no. 5, Drobeta Turnu Severin

The medieval fortress of Severin was built in the 13th century at the initiative of the Hungarian Kingdom, which erected this fortress for defense on the southern border of the Banat of Severin. The first garrison of the fortress was formed by the knights of St. John. The fortress had a strategic position, being located on the Danube and in the immediate vicinity of the old Roman fort Drobeta. The construction was carried out during the XIII - XV centuries, during which the fortress was permanently fortified, enlarged and strengthened. The construction was defended by a deep water ditch, whose traces can be seen even today, being surrounded by two rows of stone walls, supported by 6 defense towers.

The Ottoman invasions subjected the fortress to a long series of sieges over the centuries. The most devastating attack was during the time of Soliman the Magnificent, in 1524, when the walls were completely destroyed, practically from the fortifications remaining only a single tower, called the Tower of Severus, which led to the establishment of the name of the town today, Drobeta Turnu-Severin. Following a large rehabilitation project, the fortress can be admired today in all its grandeur.

### Hotel-restaurant Continental

GPS coordinates: 44.623829 / 44°37'26" N – 22.652511 / 22°39'9" E

Address: Carol I Boulevard, no. 2, Drobeta Turnu Severin

### MONASTERY GODEANU

Titular saint: "Saint John the Evangelist"

Location / address: Godeanu commune, Mehedinti district

Access road: DJ 670, good condition asphalt, then local road in Godeanu commune, relatively good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.799638 / 44°47'59" N – 22.603854 / 22°36'14" E

It is one of the newest monastic settlements in our country, being established in September 2008. On May 8, 2009, the foundation stone of the church was laid. In 2015, a paraclis was erected in the courtyard of the monastery.



### MONASTERY COSUSTEA-CRIVELNIC

Titular saint: "Venerable Pachomius the Great"

Location / address: exiting the village of Firizu, Ilovat commune

Access road: DN67 between Gârdoaia and Corcova, very good asphalt, then DJ 671A

Sisesti commune, good state asphalt, then DJ 671E Ilovat commune, good state asphalt, then

Dâlbocita village, Firizu village, poor condition asphalt, at the exit from Firizu unpaved road, very bad condition

GPS coordinates: 44.859188 / 44°51'33" N – 22.71424 / 22°42'51" E

It was built, according to an old tradition, by Saint Nicodemus of Tismana. On the occasion of the archaeological excavations made here in 1936, Professor



Al. Barcacila, manager of the "Traian" High School in Turnu-Severin, revealed the ruins of two churches: one older, larger, and one newer, with thinner walls. About the first church it is believed that it was founded by Saint Nicodemus himself. About the second church is believed to have been founded by a boyar named Hamza. In a letter from April 10, 1493, addressed to the abbot of the Tismana monastery, the prince Vlad Calugarul reminds of the Cosuste monastery and its abbot. In 1719, among the monasteries in Oltenia, among the "chapels", the monastery of Crivelnicul was included also. In the first half of the eighteenth century, an Austrian captain, Friedrich Schwartz, mentioned in his maps a monastery located on the left bank of the river Cosustea, between the waters of Sintasca and Lapusnic, between the villages Dălbocita and Racovita. In the 14th and 15th centuries, on the territory of the present Ilovat commune, there was a monastic settlement, which was ruined in the 18th century. The settlement was re-established as a monastery of monks in May 2005.



## MONASTERY BAI DE ARAMA

Titular saint: "Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel" and "Holy Martyr Marina"

Location / address: on the side of Milco Baiesu street, near the market in the center of Baia de Arama, Mehedinti district

Access road: DJ 670 good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.999806 / 44°59'59" N – 22.804740 / 22°48'17" E

It was built, according to tradition, at the urging and with the help of the ruler Constantin Brancoveanu, by Milco Baiasul, the head of the local miners, supported by Cornea Brailoiu, the big ruler of Oltenia. The building of the church began on May 22, 1699, being erected in a single year (1700). However, due to the delay in painting and the lack of money, the church was consecrated only on May 7, 1703. It is assumed

that there was an older monastery here, so we are talking about a rebuilding. The Baia de Arama Hermitage (sometimes appears in documents as a monastery) was dedicated, before 1718, to the Hilandar monastery at Mount Athos (probably even by Milco Baiasul, a Serbian). Being a settlement of monks, Baia de Arama remains in history also through its involvement in the Revolution of 1848, the prior Gherasim, abbot of the monastery since 1832, being a fervent supporter of the peace movement.

Following the secularization of 1863, the founding of Milco Baiasul became a church of chism. It was re-established in 2008 as a nun's settlement. From the old edifice there is still the church and traces of the surrounding wall of the monastery, probably erected at the end of the 18th century. The painting by Neagoe and Partenie (the last being a hieromonah in Tismana), still shows us the faces of the founders: Milco Baiasul, Mara, his wife, their four sons (Milco, Gheorghe, Nicolcea and Semen) and the family of the great boyard Comea Br iloiu: the wife Stanca and their two sons, Barbu and Constantin. All of them are painted on the walls of the church in Baia de Arama together with the ruler Constantin Brancoveanu.



The bridge of God, the Ponoare cave, the fields of limestone

GPS coordinates: 44.975072 / 44°58'30" N – 22.761444 / 22°45'41" E

Address: Ponoare commune, Mehedinti district

The bridge of God is a natural phenomenon of karst origin, formed by the collapse of a cave ceiling. It is the largest natural bridge in the country and the second largest in size in Europe, being 30 meters long, 13 meters wide, 22 meters high and 9 meters thick, it is also the only bridge that can be moved. Behind the bridge, at the base of a hill, is the Ponoarele cave, another natural

attraction representative of the karst relief of this area. The entrance to the cave has the shape of a circle arch, with a width of 15 meters and a height of over 3 meters, so that the access to the cave is easy. The altitude of the area is 337 meters. The galleries have a total length of 734 meters, presenting wide spaces, with rich formations of stalagmites and stalactites.

In the plateau behind the cave you can admire another component of the karst complex located in this area, namely the pebble fields, which are in fact calcareous geological formations like wrinkles. The stones have elongated and cushioned shapes, which the water formed in the limestone rocks. These ditches sometimes exceed 4-5 meters long and have a depth of up to 30 cm, sometimes covered with vegetation. The fields at Ponoare are notable for their variety and extension, being known several groups of pebbles, such as those in the Hill of the Cave, which form two distinct fields, Cleopatra's field and Afrodita's field. All these limestone formations are natural unique attractions at European level.

#### Hotel-restaurant Conacul Boierului, Ponoare commune

GPS coordinates: 44.974079 / 44°58'26" N – 22.763106 / 22°45'47" E

Address: Ponoare commune, Mehedinti district

#### B&B-restaurant Casa Alba, Baia de Arama

GPS coordinates: 44.999520 / 44°59'58" N – 22.809396 / 22°48'33" E

Address: Victoriei Street no. 44, Baia de Arama, Mehedinti district

#### Hostel-restaurant Izvorul Rece, Baia de Arama

GPS coordinates: 45.010756 / 45°0'38" N – 22.816303 / 22°48'58" E

Address: DN 67D, Victoriei Street no. 47, Baia de Arama, Mehedinti district

### MONASTERY JIANA

Titular saint: "Saint Martyr Iuliu the Veteran"

Location / address: exiting Jiana commune, Mehedinti district

Access road: DJ 562A, DJ 606 asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.413978 / 44°24'50" N – 22.739448 / 22°44'22" E

It was established as a monastery of monks in 2008. The erection of the church began in 2012, and the construction work lasted 9 months. The monastery is built on 5 hectares of land, donated by the heirs of an old family of boyars who had many properties in the area.



### MONASTERY GURA MOTRULUI

Titular saint: "Saint Pious Paraskeva"

Location / address: exiting the village of Gura Motrului, Butoiesti commune, Mehedinti district

Access road: DN 6 / E70 / E79 very good asphalt, then DC 115 relatively good asphalt, the last 500 meters without asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.551769 / 44°33'6" N – 23.444092 / 23°26'39" E

Tradition attributes it to Saint Nicodemus of Tismana and the founding of this monastery, known today as Gura Motrului. In the 18th century, the monastery experienced a period of decline. Even after 1738, the monastery did not enjoy too much security, as a document of November 12, 1792 shows, according to which the Gura Motrului monastery had deposited the documents of its estates at the Hurezi monastery. More earthquakes, fires, and also the involvement in the Revolution of 1821 further ruined the settlement. In 1960, following the application of Decree no. 410/1958, almost all the nuns were expelled from the monastic community. Even so, in the period 1981-1989, the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia executed a series of restoration works. In 1990, the sanctuary was reopened as a settlement for monks.



## MONASTERY OF STREHAIA

Titular saint: „Holy Trinity"

Localization/address: in the center of Strehaia, Mehedinti district

Access road: DN6 / E70, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.621424 / 44°37'17" N – 23.192537 / 23°11'33" E

The church of Strehaia monastery, contrary to the general rules that require churches to be pointed with the altar to the east, is 42 degrees toward the south. This fact seems to be either due to a design error or was intentionally constructed in this way. Following the restoration work carried out in 1963, it was found that the feudal house and the church belong to special stages of construction, the house being dated in the first half of the sixteenth century, in the glory era of the Craiovan boyars, and the church together with the strong walled enclosure, with the rooms and the other monastery buildings, were from the time of the reign of Matei Basarab, more precisely around 1645. It was also established that neither the house, the church nor the other buildings were preceded by any other construction phase. At the beginning of the 16th century, probably by 1510, in Strehaia was built a headquarters of Oltenia's ruler, documented in the time of Vlad Calugarul, by a document dated May 16, 1589. In the seventeenth century, the ruler Matei Basarab remodeled the house (erected more than a century ago), built a church, cells, annexes and a defensive wall in the same place. Regarding the reasons that determined Matei Basarab to transform into a monastery the foundation originally conceived as a typical boyar court, most historians believe that the mountain ruler followed the example of Vasile Lupu, the ruler of Moldova who, around 1640, turned the Citadel of Neamt into a monastery so that he would not have to tear it down, as the Turks demanded. Probably, for the same reasons, Matei Basarab also preferred to turn a boyar court into a monastery and not tear it down. If needed, the monastery could also serve as a defense fortress. In the second half of the seventeenth century a porch was added and the house was also enlarged. In 1693, the abbott Silvestru built a surrounding stone wall. Between 1716-1718, at the Strehaia monastery the Austrians (at war with the Turks), at a distance varying between 10 and 50 m, built a pentagonal fortification of land with a wave and a ditch, with semicircular bastions in the corners surrounding the enclosure wall of the monastery.

An important moment in the past of the Strehaia monastery took place in the second half of the seventeenth century, when the prince Grigore Ghica (February 1672 - November 1673) established the third bishopric of the Romanian Country, but for a short existence, of about six years (1673 - 1679). It had only one bishop, Daniil. All abbotts and monks from the Strehaia monastery did not had too quiet times over time. The Turks, the Austrians, and then the Turks again, have repeatedly broken the peace of the monastic settlement. In 1821, on his way to Bucharest, Tudor Vladimirescu strengthened the monastery Strehaia, as he had done also in Tismana and Gura Motrului, giving it the role of a fortress of defense. The involvement of the monastic settlement in the Revolution of 1821, seems to have had adverse consequences for the monks from here, who, for fear of reprisals, probably left the monastery.

The settlement is undergoing major repairs, being re-painted, after 118 years, both outside and inside. All rooms, houses, fountain, stables and roof are restored. In 1846, the buildings of this settlement, the church and the annexes were in a deplorable state. The monastic life ceased in 1864, after the law of secularization of the monastery assets, when the old monastery



from Strehaia becomes a chism church. In 1925, the place fell to the thieves who stole almost everything. And after the establishment of the communist regime, the monastery suffered, in 1957, the services were forbidden. However, renovation works have been initiated (starting in 1957). Until 1990, the monastery was organized as a museum. Only after the communist regime was abolished, the ancient founding of the Craiovan boyars became again a monastic settlement. The Strehaia monastery belongs to the category of fortified monasteries, being provided with strong defensive walls. The enclosure consists of four sides, having a rectangular shape, towards the middle of which is the church. The entrance to the monastery is made below a tower that seems to still guard the silence of the people. On the right side are the rooms and on the left side the gazebo that once served as an observation point. The church can be considered one of the last original artistic creations of the 17th century mountain school, having three parts: altar, nave and pronaos, to which is added the porch, a later creation, from the time of Constantin Brancoveanu (1693).

Regarding the painting, there are two different layers. The first, perhaps the original, is very well cared for, and the second seems to mimic the old iconography with differences in size and nuance. It probably dates from the year 1826. On the left side of the nave are portraits of Matei Basarab and Mrs. Elena, and next to the door are painted the founders Barbu Craiovescu and "Jupan Pârvu biv Vel Vornic". Figures of benefactors of the holy place are also painted in the pronaos.



## DOLJ

Dolj district covers 7414 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 3.1 % of Romania's surface and being the 7th district in size at national level - it is part of the group of 9 district whose area exceeds 7000 km<sup>2</sup>. From an administrative point of view, Dolj district consists of 3 municipalities, 104 communes and 378 villages. The population reported by Eurostat in 2018 in Dolj district was 630,911 inhabitants. The territory of Dolj district extends between 43°43' and 44°42' north latitude and 22°50' and 24°16' east longitude respectively, that is to say about one degree latitudinal and one degree and a half longitudinal.

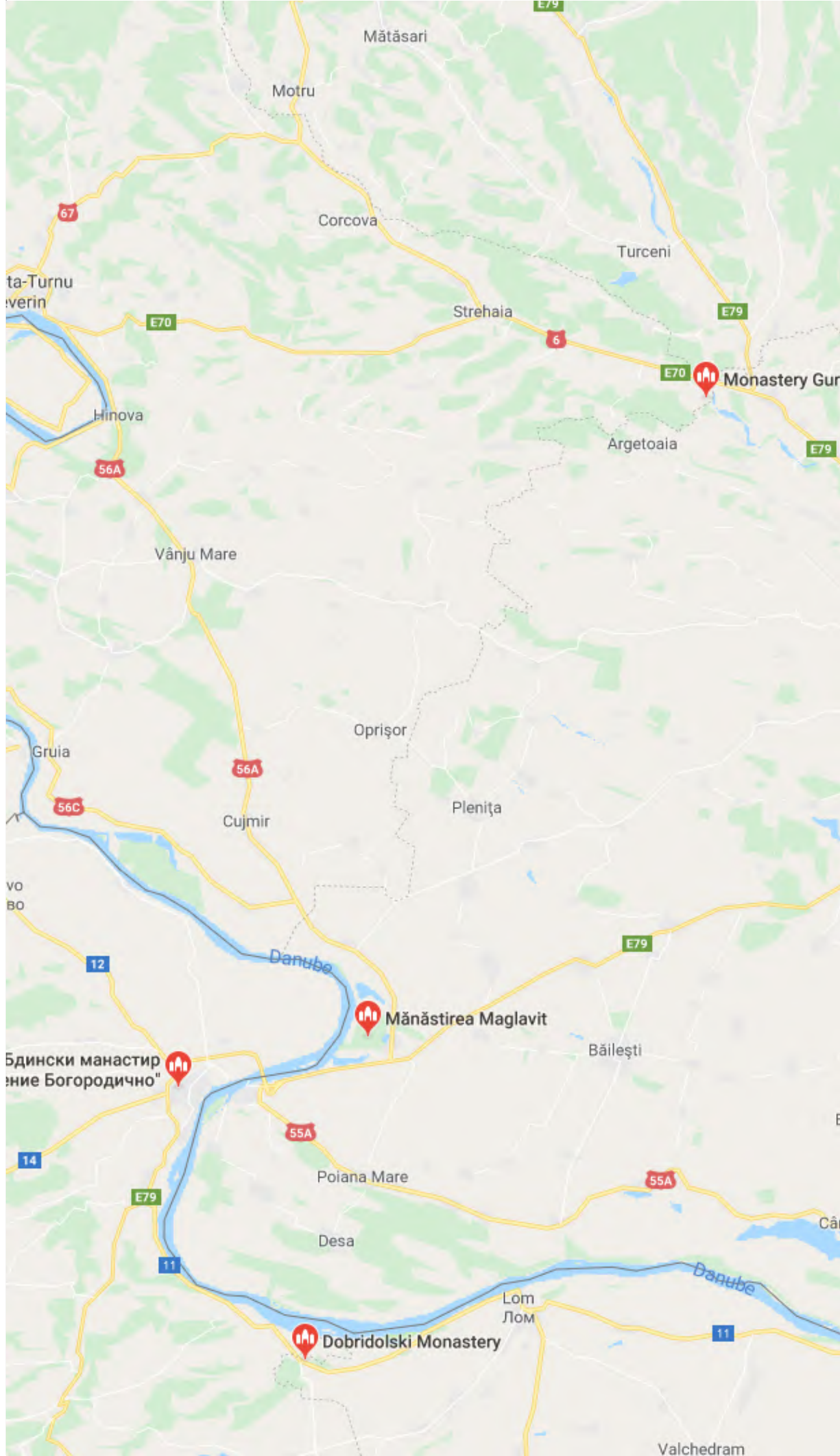
In Dolj district there are 700 historical monuments registered as part of the material cultural heritage. Of these, 15 buildings belong to religious places of national importance. The localities on whose territory these places are found are Craiova municipality, Podari commune, Co ofenii din fata commune, Meline ti commune and Malu Mare commune. The most famous places of worship located on the territory of Dolj district are: The ensemble of the Archdiocese of Craiova and the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia, the wooden church "All Saints", the Church "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary", the Jitianu Monastery. The monasteries Cârcea, Maglavit, Popânzalesti, Cosuna can have a special importance in relation to the religious tourism practiced locally. All these buildings have the potential to be included in highly attractive religious routes, which also include monasteries in the neighboring districts of Oltenia (Mehedinti, Gorj, Vâlcea, Olt).

Regarding the built heritage with tourism potential at the level of Dolj district, it also includes:

- the 9 museums in Craiova and Calafat - recently consolidated and rehabilitated, they work in historical monument buildings and have a significant heritage of unique exhibitions in the field of plastic arts, history and archeology and ethnography, which can be included in integrated tourist circuits, at regional, national and even international level. To these can be added the memorial houses in the district , especially the one of the actor Amza Pellea from Bailesti, or the Museum of the Cultural Association Castravita from Desa;
- medieval palaces and buildings: Vorvoreanu and Justitiei, Casa Baniei, Glogoveanu and Valimarescu from Craiova, together with the historical center of the city, recently rehabilitated, the culas of Almaj, Cernatesti and Brabova;
- archaeological sites: Racari, Desa camp, the Dacian fortresses Pelendava and Izvor, the archaeological sites of Bâzdana, Cârcea, Cioroiu Nou and Cotofenii din Dos.

The unique immaterial cultural heritage of Dolj district is considered, according to the district development strategy, an element of individualization of its offer for tourists and visitors, by:

- the multitude of customs, habits, traditions and traditional crafts, as well as the Oltenian folklore, still preserved and promoted in certain rural areas;
- the international festivals and competitions organized in the district, especially those of traditional music, theater and singing;
- initiatives such as the Cetate Cultural Port, which promotes the cultural act and local traditions, or the "Constantin Brâncusi" interactive tourist center in Craiova (under construction) where creative workshops, exhibition spaces, conferences will be organized.







## THE MONASTERY OF THE GREAT MARTYR DEMETRIUS

Titular saint: "Saint Demetrius", "Saint Martyrs Serghie and Vah", "Saint Martyr Tatiana" and "Saint Nifon Patriarch of Constantinople"

Localization/address: Street Matei Basarab no. 1, in the center of Craiova, Dolj district

Access road: E79, Mihail Kogalniceanu street, street Sf. Demetrius, Asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.315173 / 44°18'54" N – 23.791623 / 23°47'30" E

The history of Craiova is intertwined with the history of the church "Saint Demetrius", considered the oldest religious building in the town. This is the reason why the church has enjoyed appreciation from the godly and the pious boyars, who have often contributed to its restoration. The archaeological evidence brought to light after the restoration work of 1888, led some historians to claim that this religious institution belongs to the eighth-eleventh centuries. Other opinions place its existence in the time of the brothers Peter and Asan (late 12th century), John of the Cumanians (first half of the thirteenth century), or Mircea cel Batrân (1386-1418). It was founded, it seems, by Barbu Craiovescu (at the end of the fifteenth century), probably on the ruins of an older settlement; the first documentary attestation dates from 1645, being mentioned as "The Royal Church of Craiova". In other documents it appears as "Baneasa". It was rebuilt from scratch in 1651, by Matei Basarab; later, repaired by the former great gunman Petru Obedeianu in 1690, by his son, the stout Constantin Obedeianu, in 1724, when it is also repainted, the painting being executed by Theodosius, Andrei and others. From 1765 it becomes subordinate to the Bishop of Ramnic.

The church was badly damaged by the 1838 earthquake. It was closed in 1849 and remains in ruins until 1889. It was rebuilt with the support of King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth, under the supervision of the French architect Emile Lecomte de Noüy, between 1889-1893 (when it was re-consecrated). Between 1906-1933 it was renovated and painted by the French artists Menipot and Bories. Restoration work was carried out after this date too. The Cathedral "Saint Demetrius" houses the relics of Saint Hieronymus Nifon, Patriarch of Constantinople, of Saints Serghie and Vah and of Saint Tatiana. In the opinion of N. Iorga, besides this church, the oldest school in Oltenia (clerical) operated. In 1939, it became a metropolitan cathedral. The last restoration and consolidation work was carried out between 2006-2007.





## THE CHURCH "MADONA DUDU" OR "MOTHER PRECESTA"

Titular saint: "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary" and "Saint Anthony the Great"

Localization/address: Madona Dudu Street no. 13, in the center of Craiova, Dolj district

Access road: E79, Mihai Viteazu street, Ion Maiorescu street, Asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.317094 / 44°19'1" N – 23.789929 / 23°47'23" E

The church bears this name because of the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, found in the seventeenth century in a mulberry tree, located right where it was built. It was built (in Brancovan style) between 1758-1760, on the site of an old wooden church (dating from 1700), by the great clerk Constantin Fotescu and the tanner Hagi Ion Gheorghe. Endowed by the founders with several estates and shops, the church housed in its rooms the first mental hospital in the region.

In 1841, it was demolished (after the earthquake of 1838 it had been completely ruined), and between 1842 and 1844, it was rebuilt in the style of the Austrian Baroque by a Viennese architect, brought by the boyard lordache Oteteli anu. Becoming too small, the holy place was torn down in 1913, instead the present church was erected, built in neo-Byzantine style according to the plans of architects Ion Troj nescu (Traianescu) and Sterie Becu (consecrated in 1942). It is one of the important religious places of Craiova and has played an important cultural and philanthropic role over time. Since 1992, it has been an episcopal cathedral.



## CHURCH "HOLY TRINITY"

Titular saint: "Holy Trinity" and "Birth of the Virgin Mary"

Localization/address: Ion Maiorescu Street no. 1, in the center of Craiova, Dolj district

Access road: E79, Calea Unirii street, Popa apc street

Asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.318500 / 44°19'6" N – 23.792666 / 23°47'33" E

The holy place is the foundation of the old housekeeper Dumitrana tirbei Stolniceasa, called tirboaica, the daughter of the learned Constantin Strâmbeanu and the widow of the Grand Chancellor Constantin tirbei, former governor of Craiova in 1741. The church was built between 1765-1768, being built of stone and brick, in the Brancovan style, with the shape of the cross, the slender tower above the nave and the porch with colonnades. In 1811, several rooms were built in the courtyard of the church, probably for arranging a monastic settlement. It suffered during the Revolution of 1821, so in 1823 the roof was rebuilt. At the earthquake of 1838, new damage was registered, the church being repaired two years later by Ecaterina (Catinca) Bibescu and her son, the great logician Barbu tirbei, the future ruler of the Romanian Country. In 1890, an attempt was made to build a hospital from the church funds, but this initiative could not be realized. Instead, a medical dispensary for the poor was built, temporarily housed in the houses of the church yard, maintained by its income, related estates and donations.

At the end of the nineteenth century works began to restore the settlement, which lasted until 1906. The financial side was taken care of by the sons of Barbu tirbei Voda, princes Alexandru and Demetrius Stirbei, the construction being built according to the plans of the French architect and restaurateur André Lecomte du Noüy. At the same time the entrance tower was built, the interior painting was done, an iconostasis of oak, carved and gilded and furniture was brought from France. In 1995, the painting was restored, and in the first years of this century, at the request of the Town Hall, the fence and walls surrounding the place of worship were demolished.



## CHURCH „MÂNTULEASA”

Titular saint: "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary", "Saint Martyr Pantelimon" and "Saint Catherine"

Localization/address: Street Calea Unirii no. 59, in the center of Craiova, Dolj district

Access road: E79 / DN 56. Simion Bărnuțiu street, Calea Unirii

Asphalt in good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.312100 / 44°18'43" N – 23.796284 / 23°47'46" E

Located in the center of Craiova, the Church was built from brick between 1786-1792, by the governor Barbu Stirbei and Ioan, the tailors' foreman, instead of an older church, made by Dospina Strâmbeanu. It was radically repaired in 1896, 1938, 1975 and 2010-2013. The first founder was Dospina Strâmbeanu, a distant relative of the Brâncoveanu family. The first church was made of wood, as was the custom to erect houses of worship until the first half of the eighteenth century. The great governor Barbu Stirbei, together with the tailors' foreman, builds a new brick and stone foundation between 1786-1796. The holy place was burned during the years 1800-1801, by the Turks of Pasvanoglu or of Manaf Ibrahim from Vidin's stream (the whole town was burned down). It was again restored by the tailors of the town, but with the help of some local boyars and merchants.

By 1834-1835, the church was again covered with shingles, and in 1860, other repairs were carried out. Between 1895-1896, the holy place underwent radical changes, being enlarged to cope with the growing number of believers. Other restoration works were carried out between 1937-1938, 1974-1976 and 2010-2013. The painting is the work of the well-known painter Costache Petrescu (1829-1910), being executed in oil in 1896. It is a combination of the Byzantine and the Renaissance style.



### The Art Museum

GPS coordinates: 44.319323 / 44°19'9" N – 23.794477 / 23°47'40" E

Address: Calea Unirii no. 15, Craiova, Dolj district

The Art Museum of Craiova is located right in the center of the town and has its headquarters in the splendid palace of the Mihail family, from Calea Unirii no. 15. This imposing building was built between 1900 and 1907, following the plans of the French architect Paul Gottereau, at the command of Constantin Mihail's family, which at that time was one of the richest families in Romania. For the construction of the palace they used the highest quality materials and foreign craftsmen, generally Italians established in the Oltenia region, the architect responsible for the supervision of the works being the Italian Constantino Cichi.

In total, the Palace has 29 rooms, plus outbuildings. This building is a true masterpiece of architecture, managing to attract the entire admiration of the visitors through the perfection and harmony of the dimensions, through the delicate lines, but also firm and well contoured. The Art Museum has been operating in this building since 1954. The establishment of the museum was based on a donation of art objects made to the town in 1908 by the Aman family, through a foundation. The museum collections increased during the interwar period through a series of acquisitions made by the town's mayoralty, as well as through donations of Nicolae Romanescu, Barbu Druga, Jean Mihail or Nicolae Glogoveanu, all of them part of Craiova's greatest rich and philanthropists.

Currently the Museum has a valuable and rich cultural heritage consisting of about 12,000 works of art. The patrimony is taken over by the Oltenia Museum in 1950, and in 1954 all these cultural and artistic values were to become the foundation of the current art museum, with its own status. Thus, after being for many years the host of the most important people of the time, or the seat of political events in Romania and Europe, the former residence of the Mihail family became a Museum of art, being an occasion of joy and excitement for all who have the privilege of visiting it.

### Baniei House

GPS coordinates: 44.314705 / 44°18'53" N – 23.792139 / 23°47'31" E

Address: Street Matei Basarab no. 16, Craiova City, Dolj district

An emblematic building for the entire Oltenia region is Baniei House. Whoever visits this historical and cultural edifice has the opportunity to step into the world of popular traditions, through the thematic exhibitions opened here. Baniei House is the oldest civil construction in Craiova, being erected in 1699 at the initiative of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu on the site of an older building from the fifteenth century, which had originally belonged to the large family of Craiovești boyars.



B niei House is located in the central area of the city, in the immediate vicinity of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Saint Demetrius, because here was the administrative and commercial heart of the town at that time.

Historical reports show that the Craiova Divan was gathered here, and during the Austrian occupation, between 1718 and 1739, the building becomes the headquarters of the foreign administration, which fortifies it for defense. In 1750, the building was given by the ruler Grigore Ghica to the Bishopric of Ramnicu. Starting with 1850, the building becomes headquarters for various institutions of the town: Craiova Court of Law, the High School "Fratii Buzesti", Local Seminar, State Archives.

Since 1933, the building will house the Museum of Oltenia until 1948, when it passes under the use of the Metropolitan of Oltenia. Since 1966, the old monument of Brancovian architecture houses the Ethnography Section of the Oltenia Museum, having an invaluable patrimony that currently comprises over 9,000 pieces grouped onto traditional art collections, whether we are talking about traditional peasant tools, traditional musical instruments, ceramic instruments, carved wood, fabrics and carpets, leather goods, traditional costumes and clothes, painted eggs, religious icons and objects of worship. All these wonderful things, impossible to see and admire elsewhere, take us on a journey through the soul of Oltenia. B niei House, this building loaded with meanings, offers to those present, but also to future generations, examples of spirituality of a rich historical, cultural and social heritage.

#### Museum of Oltenia - Department of History and Archaeology

GPS coordinates: 44.316970 / 44°19'1" N – 23.789637 / 23°47'22" E

Address: Street Madona Dudu no. 14, Craiova City, Dolj district

The Museum of Oltenia comprises 3 main departments, located in different buildings in the town of Craiova. The most important and interesting of them is the section of history and archeology, which is located in a building that originally belonged to the Madona Dudu Church and on which trees used to grow. At the beginning of the 20th century, the construction of the current headquarters began, with public funds provided by the Ministry of Education and Cults and by the Craiova Tonwn Hall, because the first boys and girls school was inaugurated here in 1906, for the 40th anniversary of The reign of King Carol I. In the earthquake of 1940 the building was severely damaged, and the communist regime abolished the school in 1948, using the building as a museum.

#### Nicolae Romanescu Park

GPS coordinates: 44.302102 / 44°18'7" N – 23.798774 / 23°47'55" E

Address: Bulevardul Nicolae Romanescu no. 1A, Craiova City, Dolj district

The Nicolae Romanescu Park in Craiova is the third largest park in Europe, being one of the favorite places of the inhabitants of Craiova and of the tourists who stop in the town and go to visit it, declaring themselves fascinated by its beauty. The name of the park was given by Nicolae

Romanescu, elected mayor of Craiova in 1898, and who, out of the desire to modernize and give a European image to the town, put into practice a large project of landscaping of parks and public gardens. Romanescu Park has carried many names over time, such as Bibescu Park, Independence Park or People's Park.

To put his idea into practice, Nicolae Romanescu chose Edouard Redont, a famous French landscape architect. The park project started in 1900, based on the plans of this French architect, whose vision has succeeded in creating this landscape jewelery, having been awarded the gold medal at the 1900 Paris International Exhibition. The volume of the planning works was a huge one compared to the technical possibilities of that time. Over 500,000 cubic meters of earth were dug and moved, and the length of the landscaped alleys exceeded 26 kilometers, while over 1,150,000 trees of all species were planted. The lands where no afforestation was made were covered with grass brought from France and Italy. The public lighting network was built by the Electric Company of Berlin. The official inauguration of the park was held on September 29, 1903, in the presence of King Carol I of Romania. Currently, the Nicolae Romanescu Park has an area of about 96 hectares of green area, a central lake with an area of 4 hectares and alleys stretching over about 35 km. Nicolae Romanescu Park also houses one of the oldest zoos in Romania, inaugurated in 1906. Also part of the park's composition is an Olympic sized velodrome, as well as a former racecourse inaugurated in 1903. The town of Craiova has the privilege of owning one of the largest and most beautiful parks in the entire Europe, an exceptional monument of landscape architecture, conceived and realized as a romantic and comforting place, impressive in size and charming through the composition and diversity of natural elements.

#### Botanical garden

GPS coordinates: 44.323441 / 44°18'24" N – 23.790325 / 23°47'25" E

Address: Street Constantin Lecca no. 26, Craiova City, Dolj district

The Botanical Garden of Craiova bears the name of the one who had the initiative of its establishment in 1952, namely the university professor Alexandru Buia, based on some 50-year-old initial plans of the French landscape architect Emile Redont. Alexandru Buia, who was professor of botany and later rector of the Institute of Agronomy in Craiova, turned these plans into reality, and the current Botanical Garden was thought of as a scientific, didactic and educational institution, being organized as an university botanical garden. During the period of maximum development of the garden, there were over 3,000 specimens of deciduous and coniferous trees, as well as over 900 exotic species, all of them of great scientific and decorative value.

Currently, the usable area is about 12.8 ha., having also 3 artificial lakes with an area of about 0.3 ha. Inside the garden there is also a

greenhouse with a total area of 750 sqm, where we find a collection of over 100 species of cacti, in a wide variety of forms. We can also admire plants and trees from all corners of the world, some can be easily recognized, while others are completely unknown in our country. The Botanical Garden also has a Herbarium, which at present contains about 50,000 sheets of great scientific value, which are permanently available to teachers, researchers and students, but also to all those interested and passionate about botany. The "Alexandru Buia" Botanical Garden is known both nationally and internationally, being included since 1974 in the International Association of Botanical Gardens. The Botanical Garden has recently become again a place of promenade and relaxation for the people of Craiova, after the renovation of the spring of 2016, generously offering the inhabitants of Craiova a well-deserved recreation refuge in the middle of nature.

#### Hotel-restaurant Ramada

GPS coordinates: 44.321184 / 44°19'16" N – 23.795993 / 23°47'45" E

Address: Street Calea Bucuresti no. 1, Craiova City, Dolj district

#### Hotel Helin Central

GPS coordinates: 44.318489 / 44°19'6" N – 23.800482 / 23°48'2" E

Address: Street Alexandru Ioan Cuza no. 14, Craiova City, Dolj district

#### Restaurant Iberico

GPS coordinates: 44.317182 / 44°19'21" N – 23.798969 / 23°47'56" E

Address: Street Romain Rolland no. 13, Old center, pedestrian area, Craiova City, Dolj district

## MONASTERY OF SADOVA

Titular saint: "Saint Nicholas" and "The entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Church"

Localization/address: Street Drumul Manastirii, Sadova Commune, Dolj district

Access road: DN 55, then DJ 551, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.905169 / 43°54'18" N – 23.925509 / 23°55'32" E

It is documented on August 20, 1530, in a letter from Vlad the drowned. The monastery church was founded (probably in wood) at the beginning of the 16th century by the Craiove ti boyars (the patron Barbu). It was for a long time one of the most important places of worship in the Romanian Country. In 1640, Matei Basarab rebuilds the settlement, and by a decree of November 27, 1640, the ruler forbade the dedication of the sanctuary to the Holy Places.

The monastery was fortified like its other foundations; Paul of Aleppo observed in August 1657, when he visited the monastery with the patriarch

Macarie of Antioch, that it resembles that of Strehaia, and the church, that of Bucov . The next founder in Sadova will be Preda Brâncoveanu, who will continue the started work by building the cells and the bell tower on the south side, and Constantin Brâncoveanu will be the founder of the infirmary church, in 1693. Being an important monastic and cultural center in the south of Oltenia, worthy worshipers have been active here, taking care of both the administrative and the cultural side. In the 19th century, the Sadova monastery was affected by frequent Turkish incursions, but also by bad weather and earthquakes.

Although some abbotts (Dionisie Romano) tried to restore its former brilliance, for this formerly important monastic center difficult times followed: the monastery would be abolished (during the secularization period) or abandoned. This period has influenced the appearance of the settlement. It was re-established as a monastic settlement in 1992. The church no longer retains its original appearance, being affected by the long period in which it was left abandoned. The current appearance is due to last interventions of consolidation and restoration in 1996.



Hotel-restaurant Tata si Fii, town of Bechet

GPS coordinates: 43.786058 / 43°47'10" N – 23.954573 / 23°57'16" E

Address: Street Alexandru Ioan Cuza nr. 51, Bechet City, Dolj district

Hotel-restaurant Casa Verde, town of Bechet

GPS coordinates: 43.779065 / 43°46'45" N – 23.961584 / 23°57'42" E

Address: Street Calea Dunarii nr. 7, Bechet City, Dolj district



## CHURCH "SAINT NICHOLAS" IN CALAFAT

Titular saint: "Saint Nicholas"

Localization/address: Street Traian nr. 25, Calafat City, Dolj district

Access road: E79 / DN 56, then DN 56D, Traian Street, in the center of Calafat, Dolj district

Asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 43.995593 / 43°59'44" N – 22.931678 / 22°55'54" E

The church was built between 1730-1740, in the form of an underground hut, popularly called "Slum on the hill". The place of worship was originally intended for sailors who came to pray to Saint Hierarch Nicholas. By 1830, the new church was consecrated in the presence of the Lord of the Romanian Country, Alexandru Ghica, and of the Serbian prince, Milos Obrenovici. According to other sources, the place of worship was erected between 1853-1856. In 1861, the church underwent extension work. It was visited several times by King Carol I, especially during the war of 1877, after which it became known as the Cathedral of Independence. Demolished at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the church was rebuilt in brick, in its current form, between 1899 and 1906 (sanctified in 1910).

It was completely repaired during 1933. It was affected by the bombings of World War II and the earthquake of March 4, 1977. The painting was executed in 1909-1910, in mixed technique. În 1991, the restoration of the painting was completed, and in 2001 took place the re-consecration of the settlement. Other renovation work was carried out between 2002-2005 and 2009-2011.



## Museum of Art and Ethnography (Marincu Palace)

GPS coordinates: 43.994571 / 43°59'40" N – 22.932424 / 22°55'57" E

Address: Street 22 Decembrie nr. 6, Calafat City, Dolj district

The Museum of Art and Ethnography in Calafat is a remarkable building located right in the center of the town, also known as the Marincu Palace. It was built according to the plans of the French architect Paul Gottereau, famous at the beginning of the 20th century in Romania. The builders were Italian craftsmen, led by the engineer Pietro Adotti. The foundation stone was laid in the fall of 1904, the construction being completed three years later and being inaugurated in 1908. The architecture was made in the neo-classical style of the French Baroque, with influences of the Romanian architecture from the beginning of the 20th century. The building occupies an area of 8,330 square meters, having inside almost 50 rooms structured on three levels. The total cost amounted then to the huge sum of one million gold coins.

In 1926, the palace became property of Calafat Town Hall and functioned as St. Mary's Girls' School, and later served as a kindergarten. Later the palace hosted the courses of the Agricultural School of Calafat and was host for various administrative services. Since 1967, the Museum of Art and Ethnography operates in this building. Currently, the museum has a rich collection of art objects exhibited in permanent exhibitions, but also organizes personal exhibitions of contemporary artists from the country and abroad. In September 2012, a section of Calafat history was inaugurated here, realized with the support of the descendants of the Marincu family and who made important donations to the museum. The Marincu Palace is an impressive legacy that the noble Marincu family, so severely tested by fate, generously left to the community in which it lived. Due to the cultural and social events it hosts, this edifice can be considered one of the most important cultural centers for the entire Danube region.

## Monument of the War of Independence

GPS coordinates: 43.997231 / 43°59'50" N – 22.934442 / 22°56'4" E

Address: Street Baba Lupa nr. 1, Calafat City, Dolj district

The town of Calafat is marked in the history of Romania as the place where the Independence War of 1877 against the Ottoman Empire began. From this town, on April 26, 1877, from a place on the Danube, the first cannon was fired towards the positions occupied by the Turkish army on the Bulgarian shore.

A few years after the end of the war, there was erected a monument reminiscent of this glorious episode in the birth of the modern Romanian state. In 1977, on the anniversary of 100 years, the authorities moved the original monument to another place and in this place was erected the Memorial of Independence, the work of the sculptor Pavel Bucur. It is made of travertine, in a bas-relief style, having representative battle scenes on the facade.

## Hotel-restaurant Coliseum, town of Calafat

GPS coordinates: 43.993466 / 43°59'36" N – 22.931091 / 22°55'52" E

Address: Street Gheorghe Doja, Calafat, Dolj district

## MAGLAVIT MONASTERY

Titular saint: "The Healing spring" and "The Birth of the Virgin Mary"

Localization/address: Drumul Monastery Street, Maglavit commune, Dolj district

Access road: E79 / DN56, then DN 56A, then DJ 554, asphalt very good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.032950 / 44°1'58" N – 23.065737 / 23°3'57" E

The first church was erected in 1935, by several locals, on the place where the shepherd Petrache Lupu had seen on May 31, 1935 "a white bearded monk [...] who stood two hands above the ground". In 1935, on several Fridays, Petrache Lupu had seen the Old man (God), transmitting commands to the world for heading towards the Church, to the right faith. Soon, a few thousand believers begin to arrive in Maglavit every day.

On the places where the revelations took place are raised crosses, wayside crosses and even a pulpit for preaching the divine commandments. On September 14, 1935, the foundation stone of the future monastery was laid, and some monks were sent here. It is noteworthy that on the Danube a small village of nuns was established. The construction of this site has seen agitated times for 70 years. In 1936, the construction of several houses began, at a rather slow rate. The Second World War and the establishment of the communist regime led to the abolition of the monastery. The monastic life began only in 1990, when the construction of the settlement was resumed. The works evolved slowly, being intensified only after 2006. In 2010, the Maglavit Monastery was transformed from a monk monastery to a nun's monastery. Currently, the construction work is almost completed.









## OLT

Olt district is located in the South-West Oltenia region, on the lower course of the river that gave it its name and is part of the category of districts that lie on the Danube river.

The total area of 5,498 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 2.3% of the territory of the country, places Olt district on the 22nd place at the level of Romania as a surface. In terms of population, according to Eurostat, in 2018 there were 400,802 inhabitants in Olt district.

From the administrative point of view, Olt district comprises 8 towns, of which 2 municipalities, and 112 communes.

It is contiguous with Vâlcea district to the North, Arge and Teleorman districts to the East, Dolj district to the West and the Danube River to the South for a distance of 45 km, separating it from Bulgaria.

Olt district has a rich religious cultural heritage, 758 historical monuments are registered on its territory. Of these, 17 buildings belong to religious places of national importance. The localities on whose territory these places are found are Slatina municipality, Brâncoveni commune, Calui commune and Poboru commune. Generally, religious places of worship receive a large number of visitors during various Christian holidays, church and monastery celebrations. The most famous places of worship located on the territory of Olt district are: Calui Monastery, Brâncoveni Monastery and Clocociov Monastery.

Also, the territory of Olt district contains a true treasure trove of history. The archaeological discoveries made on Oltetului, Oltului and Dârjovului valleys highlight the first forms of human life on the territory of today's Romania. The most important archaeological finds in Olt district are:

- The Pentingerian tabula (map of the Roman world drawn up between 260-271 AD) which kept the names of daves (centers) such as Acidava (located in Eno e ti village, center of the Geto-Dacians) and Sucidava (located in Corabia-Celei, center of the Suci);
- The ruins of the Roman Fortress and the secret fountain in Sucidava (in Celei, near Corabia), built by Emperor Aurelian in 271-275;
- The ruins of the largest Roman city in South Dacia Romula - Malva, in Resca (Dobrosloveni commune) at 8 km from Caracal.
- Neolithic vestiges from Vadastra, Farcasele, Brebeni, Slatina, Oboga, Orlea.

Other monuments of significant historical, architectural and cultural importance located on the territory of Olt district are: "Nicolae Titulescu" Memorial House, Iancu Jianu Memorial House, Bratasanu Mansion, Neamtu Mansion, Calateanu Manor, Galita Manor (Câmpu Mare-Dobroteasa), Monument of Ecaterina Teodoroiu, Museum of Archeology and Ethnography in Corabia, Romanatiului Museum in Caracal, Romula archaeological site (Resca), Caracal National Theater.

From the perspective of the intangible cultural heritage, on the territory of Olt district there are numerous settlements in which traditions and handicrafts practiced from the earliest times are preserved, of which we mention in particular the pottery, practiced since Neolithic. Today in Olt there are three pottery centers left (Oboga, Romana, Corbeni) that produce glazed and unglazed ceramics in different shapes and decorations. Other well-preserved traditional crafts in Olt district are: Vadastra furrier, wool spinning, sewing - Priseaca, Curtisoara, Icoana, Cezieni, wood and bone carving - Boian Plain, traditional wood and glass painting - Corbu, masks and ironwork - Osica - Brîncoveni.

Local traditions are celebrated during different holidays such as: Romanian "Calus" - the folklore festival of Pentecost, "Feast of the bread" - an ethno-folkloric event that marks the end of the harvest, "Feast of the le" - celebration of the national costume in the Romanati area.

The ethnographic heritage mirrors the popular creation of almost all the villages and communes of Olt district, territory in which three ethnographic areas meet: Olt, Romanati and Câmpia Boianului. The traditional costumes of Olt, through the variety of its pieces, the techniques and materials used, the organization of decorations on the surface of the pieces and the decorative motifs used, is one of the most complex fields of folk art.

From the point of view of the natural heritage, Olt district is noted for its forests and floristic reserves such as: Branistea Catârilor forest, Calugareasc forest and Potelu forest for different species of oak, Seaca Opt ani forest and bush tree reserve, as well as the Academy's peony reserve that aims to protect the species of Romanian peony. The Danube River, which runs through the south of the district, is an important natural resource that can contribute to capitalizing the district's tourism potential. In the territory of Olt district are identified 12 protected natural areas of national interest, 16 Nature 2000 sites and 3 special avifaunistic protection areas.

Even though at present the tourist interest is relatively low, Olt district has significant cultural tourism objectives from the point of view of the added value that they bring to the national cultural heritage.

## MONASTERY OF MAINESTI

Titular saint: "The covering of the Virgin Mary"

Localization/address: Sat Mainesti street, on the outskirts of Bals, Olt district

Access road: E574 / DN65, then DJ643, relatively good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.330592 / 44°19'50" N – 24.105373 / 24°6'19" E

The first church was built of wood by the late Matei Bârzeanu, in the years 1742-1743. In 1745, the holy place was consecrated by the founder of the Bishopric of Ramnicu. In 1805, Popa Nicolae the seneschal, Ioanichie Preda and the seneschal Nicolae M inescu began the construction of a brick and stone church, completed on September 29, 1809. Painted in 1810-1812, the church initially received the dedication "Saint Hierarch Nicholas". Here, some of Iancu Jianu's outlaws became monks after he no longer was an outlaw, in 1818. For this reason, in the local folklore, the hermitage remained known as the "Outlaws' Hermitage".

After the secularization of the monastery assets, it became a church of christm, and in 1926, it was closed. After some repairs made between 1930 and 1940, the church was reopened in 1941. In 1979, thorough renovation work was carried out. It is worth noting that in the portraits of the founders one can observe the period costumes with specific elements of the Romanian traditional clothes. In 1996, the monastic settlement was reopened as a monastery for nuns.





## CALUI MONASTERY

Titular saint: "Saint Hierarch Nicholas"

Localization/address: Street Fratii Buzesti, Calui commune, Olt district

Access road: DJ643, then DC 9, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.462594 / 44°27'45" N – 24.031825 / 24°1'54" E

Named in ancient times Cepturoaia, the settlement was erected in 1515, during the reign of Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), the first founders being Vlad Banul (grandfather of the three Buzesti brothers), Demetrius Pârcalabul and Balica the Commander. The works were only completed in 1588, through the efforts of the Buzesti brothers (Radu, Preda and Stroe). In 1594, were completed the rooms and the bell tower, in 1600, the church was painted (by Mihnea zugravul) and in 1610, a porch was added (ruined in 1859). The Caluiu monastery has been used throughout the centuries as a necropolis of the Buzesti family: Preda Buzescu, big ruler of Craiova, buried in December 1608, Stanca - Radu Buzescu's wife, buried in February 1590, and Radu Buzescu - Chief Administrator, buried in January 1610.

Dedicated to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the monastery suffered because of the carelessness of the Greek monks. In 1821, it was set on fire by the Turks and in 1823, Romanian monks were brought in. During the time of abbott Chiriac Râmniceanu (1823-1828) several works were carried out to consolidate the holy place. In 1834, the church was repainted by the boyard Barbu Cosoveanu the painter. In 1856, it returned to ruin, so that in 1859-1861, other consolidation works were carried out. After the secularization of the monastery assets, the state of the monastery worsened again. Between 1986 and 2006, extensive restoration and modernization work was carried out, several buildings and an imposing traditional church with three towers and an open porch being erected. The building founded by the Buzesti was initially a monastery of monks, then of nuns until 1985-1986, when it became a monastery of monks again.



## MONASTERY CLOCOCIOV

Titular saint: "Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel" and "The Birth of the Virgin Mary"

Localization/address: Street Manastirea Clocociov no. 3, Slatina, Olt district

Access road: E574 / DN65, then George Poboran Street, then Vintila Voda Street, then Basarabilor Street (DC 90A), then Manastirea Clocociov Street Asphalt good condition

GPS coordinates: 44.411623 / 44°24'42" N – 24.363547 / 24°21'48" E

It was attested from the time of Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), when it was mentioned in an exchange of estates between its abbot and the boyard Manea of Persani, the founder of the Seaca-Musete ti monastery. In 1625, Alexandru Coconu dedicated the monastic settlement to the Cutlumu monastery in Mount Athos. The earthquake of 1628 and more fires ruined the old monastic center. For this reason, in 1645, during the reign of Matei Basarab, the monastery is rebuilt by Diicu Buicescu, great commander. Ruined again because of the vicissitudes of time, in 1980, extensive restoration work begins, works that have gradually restored the monument to its present state.

Through its architecture, the Clocociov monastery, with all the successive degradations, due to the restoration that sought to respect and preserve the features of the old settlement, is part of the monuments from the middle of the XVII century, still dominated by the stylistic characteristics of the time of Matei Basarab; the variety of forms is tempered by the simplicity of the construction, in which decoration is used with measure.



## MONASTERY OF STREHARETI (STRIHARETI)

Titular saint: „Assumption of the Virgin Mary”

Localization/address: Strehareti Street no. 154, Slatina, Olt district

Access road: E574 / DN65, then Carol I street, then Strehareti street, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.443755 / 44°26'37" N – 24.351696 / 24°21'6" E

It is first attested in 1478, being mentioned in several documents from 1578, 1608 and 1620. Some sources consider the bishop Varlaam of Râmnicului, metropolitan of the Romanian Country (1672-1679), to be its founder. Most likely, the holy place was founded by the monk Serafim, who, during the reign of Matei Basarab, became bishop in Buzau. On April 24, 1664, Serafim bought the Strehareti estate in order to build a monastery here, and was helped by the ruler Radu Voda Leon (1664-1669), who in 1665, donated part of his estate to the future monastery.

The new settlement was completed before 1668, when it was dedicated to the Metropolitan of Bucharest. In a 1671 document, the founder's intention to paint the church is mentioned. Ruined for various reasons, the monastery was restored in 1844, by the ecclesiastical Joseph, who also built some new outbuildings. After the secularization of the monastery assets, the buildings were transformed into a hospital. Consolidation works were carried out by the Historical Monuments Commission in the period 1930-1936, and by the Directorate of Historical Monuments, in 1982.



### Olt District Museum

GPS coordinates: 44.430361 / 44°25'49" N – 24.359963 / 24°21'36" E

Address: Street Ana Ipatescu nr. 1, Slatina City, Olt district

The Olt District Museum came into being in 1952, but the idea of such an establishment had already appeared since the first years after the end of the First World War, in the form of donations of old documents, books and prints, historical objects or works of art, with a view to establishing a museum of the Olt. Housed in a wonderful historical building in the center of Slatina, the museum enjoys an exceptional interior organization, with generous and excellently arranged spaces that house collections and exhibits of great historical and artistic value.

The history and culture section of Slatina is arranged in 5 rooms, being inaugurated on April 23, 2003. Includes countless landmarks of the history of Slatina, historical testimonies of the evolution of this locality: old documents, coins, books, objects of worship, plans, sketches and old photographs, together with the reconstruction of period decorations, such as a reception hall and a few shops from the town. Other departments of great interest to the visitors of this museum are those of plastic art, the section of folk art and ethnography and the history-archeology section.

### Museum of Romanati

GPS coordinates: 44.109371 / 44°6'33" N – 24.348064 / 24°20'53" E

Address: Street Iancu Jianu nr. 17, Caracal, Olt district

The Caracal Museum bears the old name of the region, namely the Romanati. The idea of setting up a museum in the locality appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, when Ion Hagiescu Miriste, a great magistrate of the time, originally from Caracal, bought a building in 1900, with the purpose of arranging a space for exhibiting here paintings and sculptures. At his death in 1922, this great man of culture and art lover left by his will the wealth of the district of Romanati, in order to promote and support the fine arts by setting up a museum. Unfortunately, his wish could not be realized due to the lack of interest of the local authorities, and his heirs sold the vast majority of the artworks collected by the deceased. It was only in 1949, on September 26, that the Museum of the Romanati was truly established, arranged in a building in the center of the town, and initially had 2 sections, one of history and one of arts. In 1950 the museum was moved to another, much more generous building, with 23 rooms.

Today the museum has 4 main sections: the archeology-history section, the Iancu Jianu memorial section, the arts section and the ethnography section. Its collections are impressive, for example the history section contains over



20,000 pieces of invaluable value, some with an age of over 6,000 years, as well as many objects of Roman origin, originating from the settlement with the name Romula, near today's town of Caracal. Roman statues and sarcophagi are grouped in a lapidarium, which comprises over 20 pieces. The art section comprises a collection of over 500 paintings and other works of art, and the collection of Roman gemstones and semiprecious stones is the fifth largest in the world.

#### Caracal National Theater

GPS coordinates: 44.113239 / 44°18'56" N – 24.309577 / 24°20'22" E

Address: Pia a Victoriei no. 10, Caracal City, Olt district

The building of the National Theater in Caracal is surely one of the most representative and beautiful works of architecture, more than a century old. Construction work began on July 14, 1896, following the plans of Austrian architect Franz Bileck, the construction was completed in 1901. In that year, Caracal had about 12,000 inhabitants and an exceptional cultural life. Between 1959 and 1960 major renovation work was carried out. The devastating fire of 1987 put an end to theatrical performances here, to everyone's regret. The reconstruction works took many years, but finally on December 19, 2008 this building could be reopened to the general public, now having the brilliance and elegance of former times. All the architecture and decoration details were meticulously made, the painting completely remade, and the performance hall was equipped with modern sound and lighting equipment.

#### Sucidava fortress

GPS coordinates: 43.765217 / 43°45'55" N – 24.459036 / 24°27'32" E

Address: sat Celeiu, Corabia City, Olt district

Sucidava fortress is located on the Danube, a few km from the outskirts of Corabia. This fortress-type settlement was founded by Roman troops between the years 257-275 d.Hr., being a Roman defense fortress with 8-10 towers, which included an urban settlement, a paleo-christian basilica, Roman baths and cobbled streets. In the fortress there is also a secret fountain, a remarkable architectural achievement. The Romans built this fortification on the site of an older metropolis, identified as the capital of the Dacian tribe of the Suci. Near this fortress was erected the bridge of Constantin the Great, with a length of about 2,400 meters, which from 328 allowed the crossing of the Danube, linking Sucidava with the settlement of

Oescus. One one foot is left of this bridge.

The town was remade and enlarged several times under Byzantine rule, in the time of Theodosius II, then Justinian the Great, but was also destroyed and plundered by the invasions of the Huns. It seems that it was completely abandoned by the Byzantines around 600. The fortress, however, survives the times, so it appears in historical accounts from the time of Michael the Brave as a garrison of defense on the Danube against the Ottoman armies.

Many pieces of brick still bear the sign of the fish, an early Christian symbol. The most interesting historical element is the Secret Fountain, which was built in the sixth century, but was discovered only in 1958, so that many historical vestiges of invaluable value have been found inside. Obviously her role was to ensure the water supply of the fortress during long sieges.

An unusual fact is the discovery related to the heating of the houses, which was made through a sophisticated system of tubes under the floor, an innovative solution at that time. The fortress is built of burnt brick and massive stone blocks, managing to withstand the nearly 2,000 years of shaken history. At the entrance to the fortress there is a small museum where visitors can admire some of the objects discovered here, bronze ornaments, lead rings, seals, ceramic fragments, even cult objects in the form of a cross, because the church here is considered as the first Christian church discovered in the space between the Danube and the Carpathians. The church was shaped like a nave, with the altar facing east. Near the altar were found skeletons buried in Christian rite, with the head at sunset, the feet at sunrise and the hands near the body. Also inside the church were found various Christian artifacts, oil lamps with cruciform wreath, bronze crosses, ceramic scraps with Christian inscriptions.

#### The Boian Plain Museum and the Neolithic village

GPS coordinates: 44.155135 / 44°9'18" N – 24.539289 / 24°32'21" E

Address: Street Nicolae Titulescu no. 33, entering Draganesti Olt, Olt district

At the initiative of Professor Traian Zorzoliu, who dedicated practically his whole life to this objective, the Museum of the Boian Plain, a unique place in Romania and even in Europe, was created. It is practically an open air museum that tells about the popular traditions of this area, since 6,000 years ago. In the courtyard of the museum there is a small cross, a small church, a traditional peasant house, an authentic hut, as well as 6 clay huts of a reconstructed village, from the Neolithic era, given that in the area have been

discovered traces of a prehistoric culture dating from the V-VI millennium before our era. The collections of objects include over 6,000 exhibits, tools, ceramics, fabrics, iron works.

The hut in the courtyard is a typical dwelling for this plain area. Inside there were usually 2 rooms, one used for cooking and dining, and the other for living and sleeping. Mandatory was also present the dowry box, filled with sheets and fabrics that were a family heritage. The ones now on the walls are from the 18th century. The huts in the Neolithic village reconstruct the life of 5-6,000 years ago. The Neolithic village is made up of six open-air huts, on a field surrounded by a moat and a fence of woven wickets. Entrance is made on a wooden deck, and the huts are natural in size. A hut represents a fisherman's house, another a farmer's house, another a potter's house. The houses were built of reed and poles inserted into the ground, and among the reeds soil was laid. Between them stood a lacustrine dwelling, where provisions were kept, for the settlements were erected in valleys that were often flooded. The huts were built close together, the village streets were no larger than two meters, sometimes the huts were attached to each other. The buildings were low, because the height of the people did not exceed then 1.50-1.60 m. The houses did not have ceilings, but they were lined inside. Each hut had a fireplace, an oven, and the bed was built of raised earth, on which were placed skins or mats. All have neolithic objects or reconstructions of some Neolithic objects, tables, worship altars, tools for the household. The inauguration of this prehistoric village was made in 2010. The museum is visited annually by many tourists, the most interested being those who came from abroad and who thus have the unique opportunity to admire these traditional Romanian exhibits on the spot.

#### Hotel-restaurant City, town of Slatina

GPS coordinates: 44.425570 / 44°25'32" N – 24.376737 / 24°22'36" E

Address: Street Ecaterina Teodorescu no.1, Slatina, Olt district

#### Restaurant Trattoria del Gusto, town of Slatina

GPS coordinates: 44.430194 / 44°25'48" N – 24.364021 / 24°21'50" E

Address: Street Independentei Bl. T1 parter, Slatina, Olt district

#### Hotel-restaurant Retro, Caracal

GPS coordinates: 44.116364 / 44°6'51" N – 24.345893 / 24°20'45" E

Address: Street Radu Serban no.2, Caracal, Olt district

#### Restaurant Coquette Bistro, Caracal

GPS coordinates: 44.111822 / 44°6'42" N – 24.343861 / 24°20'38" E

Address: Pia a Victoriei nr. 14, Caracal, Olt district

Hotel-restaurant Sucidava, Corabia

GPS coordinates: 43.771609 / 43°46'18" N – 24.513429 / 24°30'48" E

Address: Street Portului, Corabia, Olt district

## BRÂNCOVENI MONASTERY

Titular saint: "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary", "Saint Archangels Michael and Gavriil", "Healing spirng" and "Sant Martyrs Brancoveni"

Localization/address: Prim verii street, exiting Brâncoveni commune, Olt district

Access road: E64, very good asphalt

GPS coordinates: 44.305071 / 44°18'18" N – 24.306548 / 24°18'23" E

At the beginning of the 16th century the Brâncoveni boyards built the architectural ensemble that will bear their name, as a place of refuge; in its precinct, in 1570, the Celea mistress will raise a wooden church, and some monks will be brought. The first documentary attestation dates from 1582-1583, when Mihnea Turcitul strengthens some of the older donations. In 1634, Matei Basarab begins the restoration and transformation of the architectural ensemble provided with an ingenious system of fortifications. From the time of Matei Basarab remain the bell tower, the spacious vaulted cellars and the defense wall provided with battlements. The present church was built in place of the old one by Constantin Brancoveanu, in 1700. He also founded the infirmary church (in the triconc plan), in 1702.

The large church, built between 1699-1700, in Brancovan style, is in the form of a cross, with the open porch, supported by eight stone columns, arranged in the center; the golden iconostasis is the original one; it has a tower on the nave, and the doors are made of solid carved oak. The church houses several graves, including the one of Papa Brancoveanu (father of Constantin Brancoveanu). The painting dates from 1837, the authors being unknown. The ensemble suffered during the Turkish-Austrian war of 1716-1718, and at the earthquake of 1838. After the secularization of the monastery assets, there remained a modest settlement, whose curator was Popa apc . In time, the monastery was ruined, partially restored by Bishop Vartolomeu Stanescu (1921-1938).

Between 1940-1959, it was a nun's monastery, but following the decree 410/1959, the holy place was abolished, here functioning, for a short time, an asylum for the elderly; then it remained deserted for 20 years. After 1980, several nuns were brought from the Clocociov monastery and the first repairs began. Major renovation works were carried out.





## STUDINA MONASTERY

Titular saint: "The Ascension of the Holy Cross" and "The Birth of Saint John the Baptist"

Localization/address: Manastirii Street, on the outskirts of Studina commune, Studina a village, Olt district

Access road: DN54, then DC 139A, good condition asphalt

GPS coordinates: 43.974540 / 43°58'28" N – 24.418506 / 24°25'6" E

It is a relatively new monastery, the first works began in 1994, by building a trinity. The erection of this monastery was the wish of Mrs. Maria Crîmu from Traian locality, Olt district. Other enlargement and consolidation works have been carried out in the last two decades, and in 2009, the monastery chapel was consecrated.



# RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION ROMANIA-BULGARIA