

# KNOWN AND UNKNOWN EUROPE



## The students' voice

I love to travel and I am glad that I was a part of this great project. It was really amazing how just for 5 days we all got used to each other and became so close. It was pleasure to meet all those adorable people. I enjoyed every single moment and I won't forget it ! Thanks to Comenius ! I miss you all ! I hope we will see again some day!

*IRINA EVSTATIEWA*

I learnt a lots of countries cultures,histories. I love speaking english i learnt something from diffent languages. Now i want to know all of the european countries life styles,cultures. Thanks comenius i hope we will meet again.

*FATIH KARAKAŞ*

Comenius Project!!

I think its legen....dary! We had a week in Portugal. Now i can say this is the best weeks I lived We had the opportunity to develop our English and learned some words from other languages.I miss Portugal and i think my friends miss to.

*I ÖZAY*



## Cultural Highlights in Sofia Region

Sofia Valley, the biggest one in Bulgaria, is situated in the west part of the country. It is divided in two regions – Sofia district (the area around Sofia) and Sofia city.

Sofia, Bulgaria's fourth capital after Pliska, Preslav and Veliko Turnovo, one of the oldest cities in Europe, has a history that goes back thousands of years. The motto of the capital "It Grows but Does not Age" expresses the dynamic development of the city – from an old and historic town to a major administrative, business and cultural center.

The fine harmony between the past and the present day gives the town its genuine charm. Sofia offers its visitors a remarkable experience – long and turbulent history, opportunity to admire finest architecture, rich cultural life, beautiful mountain which is only a stone's throw away from the capital, mineral springs, wonderful landscape of the villages nearby and traditional Bulgarian hospitality.

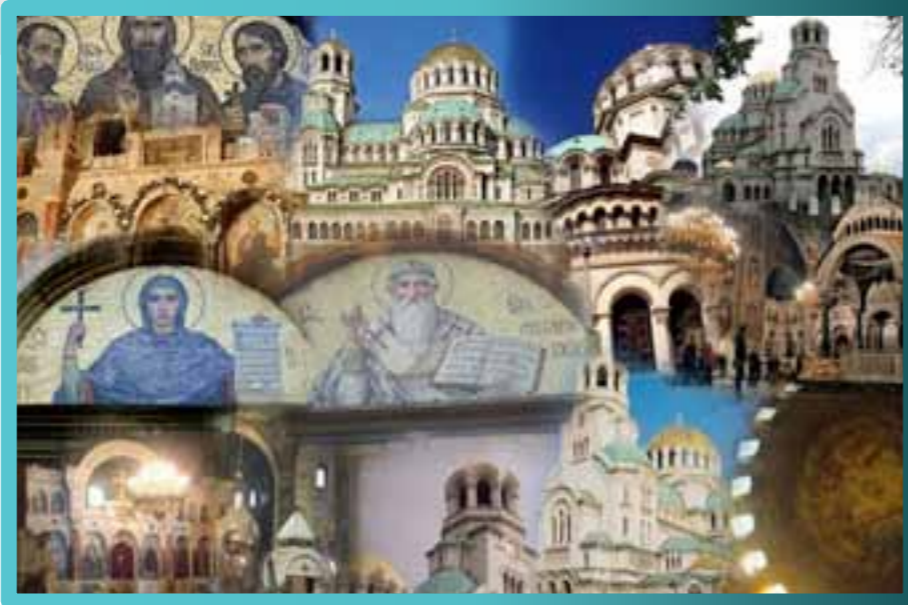
Most of the city sightseeing walking tours start from the

**Alexander Nevsky Square** with

**St. Alexander Nevsky Patriarchal Cathedral.**

This memorial gold domed church represents the magnificent expression of gratitude of the Bulgarian people for the Russian heroes in the Liberation war (1877-1878). Its foundation stone was laid in 1882, building work began in 1904 and the church was completed in 1912.

Built in neo-Byzantine style, the temple is without an equal on the Balkan Peninsula. The Cathedral is 73.50 m long, 52 m wide, 50.52 m high; it occupies an area of 3170 sq. m. and can accommodate a congregation of 5000. The church tower has twelve bells of different size with a total weight of 23000kg. The sound of the largest bell can be heard 30 km away. Artists and craftsmen (Bulgarians, Russians, Austrians, Germans, Italians,



*ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY  
PATRIARCHAL CATHEDRAL.*

Czechs) created unique masterpieces of icons, frescoes, murals and chandeliers. The interior design made of Italian marble, Egyptian alabaster, Brazilian onyx, gold, Venetian mosaics and stained glass windows embodies the spirit of the finest Orthodox traditions.

The Crypt below the church houses a superb collection of

old icons, frescoes, miniatures, service books, gold vessels, sacred objects.

**St. Sophia Church**, standing in front of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, is the symbol of the Bulgarian capital and one of the most remarkable historical monuments in the Balkan Peninsula.

Several smaller churches



*ST. SOPHIA CHURCH*

existed on the same place (Serdica's necropolis) throughout the centuries. The first had been erected as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Probably the fifth church is the now existing one, it is believed to have been built after the invasion of the Huns (5<sup>th</sup> c.) and at the time of the Justinian the Great (6<sup>th</sup> c.). Very interesting mosaics from the period of the flourishing of ancient Serdica are preserved.

The fame of the basilica is so great that the city is named after the church. During the Turkish rule minarets were added and the church functioned as a mosque (Siyash Pasha Mosque). In 1818 terrible earthquake destroyed the minaret and a second in 1858 destroyed the building. After these misfortunes the mosque was abandoned and restored as a church after liberation. At present St. Sophia once again plays an important role in the life of the town.

Just behind Alexander Nevsky Cathedral tourists can see three of the most important landmarks of the city.

**Vassil Levski Monument** marks the spot where "The Apostle of Freedom" was hanged by the Turks on February 19, 1873.

**National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"** was founded soon after the Liberation from Ottoman rule. The erection of the building was began in 1942 and completed in 1954. The National Library is the biggest and richest in Bulgaria. At

present it preserves several million volumes including valuable collection of manuscripts (the oldest from 11<sup>th</sup> century), rare books, many archival documents, maps, portraits, records. In the small but beautiful flower garden in front of the National Library was erected a monument to the holy brothers St. St. Cyril and Methodius. They developed the first Slavic alphabet (Glagolic) in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. It was later transformed as the well-known Cyrillic alphabet and used in the whole Slavic world.

The imposing Baroque-style building of the **University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”** was constructed after the design of Breanson, French architect. Its central block was built in the period from 1924 to 1934. The erection of the two side wings began before the Second World War but was completed in 1952. On the both sides of the impressive main entrance are the large seated statues of the two brothers, Hristo and Evlogi Georgiev, who donated the land and considerable funds for the founding of the university. The entrance and the ceremonial halls are decorated with stain-glass windows like the Bulgarian old icons. The University of Sofia, considered the most prestigious one in the country, has one of the richest libraries in Bulgaria including old manuscripts and books. In a small garden in front of the building is situated a monument to St. Kliment Ohridski (scholar from 9<sup>th</sup> century), now the patron of the University.

Within a short walking distance on the right of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is the

**National Assembly Square** with:

The **National Assembly** (Bulgarian Parliament) which is closely associated with the history and the fate of the people after the liberation from Ottoman rule. This beautiful white building, listed as a cultural monument, was built in several stages from 1884 to 1928, on plans of the architect Konstantin Ivanovich, Bulgarian who had been living and working in Vienna. The almost square block in Renaissance style with



SOFIA UNIVERSITY  
LEVSKI MONUMENT  
NATIONAL LIBRAR.



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

classical elements is very elegant and harmonious. The famous slogan on the façade above the main entrance of the National Assembly is “Unity Makes Strength”. The building of the **Bulgarian Academy of Sciences** was constructed in 1892. Now it accommodates the main office of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,

the most prestigious scientific institution in the country. Many research institutes and centers function as parts of the Academy. In 1869 was founded the Bulgarian Literary Society in the Romanian town Braila. It was the predecessor of the present Academy. Founder members of the Literary Society were prominent Bulgarian writers and publicists. The first president of the Society was elected Marin Drinov. Bulgaria was liberated from Ottoman rule and the Bulgarian Literary Society moved to Sofia. In 1911 it was renamed Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. **Tsar Osvoboditel (Tsar Liberator) Monument** is situated on the square in front of the National Assembly building as a symbol of the gratitude of the Bulgarians to the Russian liberators from Ottoman rule. It is 14 meters high and the bronze statue of the Russian Emperor Alexander II on horseback is 4.5 m high. The sculptor was the famous Florentine master Arnaldo Zocchi. It is considered one of the Zocchi’s masterpieces. In his right hand Tsar Alexander II holds the Manifesto declaring the War of Liberation. On the four sides of the upper part of the pedestal are situated impressive compositions with many figures depicting Russian victories and Bulgarians welcoming their liberators.

Tsar Osvoboditel Boulevard will lead tourists to the **Russian Church “St. Nicolai”**, built in 1912-1914 by Russian workmen on the project of architect Preobrazhenski. The five golden onion domes (one high surrounded by four smaller) are characteristic of the old Russian temple style. The roof of the church is covered with green majolica tiles. The interior is exquisitely decorated with mural compositions and gilded iconostasis. The frescoes were painted in the style of the famous Novgorod icon school.

The church is named after St. Nicolai “The Miracle maker”. Written wishes on paper are placed in box by the marble sarcophagus of Bishop Serafim, buried in the crypt.

The **National Museum of Natural History** is next to the Russian church. Being more than 120- year old, it is the oldest museum in Bulgaria and the oldest and richest among the

natural history museums on the Balkan Peninsula.

At present expositions are placed in 16 halls on the four museum floors.

An exposition of minerals can be seen on both sides of the central foyer.

Birds, amphibians, fish and fossils are presented in 5 halls on the second floor.

Here visitors can see almost all representatives of the contemporary bird species

in Bulgaria as well as some rare species from all over the world. The entire third floor of the museum is dedicated to mammals.

The two-meter high bear from Rila standing on its hind legs is interesting to see. It wore a gold medal for being the biggest European bear. Insects such as beetles, butterflies and others are placed on the fourth floor.

They are arranged according to a systematic principle in 20 windows.

A few meters away is the **Alexander Battenberg Square** where stands the former Royal Palace, which houses the **National Art Gallery** and the **National Ethnographic Museum**.

After the Liberation this old building was reconstructed in Viennese style and converted into a Palace for the first Bulgarian monarch, Knyaz Alexander Battenberg.

The Art Gallery possesses rich collection of paintings, graphics and sculptures by old and contemporary

artists.

The National Ethnographic Museum occupies the eastern wing of the old Palace. Today it displays remarkable variety of pottery, carpets, fabrics, textiles,



*RUSSIAN CHURCH  
AND NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM*



*NATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC  
MUSEUM*



*NATIONAL ART GALLERY*



*NATIONAL THEATER  
IVAN VAZOV*

Bulgarian artists – Zahari Zograf, Stanislav Dospevski, Nikolai Pavlovich, Vladimir Dimitrov-The Master, Tsanko Lavrenov, Andrei Nikolov, etc.

The National Ethnographic Museum occupies the eastern wing of the old Palace. Today it displays remarkable variety of pottery, carpets, fabrics, textiles,

embroideries, jewelry, folk costumes with characteristic features of the different regions of Bulgaria. The authentic design of old Bulgarian house (19<sup>th</sup> century) is preserved.

If you go through the garden opposite the Palace, you will see one of the most beautiful and valuable buildings – the **National Theater “Ivan Vazov”**. It was built in 1907 and is a model of the Neoclassical architecture. Along the 40 m high façade of this majestic building six white marble columns with beautiful capital support a large triangular pediment, decorated with mythological scenes.

In the same way as the antique shrines, a relief of Apollo and four muses remind us that this is a temple of culture. On both sides of the façade rise two towers, topped by sculpture of the

Goddess of Victory Nike. The theater is also very impressive inside. Marble stairs lead to the ornate main hall. The foyers are lavishly decorated with more than 2000 Baroque ornaments. At present the modern stage has an impressive curtain with huge mythical firebird in bright colors.

In close proximity is the **National Museum of Archaeology**, the oldest one in Bulgaria (1892). It occupies one of the oldest buildings in Sofia – Buyuk Mosque, erected in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The pretty old mosque is a square structure and incorporates many of the characteristics of East European architecture. The rich museum collection includes remains of Prehistoric, Thracian, Greek, Roman and Bulgarian settlements, treasures, coins from all parts of the country, including the former capitals of Pliska, Veliki



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF  
ARCHAEOLOGY

Preslav and Veliko Turnovo. The exhibits include the world famous Valchitran treasure and the original floor mosaic from St. Sophia Church. The numismatic collection (300 000 pcs) is one of the richest in the world.

Not far from it is the **St. George Rotunda**, which is the oldest well preserved building in Sofia, dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

It is small but charming round red brick church situated in the back yard behind Sheraton

Hotel, amid remains of the ancient town of Serdica.

Originally the building had a civil function and later (probably in the 5<sup>th</sup>

century) it was converted into a Christian temple. The walls of the Rotunda

of St. George were decorated many times. Three layers of frescoes

have been discovered and the earliest dating back

to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The magnificent mediaeval murals in the church

are depicted in very large size (over 2m). The Rotunda of St. George

has now been restored almost to its original form and it was reopened to the visitors.

Nearby is the **St. Nedelya Square** where tourists can have a look at a charming little Christian church called **St. Petka**

**Samardzhiiska**. It was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but is still very preserved and houses frescoes from three different periods. The



ST. GEORGE ROTUNDA

The



ST. PETKA AND ST NEDLYA  
CHURCHES

Guild of Saddlers looked after the church and it was named St. Petka Samardzhiiska (St. Petka of the Saddlers).

**St. Nedelya Church** is the other attraction here. This church was built in the period 1856-1863 upon the remains of the Roman town of Serdica.

A chapel had existed here in mediaeval times.

The church was known also as Sveti Kral (Holy King) since it preserves the relics of the Serbian King St. Stefan Milutin. In the southern part of it is the grave of the first Bulgarian Exarch – Yossif I. On April 16, 1925 the temple was blown up by group of communists in assassination attempt of Tsar Boris III.

Vitosha Boulevard, which starts from the square leads to the **National Palace of Culture**.

The largest multifunctional complex in Southeastern Europe (referred to as NDK) faces the majestic silhouette of Vitosha Mountain. It is a modern architectural center covering 19 000sq. m. display area. The monolithic structure was built to mark the 1 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1981) of the formation of the Bulgarian State. It is the most prominent capital's complex for concerts, exhibitions, theatre performances, movie screenings and houses many offices, shops and restaurants. Throughout the year it hosts major conferences, trade fairs, fashion shows, festivals as well

as numerous different cultural events. The National Palace of Culture has 16 halls with seating capacity ranging from 50 to 4 000, equipped with modern technology. The large basement section of the Palace has an impressive fountain in the middle. The National Palace of Culture and the area around are the



NATIONAL PALACE OF CULTURE

favorite places of the young people of Sofia. Boyana at the foot of Mountain Vitosha was one of the dozen fortresses around the mediaeval city of Sredets (Sofia). Now this beautiful suburb is notable for the **Boyana Church**, significant historical treasure included in UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.



BOYANA CHURCH

The temple consists of three parts built in different ages (11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century). In 1259 a new building, financed by Sebastocrator Kaloyan was added to the small old church. The frescoes from the 13<sup>th</sup> century are the most interesting feature of the remarkable mediaeval monument. About 240 realistic human figures are depicted in biblical scenes on the walls of the church. The murals, painted by an unknown but exceptionally gifted artist, exhibit a new humanistic tendency in the mediaeval art (earlier than the Italian Renaissance and the famous Giotto). Among the fine frescoes on the walls are the portraits of the donors Sebastocrator Kaloyan (the local governor) and his beautiful wife Dessislava as well as Tsar Constantine-Assen and Tsaritsa Irina. The artist depicted the features of Bulgarian life at that time.

Boyana Residence houses the **National Museum of History** – the biggest in Bulgaria and one of the largest history museums on the Balkans. The remarkable exposition covers the whole period from prehistory to the modern times (the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). The museum possesses priceless exhibits like bronze and silver jewelry from the Bronze Age, unique gold



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Thracian treasures from Panagyurishte and silver from Rogozen, precious Roman and Byzantine objects of culture, mediaeval manuscripts, beautiful creations of the Bulgarian National Revival Period and relics from the epic struggle for liberation (19<sup>th</sup> century). Thracian gold treasures are spaciouly displayed, often singly, so they can be fully appreciated. There is a rich collection of material from the National Revival, including folk costumes, carpets, domestic items and typically furnished rooms from that period. Visitors can see the development of the Bulgarian alphabet and early Christian art on Bulgarian soil.

Apart from the numerous churches, museums and monuments tourists can immerse in the city's long and eventful past by visiting some other less known places in the region. One of them is the medieval fortress of **Urvich**, located in the Pancharevo gorge. The historical information (construction of the walls, other remains) shows that the fortress was built during the XIII century in the time of the Second Bulgarian Empire. Preserved today are parts of the outside wall with a height up to 6 m. and parts of the walls of the inner court church "St. Ilia". There are two versions regarding the origin of the name.

According to the first one, the fortress was named after the name of the local boyar - Urvich. The other one says, that the name follows the situation - from "urva" (an old bulgarian word meaning precipice). The first records about the fortress are given by Paisii Hilendarski in his "History". Emphasized is the role that Urvich played in the defence



URVICH

of the Second Bulgarian Empire. A legend says that in this location were the last battles of Tsar Ivan Shishman, called by the local habitants Tsar Jasen. Thanks to the fact, that it is surrounded from three sides by the Iskar river, the fortress withstood the last siege for a long time, until the day when a local woman, named Vedena in an attempt to save her child's life, revealed the location of the secret entrance of Urvich. The people damned the betrayer and she petrified. Today if a

traveller looks towards the left bank of Vedena river, he will see a rock shape, which looks like a figure of a woman hugging a kid. This rock structure is named “Starchikov kamak”. Urvich is a part of the so called “Urvich fortress complex”.

The main cultural and historical cloisters, most of which exist till nowadays, are huddled in the mountains around Sofia. These are: Dragalevtsi Monastery”Virgin Mary of Vitosha”, Kladnitsa monastery “St.Nikolay”, Kokalyane Monastery “St. Archangel Michael”, German Monastery “St. Ivan Rilski”, Gorna Banya monastery “St. St. Kyril and Methodius” and many others. This large fraternity was given the name of Minor Mount Athos of Sofia, comparing it to the famous monastic complex of Mount Athos in Greece.

#### **Kremikovtsi Monastery,**

situated on the outskirts of Balkan Mountain, is believed to have been built during the reign of the king Ivan Alexander (1333-1371), but there is certain evidence for its existence from the 15th century. During the Ottoman Slavery the Kremikovtsi Monastery was an important literary and cultural centre for Sofia’s residents and

many liturgical books were transcribed there. The oldest building there is the church “St.Georgi” dated back to the end of the 15th century and renovated two times. Frescoes in the old church are closely connected to the traditions of the churches’ art-painting from the period of Bulgarian Middle Ages. Most of them are painted on a dark background, on which the figures of saints stand out. Some of the relics in the Kremikovtsi Monastery are a Gospel dated back to 1497, having been ordered to be written by the Sofia’s metropolitan bishop Kalevit, beautiful calligraphic scripts, and a wooden iconostasis dating back to the 17th century. All of them are kept in the new church. The Kremikovtsi Monastery boasts really impressive and interesting icons. The oldest of them is “Jesus Christ All-Powerful” dated back to the 15th century. Another icon depicts the image of the monastery’s patron



*KREMIKOVTSI MONASTERY  
GERMAN MONASTERY*

from 1667 and several icons dated back to the 18th and 19th century.

**German Monastery**, which lies in the Lozen mountain, was established in the 10th century and according to the legend, the venerable St.Ivan Rilski lived there for a while just before he found his solitude in the Rila Mountain. During the reign of the king Petur, the monastery was turned into an important spiritual centre and, respectively, a part of the “Sofia’s Little Sveta Gora” (Sofia’s region is abundant in cloisters). Soon afterwards, during the time of Byzantine domination when the monastery flourished, it was sent presents by the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Komnin. The holy cloister was completely destroyed during the time of the invasion of Ottoman conquerors in 1382 when Sofia city fell under their power. The shrine was restored one century later and it rapidly turned into a cultural centre. The shrine does not boast frescoes, but it has valuable icons which were painted by the eminent brothers Nikola and Ivan Dospevski. The remnants of an old Byzantine fortress, which was destroyed by the troops of Khan Krum in 809 after the occupation of Sredets (today Sofia city), can be seen to the north of the German monastery. The ruins of an old church were discovered not far away from the monastery. It is believed that it dates back to the time of the First Bulgarian State and it was connected with the fortress situated in the near Kaleto Peak.

Sofia region enjoys a rich potential of tourist resources. The cultural heritage of the city as well as the cultural routes could ensure an exciting and unforgettable experience for every visitor of the capital.



## Itineraries for the Young

**Vitosha Mountain**, just 15 km away from Sofia is the favorite place of nature lovers and young people. On weekends regardless of the season and of the weather, tourists line to get on the lifts, impatient to go up above the smog-blanketed traffic-fumed city. And indeed, on many occasions Sofia is deeply immersed in thick fog, while Vitosha offers sunny skies and warmer



VITOSHA MOUNTAIN

temperatures. In the summer people are keen to experience the refreshing coolness of its crystal clear air. Almost 90% of the mountain belongs to the territories of the Vitosha Nature Park. The biosphere reserve of **Bistrishko Branishte** falls into its eastern portion where an expanse of spruce forests and more than 300 ha of high-mountain turf land are under protection. More than 100 bird species inhabit Mount Vitosha as well as a stunning diversity of insects and wild animals. Another attraction for tourists is the Museum of the Bear in the northern slopes of Mount Vitosha. Nature-lovers often stop at the Belite Brezi (White Birches) locality where the Owllet Museum stands. Most of the visitors – 80% or even more, come to the mountain for hiking tourism. For the purpose Vitosha is dotted with special picnic spots. Marked tourist routes offer rescue shelters too. Mountain trails take you to chalets and recreation homes offering coziness and calm amid the alpine beauty of Mount Vitosha. One picturesque trail will take you to the breathtaking **Boyana Waterfall** descending from a height of 15 m. Boyana waterfall flows only five kilometers away from the residential district of Boyana. It also happens to be the largest waterfall of Vitosha Mountain. If you love extreme and alternative forms of tourism- try climbing up the Boyana waterfall during the winter. Boyana waterfall is one of the few places in Bulgaria that offers good conditions for ice climbing. The waterfall freezes in two separate branches. The two offer differing difficulty levels. The



BOYANA WATERFALL

left branch is less steep while the right branch is suitable only for professional ice climbers. If you want to explore several Vitosha beauties at the same time start your walk from Aleko, cross the Vitosha plateau and head down to the stone river-**Zlatnite Mostove**. The stone river 'flows' at an altitude of 1500 to 1350m. Large stone blocks, covered by gold lichens, have given the name of Zlatni Mostove. According to another version, the place had some gold deposits. Tourists can have a picnic or sunbathe on the large, smooth stones. Another option is trying to climb up the stone river. Zlatnite Mostove can be used as a starting point for the route to Cherni Vruh, or Black peak,

12 290 m/, which makes Mount Vitosha the fourth highest in Bulgaria. Koumata cabin and ski center Konyarnika are two



KOMINITE

of the places that you will visit along the way. Vitosha also offers walls for rock climbing in its eastern part. **Kominite** (The Chimneys) locality with its vertical rocks is the perfect place to do this. The mountain of Vitosha, situated close to Sofia, attracts many bikers. It offers diverse terrains and many tracks. Some

of the routes can be completed in two or three hours, giving you a chance to escape for a short period of time from the office and your daily routine. Other routes require more experience and physical strength. Paragliding is another option for those who want to have a look at the region from above and sense the adrenaline rush. They may take paraglide lessons or select

a flight with an instructor. A distance of 400 km can be covered in such a flight and rising 7000 meters above the ground is also possible.

The Southwestern part of the mountain is the largest and yet the least frequented. It borders on Mount Verila. It is home to Bulgaria's longest reaching cave, **Duhlata**, located on the right bank of the Struma river near the village of Bosnek.. Its name is associated with the sound that the wind makes while it passes through the cave entrance. Duhlata is a maze of tunnels, galleries, underground lakes, waterfalls and sinter formations. 22 species of cave animals, including 6 bat species were found in the cave. The cave has a wide variety of cave formations. Yet, if you want to visit it, you need to get an experienced guide to take you inside.

Vitosha is one of the city emblems and a very attractive place of choice for winter tourism due to the fact that the duration of the skiing season is 120 days. The first skiing center in Bulgaria originated near the Aleko Chalet. It is the best opportunity for the lovers of winter sports. The ski runs of Vitosha are various and would be suitable for skiers and boarders of any level. Vitosha offers six ski runs with various difficulty and length - the green ski run being the easiest and the Vitoshko Lale the most difficult. There is also a trail for ski running - Univerisada, 9600 m long. All ski runs have the necessary facilities. There are a number of chair and drag lifts, as well as a Gondola lift starting from the outskirts of Sofia and reaching almost the top of the mountain near Aleko. The biggest tourist chalet Aleko, offering accommodation as well as skis for rent and highly qualified ski instructors, enjoys tremendous popularity with holidaymakers. For people with higher requirements the best hotels are in the villages of Simeonovo and Dragalevtsi, which are close to the lifts leading to the ski runs.



BANKYA

If youngsters decide that they want to get spoiled during the vacation, **Bankya** is the place. It is a balneological resort situated only a few kilometers away from Sofia. Locals have fully developed spa tourism. Numerous hotels offer quality procedures

and everything else necessary for a good vacation. A bottling company produces mineral water, making use of Bankya spring, which heals heart diseases and attracts tourists to the region year-round. Apart from the healing centers, Bankya has some very good hotels that offer full spa treatment package.



PANCHAREVO LAKE

**Pancharevo Lake** /5 km long and 1 km wide/, located just 12 km away from Sofia, in the suburbs of the capital city, also offers plenty of opportunities for sports and recreation activities. It is suitable for sun-bathing, fishing and water sports - swimming, surfing, and water skiing. Nearby, hot mineral springs are located. The outdoor mineral swimming pool attracts young people even in cold weather. In Pancharevo tourists can simply walk and enjoy the beautiful nature, away from the noise of the big city. There are several park areas with coffee shops and restaurants around the lake, which offer cozy atmosphere and plenty of delicious food - grilled meat, homemade potatoes, fresh salads, fried fish and cold beer. You can just sit on the bridge above the lake, taste the delicious Bulgarian food and watch the fishermen. In short - a visit to Pancharevo Lake will definitely bring you back to nature and will lighten your day.

Another option for young people is to visit the picturesque small villages, preserving the unique spirit of the Shopluk region. They can take part in some of the typical festivals, held annually in the town of Elin Pelin. If they happen to visit the region in winter, they can join in the **Kukeri**, costumed men in wooden masks of animals and bells attached to their belts, who walk and dance, driving away evil spirits. **Koledaruvane** is another ritual that can be seen there. Young, single or recently married men dressed in national costumes visit the houses, singing and wishing the family prosperity. The house owner invites them

in and gives them wine, money and food. People believed that songs chased evil spirits. Spring is the season for one of the most attractive festivals – **Lazarovden**, held on Saturday eight days before Easter. This day is a “coming of age” celebration for young girls known as Lazarki. The maidens are dressed in colorful traditional costumes with wreaths of flowers in their hair, singing and dancing as they go from home to home. All festivals end with joining in the typical folk dance for the region – kopanitsa. Apart from numerous landmarks and ways of entertainment Sofia Region attracts tourists with its cosy, typically Bulgarian folk-style restaurants, called “mehana”. One of the pearls in contemporary Bulgarian tourism is the amusement restaurant “**Vodenitsata**”/ the Watermill /, nesting in Vitosha Mountain, very close to Dragalevtsi Monastery. It will tempt you with Shopska salad and chilled grape brandy, monastery bean soup or tarator /cold yoghurt and diced cucumber soup/, feta cheese baked in an earthenware dish or peppers stuffed with

sheep’s cheese, kebab or meshana skara. The smell of oven-fresh bread rolls is mixed with the fragrance of savory thinly sliced loukanka / flat dry sausage /, pastrami and feta cheese sprinkled with paprika are temptingly arranged on ceramic plates. Tourists will probably find it hard to choose among the many delicate white wines and full reds. The meal is



VODENITSATA

wrapped up with a cup of steaming coffee served with sweet jam, pancakes with honey and walnuts or baklava.

During their stay in the restaurant, foreigners will have the pleasure to enjoy the performance of authentic Bulgarian folklore and to get in touch with the old Bulgarian traditions, presented by the Bulgarian folklore troupes. The ideal combination of beautiful nature, woods, wonderful flowers among watermill stones makes this place very attractive.

Breathtaking landscapes, wonderful opportunities for recreation and practicing sports and attractive cultural sights along with their closeness to the capital of the country, has turned the region into a preferable destination for spa, cultural and rural tourism.



## Northern Apulia: the Daunian Subapennine, the Tavoliere Plain and the Gargano Promontory

The **Daunia** is characterized by a few mountains, rocky hills and luxuriant oak and beech woods. In its cosy medieval towns with their stone houses, people can enjoy a particularly relaxing pace of life. One of the most well-known towns in this area is **Troia**, famous for its Romanesque Cathedral, whose rose-window is the symbol of the town and is one of the nicest in Apulia.

The advent of Frederick II, king of Sicily and Emperor of the Holy Roman Emperor from 1220 to 1250, was important for the development of the capital city of this area, **Foggia**, where he built three imposing imperial palaces and for its province, where the most famous of his sites are situated: **Lucera, Apricena, Civitate, Ortanova and Castel Fiorentino**, the extinct town where he died. **Faeto** is known not only for its gastronomic specialities, such as its ham and its lard, but also for the fact that Provençal French has been spoken here since 1345, when a French colony settled in the town. **Bovino** numbers among the nicest little towns in Italy.

**Pietramontecorvino, Sant'Agata di Puglia** and **Alberona** have received the orange flag, an award for the respect of cultural and natural heritage.

The Gargano and the Daunian chain are divided from the rest of the region by the **Tavoliere delle Puglie**, the second largest plain in Italy. The main town in this area, **Lucera**, was a Roman colony where an amphitheatre was built during the Augustan Age. This town was also much endeared by Frederick II, who built a castle here which overlooks the Daunian Subapennines and the



LUCERA

Tavoliere Plain.

The **Gargano Promontory** is a spur of rugged cliffs and dense forest jutting out into the Adriatic Sea.

The Gargano coastline, with its bays, caves, coves and cliffs attracts tourists from all over the world in summer. North of the **Gargano Promontory** there are two salt lakes: **Lesina** and

**Varano.**

Lesina, on the shores of the homonymous lake, is a maritime village known for the production of tasty female eels.

**The Tremiti Islands**, an enchanting archipelago set off the north-east of the Gargano, also belong to Apulia and boast a marine reserve which is part of the National Park of the Gargano.



FROM THE RUGGED COASTS OF THE PROMONTORY OF GARGANO

In the island of **San Nicola** tourists should visit the abbey of S. Maria a Mare, a Romanesque church built in the typical style of Benedictine and Cistercian monks. Another island with scenic views and dozens of beautiful coves is **San Domino.**

The S.S. 89 coast road unfolds for about 100 kms passing through rough enchanting villages from which you can see stunning views.

**Rodi Garganico, Peschici Vieste** and **Mattinata** are the names of its most famous villages which, with their quaint houses and narrow and tortuous alleys, lean out to the sea.

From **Vieste** to **Peschici** you will notice the so-called **trabucchi**, typical wooden buildings from which fishing nets are hung. The **Gargano National Park**, with



TRABUCCHI

its 120,000 hectares of lagoons, mountains, forests, rugged

or sandy beaches (which include the Tremiti Islands' marine reserve too), is one of the most beautiful areas in Italy. The heart of the Gargano National Park, the so-called *Foresta Umbra*, is a natural reserve whose flora and fauna are varied and unique. Monte Gargano is the site of two important religious sanctuaries:

**1 - Monte Sant'Angelo**, where there is the cave-church of Saint-Michael, which is the oldest shrine in Western Europe dedicated to this saint. The town has recently been included in the Unesco World Heritage thanks to its remarkable examples of Lombard-style architecture and it also boasts an outstanding Norman castle;



GROTTA MONTESANTANGELO

**2 - the monastery of San Giovanni Rotondo**, which is visited by a lot of people who seek the protection of Padre Pio, a saint who has made a lot of miracles for the sick.

About 10 kms from Monte Sant'Angelo stands the **abbey of Santa Maria di Pulsano**. In this secluded area 23 hermitages were built in the VI century by Turkish monks dedicated to ascetism.

Sloping down along the coast you will get to **Mattinata** and then, at the foot of the promontory, to **Manfredonia**, where there is a castle started by Manfredi, Frederick II's son and completed by the Angevins. Stop over at **Siponto**, a hamlet of Manfredonia, which was an important port of the Magna Grecia in the past. Its Cathedral, the Basilica of St. Maria Maggiore, is an important Romanesque masterpiece.



SIPONTO

Wide stretches of sandy beaches lead to **Zapponeta** and then to **Margherita di Savoia** a spa resort surrounded by saltpans. Margherita di Savoia's wet areas became a State Naturalistic Reserve in 1979 in particular due to the presence of flamingos.



CANNE DELLA BATTAGLIA

In the surroundings, several hypogea which date back to the bronze Age and which were used for fertility cults and for collective burials have been found. Eight of them are near **San Ferdinando di Puglia**, while the Ivory hypogeuem and the Bronze Hypogeuem are in the Archaeological Park of **Trinitapoli**.

## Higher Murge

The **Murge plateau** is a large area (50 km wide and 150 km long) made up of limestone hills.



MUSHROOMS "CARDONCELLI"

At the **Salso Lake Oasis**, a reserve which is at the foot of the Gargano Natural Park, it is possible to admire protected birds such as whitehead ducks.

Visit the archaeological site of **Canne della Battaglia**, where Hannibal defeated the Romans in 216 B.C., in the most important battle of ancient times.

The Higher Murge spread out in the provinces of Bari and Barletta-Trani-Andria and slope gradually towards the Adriatic Sea. In this area the first **National Rural Park** has been created to preserve the widest area of steppe vegetation in Italy. It includes a rich area of inaccessible and stony pastureland,

cultivated areas and woods of oaks.

Here flower lovers can see wonderful wild orchids, birdwatchers can see rare species of birds and, in autumn, mushroom searchers can go in search of the so-called *cardoncelli*, a tasty mushroom kind. Rare animals such as foxes, crows, hares, owls, larks, hawks, the endangered otter and others live in this area.

In Andria, one of the capitals of the BAT province, tourists should visit the old town, the Ducal Palace and a Museum of Comfits, set in a beautiful Liberty-style building.

In the surroundings of Corato there is the *Chianca dei Paladini* dolmen, which according to the legend, was created by giants who wanted to show their strength. From these towns one can easily reach the Unesco World Heritage site of **Castel del Monte**, the mysterious castle based on the number eight: eight sides make up its shape, eight are its octagonal towers and its interior courtyard is also octagonal..

In **Canosa**, which is the most important archaeological centre in Apulia, one should not miss the Basilica of S. Leucio (an early Christian church) and the Hypogea Lagrasta, used both by the Dauni and by Romans as burial places.

On the right of the Cathedral stands the Mausoleum of Bohemond, one of the heroes of the first crusade, who helped to capture Antioch. Enjoy scenic views from **Minervino Murge**, which has been called Apulia's balcony, and have a walk through the oldest part of its historic centre, called *Scesciola*, characterized by a labyrinth of narrow lanes, slopes



CASTLE DEL MONTE THE OCTAGONAL MYSTERIOUS CASTLE BUILT BY EMPEROR FREDERICK II



MINERVINO MURGE



CASTLE OF GARAGNONE

landscape and be therefore safer against attacks.

Other important hinterland centres of the Murge which parallel the coast towns are **Ruvo di Puglia** and **Bitonto**.



RUVO DI PUGLIA - ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL

particular the Talos Vase, an Attic crater representing the death of the mythical daemon guardian of Crete.

**Bitonto** is also famous for its high-quality olive-oil obtained from the tree that, according to the legend, was given to this town by the goddess Minerva.

The historic centre of this town is embellished with an outstanding example of Romanesque cathedral which was built on the same lines as St. Nicholas' Basilica in Bari.

The karstic land of the Murge is the birthplace of canyons, grottoes, dolinas and steep gorges called *gravine*.

Heading westwards you will reach **Gravina** and **Altamura**.

In Altamura, whose bread is among the most renowned in Italy, one can find the *Pulo*, a Karstic dolina where the unique remains of a whole human skeleton of the Palaeolithic Age were found.

and archways linking the medieval houses rising on the hillside.

Head then for **Spinazzola** and reach one of most secluded places of the region, the ruins of the **Castle of Garagnone**, which was built during the Norman Empire and was camouflaged with the top of the rock so as not to stand out in the

**Ruvo di Puglia** is famous for the production of wines and has a medieval historic centre which hosts a graceful Romanesque Cathedral. This town is also the seat of the National Archaeological Museum Jatta, where Apulian vases and other archaeological findings are on display, in

In this town you can also see one of the four palatine Cathedrals in Apulia, the Dinosaur Park and the Archaeological Museum. **Gravina** takes its name from a ravine where cave houses were built on superimposed levels and linked by exterior stairs. Basilian monks, who fled from the East during the Byzantine age to avoid iconoclast persecutions, dug rock churches in its caves painted with splendid frescoes, the most representative being the church of St. Michael of the Caves.



GRAVINA DI PUGLIA

### The Adriatic coast and its hinterland from Barletta to Monopoli

From **Barletta** to **Bari** there are several middle-sized towns which were in the past the coastal outlets of the hinterland agriculture centres.

Along the coast sand alternates with rocks or pebbles and the vegetation is characterized by the predominance of olive trees.

Wander around the narrow winding streets of their cosy historical

centres to admire amazing Medieval and Renaissance stone buildings, Norman or Swabian castles and Romanesque churches.

**Barletta** is famous for the *Disfida* (the *Challenge*), a battle which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1503 when 13 Italian Knights fought against 13 French Knights. This event is re-enacted every year in its Norman-Swabian castle.



TRANI

In **Trani** you will admire an outstanding example of an Apulian



DOLMEN - BISCEGLIE

famous for its dolmens which can be seen in its surroundings, in particular the *Dolmen della Chianca*.



THE FESTIVAL OF THE MADONNA OF THE MARTYRS IS ONE OF THE ENDLESS SPECIAL EVENTS WHICH ARE CELEBRATED IN THIS REGION

town, the Hospice of the Crusaders and the *Pulo*, a dolina where there are many traces of the Neolithic Age.

**Giovinazzo** is another middle-sized town which has a cosy historic centre and a Romanesque cathedral facing the sea, partly rebuilt in 1747 with Baroque touches.



GIOVINAZZO SMALL PORT

In the countryside landscape one can see century-old olive trees, almond trees, fortified farmhouses, look-out towers, rural churches, *pagliari* (small buildings used for keeping farmers' tools), oil-mills, votive chapels,

millstones, public storage tanks and water wheels (which were driven by horses for drawing water from underground).

**Terlizzi**, an hinterland agriculture centre famous for its flowers and its ceramics, is also worth visiting for its old town and its Norman clock tower.



EASTER PROCESSIONS CHARACTERISE THE HOLY WEEK OF MANY APULIAN TOWNS

**Bari**, the second largest town in southern Italy, boasts two twin Romanesque churches, the Basilica of St. Nicholas and the Cathedral St. Sabinus.

The Basilica of St. Nicholas, built at the end of the 11th century to keep the body of the Saint taken from Mira (an ancient town set in present Turkey) nowadays plays an important role in the religious dialogue as the Orthodox faithful can pray in an area chapel reserved to them.



ST. NICHOLAS' CRYPT TOMB OF THE SAINT

Its castle, built by the Normans, was renovated by Frederick after it suffered serious damage in 1156. Bari has a picturesque old town, an important seafront built during the Fascist age, an orthodox church and the elegant Murat quarter, a regularly planned neighbourhood which adjoins the old town. Piazza Mercantile, with its cafés and nightspots, is the heart of the so-called *movida*. South of Bari tourists can



BARI CASTLE

visit **Mola di Bari**, with its impregnable castle built by Charles d'Anjou. In this town a spectacular octopus feast is held at the end of July.

The next coastal town is **Polignano a Mare** whose old town overlooks scenic cliffs. Grotta Palazzese, whose blue-green shades often change during the daytime, is the most famous of the sea-caves which are the result of sea erosion on the reef; these caves were often inhabited in prehistoric times.

This town is also famous for being the birthplace of Domenico Modugno, an Italian singer famous in particular for his international hit song *Nel Blu Dipinto di Blu (Volare)*.



MONOPOLI

In **Monopoli** tourists should visit the Aragonese castle and have a stroll around its pier and its old fishing port.

In the surrounding area tourists can visit Saint Stephen's Abbey - a typical Benedictine church with aligned domes- and fortified

farmhouses, among which stands out Masseria Spina Grande, built of red stones.

In the basin of Bari, 3 kms from **Modugno**, tourists can visit the Church of St. Mary of the Caves where, according to the legend St. Conrad of Bavaria, a monk who became Molfetta's patron saint, lived and died.

Along the State Road which leads to Bitonto it is also possible to see the *Monk*, an impressive 3.7 metre high menhir which goes back to 4000 years ago.

You might also stop over at **Sannicandro** to visit its Norman-Swabian castle.

In **Acquaviva delle Fonti**, a town which is particularly famous for the production of red onions, visitors can see one of the few examples of Renaissance architecture in Apulia, the Cathedral of Saint Eustace, which belonged to the king. South-east of Bari there are vast vine-yards and fruit-orchards which produce cherries in particular.

This area is also marked by the presence of several gentle slopes



called *lames* (dry river-beds).

**Noicattaro** is famous for being the town where one of the most important Holy Week processions takes place while in **Rutigliano**, an earthenware whistle festival is held on 17th January, **St. Anthony the Abbot's day**.

In the surroundings of **Valenzano** tourists can reach the church of All Saints, a typical Benedictine Romanesque church, which was built with the proportions of the golden number.



VALENZANO

Other examples of churches with three domes on the same axis are in Molfetta (St. Conrad's), Trani (St. Francis') and in **Conversano** (Monastery of St. Benedict's), this latter was probably built at

the end of the X century and was later entrusted to Cistercian nuns. Their rivalry with the local bishops led them to make a solemn polychrome majolica-tiled bell tower.

In Conversano one should not miss the trapezoidal castle, which overlooks the town and divides it into three parts, and the cathedral, dedicated to our Lady of the Assumption, started by the Normans and completed during the second half of the XIV century.



GIOIA DEL COLLE

Conversano, just like Turi, a nearby town, is also famous for the production of a particular variety of cherry which is exported all over Europe.

**Gioia del Colle**, which divides the north-west Murge from the south-east

ones, is also partly immersed in the so-called **Murgia dei Trulli**. In this town there is a well kept Norman-Swabian castle where according to a legend Frederick II secluded his unfaithful wife Bianca to death; this castle hosts an archaeological museum where one can see numerous findings belonging to the Peucetian



TRULLI, THE TYPICAL CONE-SHAPED HOUSES WHICH HAVE MADE ALBEROBELLO A UNESCO SITE

was imported in the X century.

The valley is an extensive karst depression characterised by the presence of numerous caves and **trulli**, cone-roofed buildings whose slabs are painted with religious or exoteric symbols and whose pinnacles have shapes remembering the cult of the sun or of sacred stones.

Alberobello is the only place in the region where this type of building has become part of the ordinary architecture of a town. For this reason it has been included in the Unesco World Heritage List.

In *Rione Monti*, one of its two main districts, one can buy any type of souvenir, in particular miniature stone *trulli*. The trullo church of St. Anthony and the *Siamese trullo* (which according to the legend was split in two after two brothers who lived in it became love contenders) are the most particular buildings of this quarter.

The other district of the historical centre, *Aia Piccola*, hosts the *Trullo Sovrano*, the only one which has two floors, which strikingly contrasts with the other *trulli* for its size, and the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian, in Neoclassic style, which dates back to 1885.

**Locorotondo**, whose name means *round place*, is a town which is built in concentric circles marked by *cummerse*, two or three-floor houses with pitched roofs.

The town is perched on a hill which is dominated by St. Georges' church, built in the neoclassical style between 1790 and 1825. From its favourable position Locorotondo overlooks the surrounding towns.

The town gives its name to a grape from which one of the best

communities who lived in the surrounding areas of Monte Sannace and Santo Mola.

**Murgia dei Trulli**, which is also known by the name of **Itria Valley**, is one of the most scenic areas in the whole region. The name Itria probably comes from the cult of Our Lady of Odegitria, patroness of Costantinople whose cult

Apulian white wines is produced.

**Castellana Grotte** owes its name to spectacular grottoes whose formation started 90 million years ago.

With their stalactites, stalagmites and little lakes they represent the most spectacular expression of karstic erosions and are among the most important attractions in Apulia.



GROTTE DI CASTELLANA

Its long tour leads through scenic caves with spectacular names, to the *White Cave*, a stunning, huge grotto made up exclusively of white stalactites and which is considered by many experts to be the best cave in the world.

Karstic caves are also interspersed in the territory of **Putignano**, a little town where one of the most important Carnival festivals in Italy is held.

**Noci** (which means walnuts) owes its name to the presence in the past of a great number of walnuts. Its medieval historic centre is marked by the presence of *gnostre*, particular courtyards which are bounded on three sides by houses or other premises such as wine-cellar.



BACCHUS IN THE GNOSTRE

Nowadays these spaces have become the setting for food festivals, in particular *Bacchus in the gnostre* (a festival for tasting new wines and chestnuts) and *Fritters in the Gnostre*, dedicated to fritters coated with chocolate.

In the surroundings one should visit the Benedictine Abbey of Madonna della Scala and its monastery (where it is possible to have spiritual stays) and the Barsento Farmhouse which adjoins an abbey built in the VI century by the Benedictine monks of St. Equizio.

## The provinces of Brindisi and Taranto and the Salento plain



EGNAZIA

In the province of Brindisi we would suggest visiting the excavations of **Egnazia** - which at the Roman age was an important coastal town on the border between Peucetia and Messapia.

Its inhabitants took refuge in the hinterland town of **Fasano** when the town was destroyed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Along the coast, during the summer, tourists can stop over at **Savelletri**, famous for its sea-urchins, and **Torre Canne**, whose therapeutic waters have made its spa well-known.

The road to Brindisi also leads to **Torre Guaceto**, an Aragonese watch-out tower which nowadays overlooks a WWF oasis. In its hinterland **Fasano** is surrounded by woodlands (*Selva di Fasano*) covered with typical Mediterranean *maquis* and boasts a park with 200 species of animals (*Zoosafari*) and an adjoining fun park (*Fasanolandia*). **Fasano**, **Cisternino**, **Carovigno**, **Ceglie Messapica** and



TORRE GUACETO

**Ostuni**, just like other towns belonging to the Itria Valley, are immersed in a landscape dotted with trulli and white buildings. Ostuni in particular, whose houses are all painted with white lime, is also called the *White Town* and is undoubtedly one of the cosiest Apulian towns.

Its Cathedral was built in the second half of the XV century in

a Gothic style to restore the old Romanesque style destroyed by the 1456 earthquake and is considered a national monument. Beautiful castles or fortified palaces also distinguish the lovely towns of this province: Carovigno has a XV century defensive castle with an unusual lozenge shape; in **San Vito dei Normanni**, besides the castle built by Boemond of Hauteville and rebuilt in the XV and XVI centuries, one should visit the rock church of S. Biagio.

The white houses of **Ceglie Messapica** are overlooked by a fortress whose crenellated tower faces the majolica-tiled dome of its Collegiate Church.

In **Francavilla Fontana**, whose churches and buildings are clearly influenced by the Salento Baroque style, its former castle, which is nowadays the seat of the Town Hall, is the heart of the old town.

**Oria**, which in the Middle Ages was an important Jewish colony, is dominated by one of the most beautiful defensive castles built by Frederick II.

**Brindisi**, the town from which the Appia Road started, boasts two castles: the Land Castle, which was built by Frederick II in 1227, and the Aragonese castle, built to defend the town port.

The town was the main Messapian centre and a very important Roman port, as proved by the remains of one of the columns marking the end of the Appian way, which is considered the symbol of the town.

Tourists should also visit the Archaeological Museum, the Norman Temple of S. Giovanni al Sepolcro built by the Templars, the portico of the Templar Knights, the archaeological area and the Church of S. Maria del

Casale, a remarkable example of architectural transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic style.

**Mesagne's** main highlight is its Norman castle which has lost most of its original features and keeps only one square tower and a Renaissance loggia of its original structure.

This area, just like the Salento, is also marked by the presence of *specchie*, cone-shaped big heaps of high stones which were



CASTELLO DI ORIA

probably used as little watch-out towers, and by *case a cannizzi*, whose wooden roof beams were fitted with a thick layer of reeds.

**Martina Franca**, which pertains to the province of Taranto, is perched on the hill of S. Martino, the highest one in the Lower Murge, from which it overlooks the Itria Valley.

It is one of the so-called white towns but the architectural style of its old town buildings, among which stand out Ducal Palace and the Basilica of St. Martin, is clearly influenced by its proximity to the Salento plain. In fact they are in typical Baroque style and are endowed with wrought iron balconies like the ones which can be admired in the Salento.

In the fan-shaped area of steep ravines and impressive canyons which crown the Bay of Taranto one can tour amazing towns whose caves were inhabited by Basilian monks in the early Middle Ages: in **Laterza**, which rises west of its ravine, one should visit Palazzo Marchesale, its rock churches, its Fountains (the most famous ones are *Fontana Medievale*, *Fontana Candile* and *Fontana Imperatore*), the so-called Spanish cellar - a crypt where masonry meetings were probably held - and the Medieval Kiln, used for baking the famous white and polished majolicas decorated with refined turquoise patterns. Laterza is, together with Grottaglie, included in the Italian Route of Ceramics. In its hinterland there is a bird-watching reserve cared for by the LIPU, an Italian association for the protection of birds. Caves and painted crypts are in **Palagianello** and **Ginosa**.

This town overlooks its ravine and also has a ravine park where many rare botanical species can be found.

**Castellaneta**, which has a quaint historic centre whose narrow alleyways let in only one person at a time, is perched on one of the most impressive Apulian ravines.

A museum has been opened in honour of Rodolfo Valentino, the great star of Hollywood who was born in this town. In the surroundings

of **Mottola**, a town which has been inhabited since prehistoric



GROTTAGLIE A CERAMIC  
HANDCRAFTSMAN

times, one should see the so-called “God’s caves”, St. Nicholas’ crypt in particular, considered as the Sistine Chapel of Rock Churches.

Among the numerous important crypts of **Massafra** one should not miss the *Madonna della Scala*, which is accessed through a long picturesque Baroque staircase.

Its nearby WWF oasis is surrounded by a maquis and oak woods. In **Grottaglie**, which was founded in the X century by the inhabitants of the caves of the surrounding ravines, one should visit the quarter of ceramics where more than 28 artisans show a great variety of styles, often decorated with cocks and grape leaves.

One can head for **Manduria**, which in the past rivalled Taranto for the supremacy of the Salento, as proven by the ruins of Messapian cyclopean walls which can be seen in its archeological area.

Nowadays the town is well-known for the production of a fortified red wine called *Primitivo*.

**Taranto** is washed by the Mar Piccolo and the Mar Grande and is therefore called the *Town of the Two Seas*.

In the 8th century this town became the capital of the *Magna Grecia*.

In the old town, separated from the modern one by a swing bridge, one should visit one of the oldest Romanesque Cathedrals

in Apulia, dedicated to Saint Catald, and the Aragonese Castle. Taranto was the main centre of production and diffusion of gold jewels of the *Magna Grecia*, as proven by a rich collection of artefacts which, together with Greek vases and other findings, are exhibited in this museum.

Along the coast there are well-known seaside resorts such as **Marina di Ginosa, Riva dei Tessali, Castellaneta Marina, Marina di Pulsano and San Pietro in Bevagna.**

**Salento** is a vast plain extending between the Ionian and Adriatic sea.

The most important architectural attraction in this area are the



TARANTO MUSEUM

Baroque churches and buildings.

Salento is also famous for its past links with the *Magna Grecia*; it is one of the most important tourist areas in Apulia and has numberless attractions: seaside resorts many of whose unspoilt waters often deserve the *Blue Flag*, art cities, numerous monuments of the past (menhirs, dolmens, *specchie* etc.), rural landscapes where century old olive trees intermingle with fortified farmhouses and other gracious buildings, hinterland charming towns where one can also visit hypogeum oil mills

whose oil is particularly tasty because millstones are placed in an underground room where the temperature is constant, handicraft products (laces, stone decorations, reed bags, papier-maché artefacts in particular) and food or folk festivals, especially the “*Notte della Taranta*” folk music festival.

The Salento coasts, characterized by

picturesque cliffs and by low and sandy beaches are dotted with watch-out and defence towers which have aggregated small cosy seaside resorts.

On the first stretch of the Adriatic Sea one could choose to stay at **San Cataldo, San Foca, Torre dell’Orso, Frassanito** (near the **Alimini Lakes**), and **Otranto**, a fortress town which lies on the most eastern-oriented part of Italy.

The town is also called “*the Town of Martyrs*” because of the 800 inhabitants that were

beheaded by the Turks in 1480 and whose skulls can be seen



NOTTE DELLA TARANTA FESTIVAL



THE BEAUTIFUL ROSE WINDOW OF THE CATHEDRAL OF OTRANTO

in its splendid Romanesque Cathedral paved with one of the biggest mosaic floors in the world.

The Aragonese castle from which Horace Warpole drew inspiration to write the first Gothic novel in 1764 is also worth a visit.

From San Cataldo one might easily reach **Acaya** (to see a unique example of an Aragonese fortified town) or to the WWF Oasis *Le Cesine*.

Heading for the south one reaches a rugged coastline stretch characterised by numerous caves.

Grotta dei Cervi, in Porto Badisco, is one of the most imposing monuments of pictorial and rocky art in Europe. Southwards, the

spa resort of **Santa Cesarea Terme** is famous for its sulphurous waters and the large **Zinzulusa Grotto**, with its stalactites and stalagmites, is one of the karstic marvels which can be admired along these shores.

**Castro Marina** is an exclusive seaside resort which is a paradise for underwater divers.

Other beautiful marinas and other beautiful grottoes can be visited along the coast from **Marina d'Andrano** to **Santa Maria di Leuca**, the extreme jagged tip of the region, for this reason called *finis terrae*.

Near the Basilica of *Santa Maria*, which was built to commemorate St. Peter's landing in this place, one can climb the 284 steps which bound the last stretch of the Apulian Aqueduct. Tourists also flock to the seaside marinas on the west coast (**Torre Vado**, **Marina di Pescoluse**,



CASTRO MARINA



SANTA MARIA DI LEUCA

**Torre S. Giovanni**, **Marina di Mancaversa**, **Gallipoli**, **Porto Cesareo**, etc.).

**Gallipoli** is one of the most enchanting coastal towns in the Salento. It has an ancient monumental fountain, a defensive Angevin castle and, within its cosy old town, which stands out on a promontory, the cathedral of St. Agatha, with its magnificent Baroque façade. **Porto Cesareo** has one of the biggest marine reserves in Italy, set in the facing *Isola dei Conigli*, whose seabed has a sub-tropical environment.

The surroundings are marked by the presence of several watch-out towers and of karstic grottoes (called *spunnulate*) where salt waters mix with fresh water generating a particular type of vegetation.

**Lecce** (called the Florence of the South or the Athens of Puglia) is the capital city of the Baroque style, which flourished in Salento between 1550 and 1700.

Its most representative monuments, such as the Basilica of Santa Croce and the adjacent Palazzo Celestini, the Church of Santa Chiara, and the Duomo, are flamboyantly decorated with animals, grotesque figures and vegetables.

A must in this town is piazza S. Oronzo where you can admire the statue of its patron Saint, set on top of the twin column which marked the end of the Appia Road.

Near the column is the *Palazzo del Sedile*, which used to be the place where Town Hall meetings were held. In the square one can see the Roman amphitheatre

which was built in the second century A.D. In the streets of the



BASILICA OF SANTA CROCE



PALAZZO DEI CELESTINI

old town one can see local stone and papier-mâché workshops, where cribs in particular are made with this material.

In the surroundings the *Museo Diffuso* of **Cavallino**, immersed in a vast naturalistic area, shows important evidence of a Messapian settlement. Numerous other attractions can be admired during a hinterland tour of

the Salento: the Renaissance-style castle of **Copertino**, with its lavishly decorated portal, the Church of S. Domenico in **Nardò**, the church of SS.

Peter and Paul at **Galatina**, the church of Del Crocifisso della Pietà at **Galatone**, the spire of the parish church of **Soletto**, considered a national monument, the XV century castle of **Corigliano d'Otranto**, which was altered with a Baroque façade in 1667 and, in the same town, the archway Lucchetti, regarded as a national monument for its fine Byzantine-style engravings, and the Duomo of **Maglie**, with its solemn bell-tower.



CORIGLIANO D'OTRANTO  
CASTLE



POLAND

## The South of Poland

We cordially invite you to visit the beautiful land stretching over the southern part of our country.

The tourist is warmly greeted and received here the year around and can always participate in various forms of tourism and relaxation.

Awaiting the tourist in this part of the country are old settlements with

a thousand years history that boast many priceless relics of architecture and culture. Among them the most splendid is one of the most beautiful and most famous cities of Europe - **Cracow**.

It is worth visiting southern Poland if only to get acquainted with this city. The Town at the foot of Wawel Hill, developed on the Vistula, was the former capital of Poland, centre of science, culture and art cherishing a thousand years long tradition.

It has many precious relics - the vast Market Place, whose central part is occupied by Clothiers`Hall, the Gothic St Mary`s Church with the altar of the famous artist Wit Stwosz, the Kazimierz district with Jewish churches of St. Catherine and Corpus Christi, the church on Wawel Hill containing the graves of polish kings, leaders and poets. 13 km kilometres from Cracow is **Wieliczka**.

The greatest tourist attraction here is the antique salt mine, placed in 1978 by UNESCO, beside Cracow, on the list of the 12 most priceless world monuments in Poland. It



WAWEL HILL



KRAKÓW



WIELICZKA SALT MINE

and the natural, world-unique Crystal Caves. The underground part also contains the Museum of Cracow Salt-Works, whose exhibition presents the history of Polish mining. On display there are original mining tools and implements placed so as to give the impression that the miners have just finished their work. Open since 1964 in the mine is the underground sanatorium "Kinga", which for therapeutic purposes (treatment of asthma) makes use of a specific microclimate. It is located 200 metres below sea level. It takes only an hour to get from Kraków to Oświęcim- the town in which the largest

is among the oldest and largest complexes of this type, with a total of about 20,000,000 tons of salt having been mined here in the course of 700 years. The oldest part of the mine is open to visitors. The 4.5 km-long route leads through galleries and chambers on three mining levels. Here one can see 17th and 19th century chapels

of Nazi Germany concentration camps was located. **Auschwitz** is the German name for Oświęcim. All over the world, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror and the Holocaust. The camp was built and operated during the Second World War. To the Northwest of Cracow in the Middle Ages a chain of small fortified castles was built here



AUSCHWITZ

on the sides and tops of elevations. Nearly all of them were destroyed in later centuries, but their ruins are still visible on the limestone crags in the shape of eagles` nests. Two marked tourist trails run from here: **Eagles` Nests and Jurassic**

**Strongholds.** They lead through the most charming areas and link all of the old castles. Closest to Cracow (distance 24

km) lies **Ojców** with a natural history museum and regional museum.

There are also the ruins of a 14th century castle.

On all sides stretches the Ojcowski National Park, protecting the beautiful valleys and caves carved in the limestone crags as well as rare specimens of plants. At the edge of the park lies **Pieskowa Skala** (27 km from

Cracow). Rising on a steep elevation over the valley of the Pradnik river is a 14th century castle, rebuilt into a Renaissance residence. It now contains the Museum of the National Wawel Art Collections. On the ground floor is the "Zamkowa" period restaurant. In the vicinity of the palace rises a characteristic rock (25 metres high) called the Club of Hercules. On the Trail of Eagles' Nests running to Czestochowa it is worth visiting the ruins of small castles in Ogrodzieniec, Mirow, Bobolice, and Olsztyn. The **Ogrodzieniec Castle** in Podzamcze is the most impressive castle in Krakow - Czestochowa Upland. It is located on the Janowski's Mount - the highest peak of Jura (504 m) - it survived centuries, being an impregnable fortress. The castle existed there until the beginning of the twelfth century. It was a small settlement with only a few wooden huts, sheltered by cliffs. When, in 1241 the castle was looted and burned during the Tartar invasion a gothic castle of stone was built. To the north of Ogrodzieniec Castle, there is a stronghold on top of **Mount Birów**.



*PIESKOWA SKALA CASTLE*

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*OGRODZIENIEC CASTLE*



*MOUNT BIROW*



*CZESTOCHOWA*

and the centre of the cult of the Virgin Mary, the place of numerous pilgrimages from Poland and the entire world (the largest are on 15th and 26th August).



*BLACK TROUT TUNNEL*

and machine industries, boasting a centuries-long tradition of

This is the reconstruction of medieval wooden settlement which existed there until the fourteenth century.

The first inhabitants of this place were people from the Neolithic Period. The settlement was burnt down at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Probably, it was the result of a battle between Władysław Łokietek and Vaclav II Czech over the unification of Poland. The city known all over the world due to the presence of the Holy Virgin Mary embodied in the icon of the Black Madonna is **Czestochowa**.

It's an industrial centre (metallurgy, textiles, chemicals, wood, food)

and the centre of the cult of the Virgin Mary, the place of numerous pilgrimages from Poland and the entire world (the largest are on 15th and 26th August).

The Upper Silesian Industrial Region is the largest and most important concentration of industry in Poland. About 50 km south from Czestochowa there is a town **Tarnowskie Gory** - a centre of the mining

and machine industries, boasting a centuries-long tradition of

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ore-mining.

A great attraction is visiting the antique mine and the **Tunnel of the Black Trout** (trip by boat), beside which there is a Skansen Museum of Steam Engines. An obligatory place to visit for those who want to experience the travel into the depths of the Earth is **The Museum of Coal Mine „Guido”** in Zabrze.



GUIDO MINE

People can walk down and climb along original mine's corridors, admire the exhibition illustrating the history of mining. What is more, one may watch the work of enormously big mine machines. A colourful event are the annual Miners' Days in September. It is also worth visiting the collections of the regional museum that documents mining traditions. The next town, definitely worth seeing, lies south of Upper Silesia. From the middle of the 19th century



PSZCZYNA PALACE

**Pszczyna** was the centre of the estates of the Pszczyna dukes, one of the richest houses of Europe. In the **palace** (originally Gothic, then rebuilt several times) there is a Museum of Antique Furnishings that has many precious exhibits from various epochs - from the Renaissance to the 20th century. Chamber music concerts are held here. **Museum of Silesian Press** in Pszczyna founded in 1985 is the only periodical museum in Poland. Its exhibits show a history of printing in Silesia from its beginnings until 1939. The first press here was established in 1805 and the first Polish newspaper in Silesia 'The Polish Farmers' Weekly' was published here. The museum collects historic machines and printing



\_UBRY

equipment (including the broadsheet machines from the beginning of the 20th century, linoleum engraving machines, title and line composition casters) and bookbinding machines, and also the Pszczyna and Cieszyn press. In the **Bison Center**, only a few hundred meters from the Old Town you can meet a real bison!

The place was set up in the historic part of the Pszczyna Park, called 'Zwierzyniec'. On almost 10ha two pens were built. The animals can be seen from the scenic platform. In the Bison Center you can also see other animals: deer, fallow deer, roe deer, and many kinds of birds. Inside the Educational Building there is a variety of exhibitions, also a 3D film about the history of Pszczyna's bisons. The mountains are the most important element in the landscape of southern Poland. **The Beskids** are approximately 600 km in length and 50–70 km in width.



BESKID MOUNTAINS

They stand mainly along the southern border of Poland, and in the neighboring eastern Czech Republic, neighboring regions in northern Slovakia, and in western Ukraine. For the most part they are covered with beautiful forests, and the river valleys divide them into smaller mountain groups:

Silesian Żywiec, Insular, and Low Beskids. The highest top of the Beskid Mountains is Babia Gora (1725 m above sea level) with its unique nature. The area surrounding the top is protection area - called The National Park of Babia Gora. UNESCO has included this area to the biosphere reservations as its programme "Man and Biosphere". The longest Polish

river - Vistula starts at the foot of Barania Gora Mountain (1200 m above sea level). **Bielsko-Biala** is situated on both sides of the Biala River at the foot of the Szyndzielnia and Kozia Gora Mountains. It is the main urban and industrial centre of Podbeskidzie Region. The region offers a big variety of touristic attraction like places of walking, mountain tracking, skiing, cycling or car excursions.



BIELSKO-BIALA

**Ustroń** is today one of the most important centers of tourism and recreation in the Beskid Śląski. It is one of the most charming towns in the Silesian Beskid mountains, nestling attractively in the Vistula valley between Czantoria Wielka (995 metres above sea level) and Równica (884 metres above sea level). The town is an excellent place for medical and physiotherapeutic treatments, for all kinds of sports and recreation and for cultured leisure activities.



Ustroń is now an internationally known health resort. There is a great number of sanatoriums and rehabilitation centres with modern equipment, offering a wide range of treatments and top-class professional



USTRO

service. Winter in Ustroń is just as enjoyable and exciting as summer. There are ski lifts and ski runs for downhill skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing and ski touring. When one gets tired of schussing down the slopes, he can take a torch-lit sleigh ride.

In Ustroń you can head for way marked walk, hiking trail or cycle path or take the new, four-seater chairlift up Czantoria. You can also walk up to the summit and enjoy the spectacular panorama from the viewing tower. If you're in good shape you can climb Równica.

On Równica people can enjoy the high ropes course and the attractions of the Extreme Park, where there is a year-round toboggan run. If someone would like to spend some time looking at large wild animals and birds he must visit the Forest Nature Park.

Ustroń can offer a rich and varied cultural programme in summer and winter.

In summer, events are staged in the roofed amphitheatre. Some of the main events are: Ustroń Theatre Festival, the Ustroń Musical Autumn, the Folk and Country Festival and the Ustroń Harvest Festival. Ustroń Museum has permanent and temporary exhibitions and organizes various events.

**Wisła** - a city and municipality in the province of Silesia, Cieszyn County, to the south of the Ustroń and west of

Szczyrk. It is located deep in the Silesian Beskid Mountains range, near the Czech border. Wisła Center is located at an altitude of 430 m above sea level. It's a well-known tourist and sports resort. In the city its source has Poland's biggest river of the same name – Wisła (The Vistula). It is the longest and one of the most important



WISLA

rivers in Poland at 1,047 km in length.

It covers over half the area of the country.

It begins with the White Little Vistula (Biała Wiselka) and the Black Little Vistula (Czarna Wiselka) and continues to

flow through several large Polish cities: Kraków, Sandomierz, Warszawa and Gdańsk. Wisła is a popular year-round tourist destination, with the nearby mountains favoured by ski jumpers. It is known for being the home town of ski jumper Adam Małysz. Characteristic feature of this place is its division to several valleys.

The landscape is dominated by forests, meadows on the mountainsides and mountain streams. Wisła is a great place

for outdoor adventure enthusiast. Its location, climate and scenic charms encourage people to rest in winter as well as in other seasons.

Tourists that come to Wisła have more than 100 kilometers of tourist trails to their disposition. In the summer those are the trails with different scale of difficulty for pedestrians and mountain bikers.

In the winter there are beautiful routes for Nordic and downhill skiers, more than 20 ski lift (with most of the routes lighted). Recently

a world class ski jump 'Skocznia Malinka' has been built to host international competitions.

The ski jump was named after Adam Małysz. In summer Wisła is a great place to go hiking through its many mountain trails. During the summer guests have an outdoor pool to their disposition, as well as indoor pools, tennis courts and sport

fields. To support its recent growth in tourism, many hotels have been built.

The biggest and most impressive is Hotel Gołębiewski.

Wisła is also a very interesting place in case of religion. Till the end of 19th century the village was inhabited almost only by Lutheran.

Nowadays the believers of 13 different denominations and religious groups live here,



MALINKA SKI JUMP



ŻYWIEC BREWERY

mostly protestant.

Those who love folklore and the performances of folk bands will find the most colourful examples of this art among the highlanders, especially at various festivals or at campfires, sledging cavalcades and picnics. One can go hunting, mushroom-picking or fishing there. The Beskid is the centre of folk art and folklore, among which to the famous lace-making towns of Koniakow and Istebna, where there is a museum of sacral art in the 18th century church and in the 19th century Kawulok highlanders' cottage - mementos of the family and concerts on pastoral instruments.

To the east of the Silesian Beskids there is a valley in Żywiec lies. The city houses the Brewery foto 19, built by the Habsburg dynasty in 1852. It was created on the initiative of prince Albrecht Fryderyk Habsburg.



PIAST TOWER

The museum was founded in 2006. 18 cellar rooms cut into the cliff - the historic ice cellars where the beer is stored - lead visitors through an entertaining 150 years of brewing history.

A shaking time machine takes its passengers into a replica of a 19th century alleyway in a small Galician town, or a labyrinth that vividly illustrates the tangled political and economic situation at the time of the People's Republic of Poland. Numerous events of the "Beskidian Culture Week" are held in August. Standing guard on the border with the Czech Republic is Cieszyn, boasting a centuries-long history and precious

architectural relics.

One should not miss seeing the Romanesque rotunda and 14th

century Piast Tower, the former hunting castle of the Habsburgs, and the Larish palace (today housing a museum).

Although Silesia's image is to a large extent shaped by industry, an abundance of forests, parks and green recreational areas ensure tranquility and contact with nature in the industrial heart of Poland. You can never get bored here. Moreover people living here combine typically eastern hospitality and openness with western modernity and trust in new technologies. That's why you'll be warmly welcomed here.



## Portugal

Portugal is the westernmost country of all Europe, characterized by its great natural beauty, with the Tagus River dividing the northern part, more mountainous and the southern with lower regions. There is also a vast coastline where you can enjoy beautiful beaches which are a very popular holiday destination.

The major places of attraction are the capital, Lisbon, where you can visit Castelo de São Jorge with a view over the town and many other historical monuments; Cascais is surprising for its beaches; Sintra with its Palace and many green spaces; Oporto, where you can observe the Douro River and enjoy the famous port wine; Coimbra, a city with great academic tradition; Serra da Estrela, the highest mountain range and the Algarve coast.

## Lisboa

The city of Lisbon can rightly be considered the capital of the Discoveries. Lisbon, situated in a geographically point near the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic ocean, was the scene of adventures between mainland Europe and the rest of the world and the stage of departure for the great Portuguese navigators. It became a cosmopolitan city destined for commercial life at sea what strongly supported the process of expansion initiated by Portugal.

Located on the north bank of the Tagus river, Lisbon, with its seven hills, is a city of art, architecture, culture and traditions. The charm of Lisbon exists in its strong links with the past. The renovated palaces, magnificent churches and an impressive castle mirror the city's rich cultural heritage. For all this and much more, once you visit it you will want to visit it more often.

## Rio Maior

It is a small town in the district of Santarém. It has about 8000 inhabitants. It is located next to a mountain range (Serra dos Candeeiros) with a mild climate with moderately cold winters and short hot summers. It is a young city with a few historical monuments. The most famous natural monument is the salt mines existing in a village 3 kilometers away from the city centre. Rio Maior is famous for its infrastructures linked to sport.

## LISBOA

It is the capital city and largest city of Portugal with a population of 547,631 within its administrative limits on a land area of 84.8 km<sup>2</sup>. The urban area of Lisbon extends beyond the administrative city limits with a population of 3 million on an area of 958 km<sup>2</sup>.



S.JORGE CASTLE - PHOTO 1

## CITY HIGHLIGHTS

### ST. JORGE CASTLE

Saint George's Castle can be seen from almost everywhere in the city. Its oldest parts date from the 6th century, when it was fortified by the Romans, Visigoths, and the Moors. It served as a Moorish royal residence until Portugal's first king Afonso Henriques captured it in 1147 with

the help of northern European crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. It was later dedicated to St. George, the patron saint of England, commemorating the Anglo-Portuguese pact dating from 1371, and became the royal palace until another one (that was destroyed in the Great Earthquake) was built in today's Praça do Comércio.



ROSSIO SQUARE PHOTO 2

### ROSSIO

Rossio is one of the most beautiful squares in Lisbon, with monuments, fountains and a fascinating history. D. Maria II National Theatre, where many plays were, and are, performed and seen by Kings and Queens; the cafes visited by famous Portuguese personalities

- like Cafe Nicola founded in 1929 - and the roasted chestnuts that have been sold in the Rossio Square for many years.

In the middle of the square there's a statue of Dom Pedro IV and at its foot the four female figures representing Justice, Wisdom, Strength and Moderation, qualities attributed to Dom Pedro himself.

**DOWNTOWN**

Lisboa downtown is an elegant district, primarily constructed after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. Marquis of Pombal, the Prime Minister to D. José I of Portugal from 1750 to 1777 took the lead in ordering the rebuilding of Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake. He imposed strict conditions on rebuilding the city, and the current grid pattern strongly differs from the organic street plan that characterized the district before the Earthquake.



*DOWNTOWN - LISBOA*

**BELÉM TOWER**

Lisbon's icon; a symbol of the Age of Discovery. Built in 1515 as a fortress to guard the entrance to Lisbon's harbour, Belem Tower was the starting point for many of the voyages of discovery and for the sailors it was the last sight of their homeland. UNESCO has listed it as a World Heritage monument. Built in the Manueline style.



*BELÉM TOWER*

**JERONIMOS MONASTERY**

It is the most impressive symbol of Portugal's power and wealth during the Age of Discovery. King Manuel I built it in 1502 on the site of a hermitage founded by Prince Henry the Navigator. It was built to commemorate Vasco Da Gama's voyage and to give



*JERÓNIMOS MONASTERY*

thanks to the Virgin Mary for its success. Vasco da Gama's tomb was placed inside by the entrance, as was the tomb of poet Luis de Camões, author of the epic *The Lusiads*. This style of architecture became known as Manueline, to glorify the great discoveries.



*PARQUE DAS NAÇÕES*

**PARQUE DAS NAÇÕES**

Area created when a world fair was held in Lisbon, from May 22 to September 30 1998. The theme of the fair was "The Oceans, a heritage for the future" to commemorate 500 years of the Portuguese discoveries. Expo 98 received around 11 million visitors.



*LISBOA OCEANARIUM*

**Recommended restaurants**

**Bica do Sapato Restaurant** (Portuguese cuisine)

**Address:** Avenida Infante Dom Henrique, Armazem B. Doca do Jardim do Tabaco. Alfama. 1900 Lisbon

**Tel.:** 218810320 - **Fax:** 218810329

**Underground station:** Santa Apolónia

**WebSite:** <http://www.bicadosapato.com>



*BIFE NATAS COGUMELOS*

**Gambrinus Restaurant** (the best seafood)

**Address:** Rua das Portas de Santo Antão 23. Santa Justa. Baixa. 1150-264 Lisbon

**Tel.:** 213421466 - **Fax:** 213465032

**Underground station:** Restauradores

**WebSite:** <http://www.gambrinuslisboa.com>



*BACALHAU DOURADO*

**Largo** (Gourmet cuisine)

Rua Serpa Pinto, nº10A 1200-445 Chiado, Lisboa

**Tel.** +351 21 347 72 25

**Underground station:** Baixa-Chiado

**WebSite:** [www.largo.pt](http://www.largo.pt)

**Places to visit in municipal of Rio Maior:**



*SALT PANS*

**Salt Pans**

Rio Maior stay some 30 km from the sea, but exist the salt pans in were.

They are said to have been exploited by local community in Roman times. The white pyramids against the blue sky and greenery of the surrounding hills form a unique landscape.

The typical wooden houses of the salt pan workers conceal secrets in the art of their locks. Today renovated for tourism purpose, one can find handicraft stores, taverns and restaurants.



*RIO MAIOR SPORTS COMPLEX*

**Sports Complex**

The quality of the installations has enabled is to acknowledged as a Preparatory Centre for Olympic athletes by Portuguese Olympic Committee.

This complex was inauguration in the year 2000, and encompasses the

following facilities: Centre of Sports Education and Training; Municipal Stadium (with tartan athletics track; 3 football pitches; Multiple Sports Park (1 seven-a-side artificial football pitch, 2 basketball/volleyball courts, 1 synthetic athletics track); 2 covered Municipal Swimming Pools 25m and 50m.

### Rural Museum of São João da Ribeira

Stay some 10 km from Rio Maior, one cannot fail to be surprised by richness and organization of the collection of the Rural Museum.

The Museum also has particularity kitchen where visitors can observe the baking of bread in wood-fired stove and taste the product at the end of the visit.

### Alcobertas Dolmen

One the largest Dolmens in the Iberian Peninsula, it is the only one in Portugal to be back to back with a Parish Church.

### Roman Villa

Discovered in 1983, this Villa seems to have been very important, judging by the remains unearthed up to now, showing the great luxury and richness of its proprietors. Among the various statue parts found, one remarkable sample is almost intact; the Ninfa (marble Nymph) de Rio Maior (which can be admired at Casa Senhorial).



ALCOBERTAS DOLMEN

### Casa Senhorial D'El-Rei Dom Miguel

Built adjacent to the church of Misericórdia, it is located next to a junction of two important Roman roads, one coming from Santarem, and the other from Lisboa. In medieval times this zone was located on the southern limit of what was the village of Rio Maior.

The building was always known as the Casa de D. Miguel (King Miguel House), due to the fact that it was known that the king stayed here both during journeys and on hunting trips, and probably also in the rebellious period of the Liberal Revolution. Today it has been converted into an exhibition centre.

### Beaches near Rio Maior



NAZARÉ

### Nazaré beach

Nazaré Beach has a huge sandy beach for holidaymakers, but also with a very strong presence of people of the sea. Apart from the possibility to see the art of sewing nets, we can still see the piles of “baskets” used for drying fish. It is a beach that extends through the main avenue, where there are lots of shops. The waves in Nazaré are very popular with surfers and bodyboarders. The beach facilities are among other amenities, with traditional beach huts striped with bright colours.



SUPERTUBOS

### Supertubos beach

This beach is for surfers and bodyboarders. A considerable stretch of sandy beach and a dune environment, allows us to look beyond nature, admire the impressive sea. More and better conditions have been created as regards the support of beach, where the disabled have had special attention.



BALEAL BEACH

### Foz do Arelho

Foz Arelho beach, near Obidos Lagoon, is a place where nature gives us some exceptional therapeutic qualities and a vast area of beach, spot for surfers; the calm and quiet lagoon is a charm for children. This beach has great outdoor cafes and restaurants, where you can enjoy delicious dishes of fish, like fried eels, clams and seafood stew.



### São Martinho do Porto beach

Beach that stretches along a beautiful bay washed by the blue sea. Due to its characteristics it is ideal for children and water sports. The Bay of São Martinho do Porto is the last vestige of a former Gulf that until the sixteenth century extended to Alfeizerão and it has an opening to the ocean, with about 250 meters wide, between the hills of Santana (south) and the lighthouse (north). In the avenue, cosmopolitan centre of the village, there is a variety of outdoor cafés, shops, bars and restaurants specialized in almost all flavours of the sea: steamed lobster, sea bass, and the golden grilled sole or roast sardines.

### FÁTIMA

Fátima, a Portuguese town, belongs to the municipality of Ourém, with 71,29 km<sup>2</sup> of area and 11 596 inhabitants (2011). Density: 162,7 hab/km<sup>2</sup>. Belongs to the district of Santarém, in the central region and sub-region of the Middle Tagus. Its worldwide fame is due to the fact that on May 13, 1917, the Virgin Mary appeared to the shepherds in the form of Our Lady of Fatima.

The name was changed by Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1984. The existing single parish in the city has a patron saint: *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres*.

142 km North of Lisbon, Fátima is one of the most important shrines of the world dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This Sanctuary welcomes millions of pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. The fame of this place is the result of the Apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary to three shepherd children, Lúcia and her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta that, between May and October of 1917, witnessed successive apparitions. The last one, on October 13th, was confirmed by a miracle witnessed by

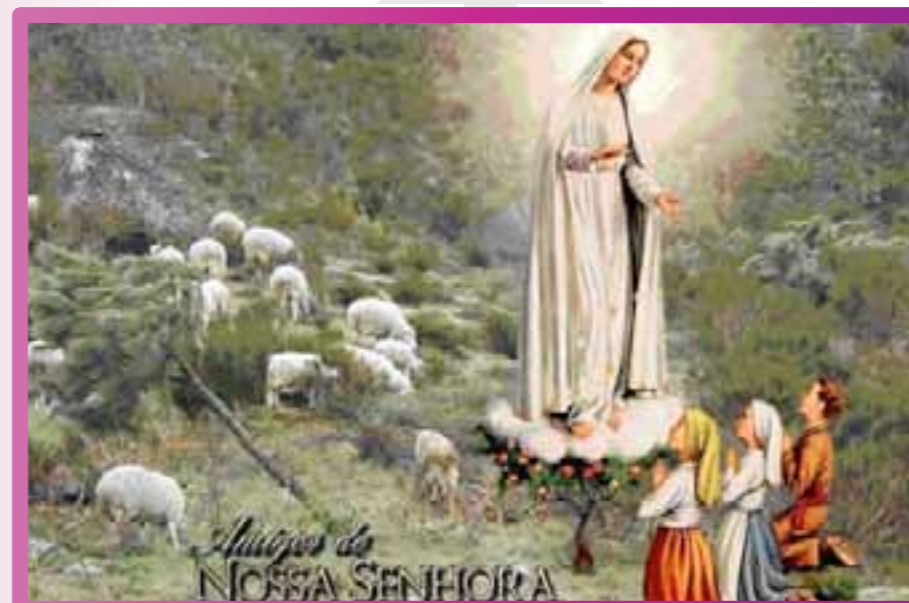


FÁTIMA

70,000 people “on the day the sun danced”.

The very heart of the Sanctuary was the first building constructed in Cova da Iria, at the place of Our Lady’s Apparitions. The exact spot is marked by a marble pillar on which the Statue of Our Lady is placed. Here converge the four million pilgrims who visit the Sanctuary each year.

Near the sanctuary there are lots of shops where tourists can buy all types of souvenirs, specially religious objects.



FÁTIMA MIRACLE

### HISTORY OF FATIMA MIRACLE

The city’s name comes from the Arabic. There is an unconfirmed story that the name derives from a Moorish princess named Fatima who, after being captured by the Christian army

during *Reconquista* was given in marriage to a count of Ourém. Accepting Christianity, she was baptized and given the name Oriana in 1158. It became world famous for Virgin Mary apparitions to three shepherd children (Lucia and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto), which then took place between May 13 and 13 October 1917, the site of Cova da Iria. The construction of the Shrine of Fatima brought development to the place, that became a city on July 12, 1997.

## Gastronomy of Óbidos

Dishes - fish stew of the Óbidos lagoon, eel stew and fried, sweet - Muggle-of-eggs and lampreys from Gaeiras, fruit - apples and oranges. “Pêra Rocha”, a species of pear is the most qualified of the Western Region and achieves great expression in the Region of Usseira. Óbidos produces excellent wines, among which are the well-known wines from Gaeiras, like cherry, a liquor that became famous as the most typical and traditional drink of Obidos.



CALDEIRADA

## At Óbidos you can visit

Óbidos Castle – With Roman origin, is probably based on a fort. It was later fortified under Arab rule. After conquered by the Christians it was repaired and enlarged several times. During the reign of Manuel I, the mayor ordered the construction of a space and changed some parts of the castle. It has windows of beautiful Manueline style. Photo 20



ÓBIDOS AT NIGHT

Church of St. Peter- The Medieval foundation of its initial construction retains only the vestiges of the old Gothic portal in the façade. It was reformed in the second half of the sixteenth century, as other churches in the village, with a baptismal chapel at the, covered by a small dome and a spiral staircase to the bell tower . Greatly affected by the earthquake of 1755, stands out in its interior, the nave, the magnificent baroque altarpiece of gilded Johannine period. The old painting from the tribune of the altarpiece - S. Peter receiving the keys of Christ in Heaven, is currently in the side wall of the Epistle.



ÓBIDOS CASTLE

Lady of Grace door- The access door of the town has a chapel-shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Grace in the place where now there should be a niche with an image which tradition says was offered in thanksgiving after the siege of 1246 (the feud between Kings Sancho II and Afonso III.



## Region South Moravia

When looking at the map for a perfect holiday destination in the Czech Republic, let your eyes rest on **South Moravia**, and do not hesitate, set off for a journey to see the beauties of the local countryside. You will find a specific region in the very heart of Europe, which you will come to love, as did so many more before you – in no time, and forever. For many people, South Moravia is a place of cultivated vineyards, blossoming orchards and fertile fields. You can discover for yourself the beauty of the beech woods and orchid meadows of the *White Carpathian Mountains*, mysterious charms of the floodplain forest at the forks of the Morava and Dyje rivers, or the unforgettable silhouette of *Pálava*. Viticulture is an integral part of South Moravian culture. Discover the region producing Rieslings, Veltlín, Frankovka, and St. Lawrence wines. Walk among the vineyards and wine cellars, taste our liquid sun! Learn folk traditions, such as the Ride of the Kings, meet the hospitality of local people. The region offers scenic beauties, historical castles and chateaus, karst caverns, archaeological sites, churches and synagogues, places of bloody battles, traditional folk fests and swimmable water reservoirs. South Moravia provides both long-distance and regional cycling routes, as well as the unique *Moravian Wine Path*. The metropolis of the region is the largest Moravian city, second largest in the Czech Republic, **Brno** (about 400 000 inhabitants).

**Brno** forms the natural centre of Moravia. Historically it was one of the lands of the Bohemian Crown. The city's environs, whose settlement stretches way back into prehistorical times, has a varied character. From the north it is shielded by spur of the *Drahan uplands*, from the west by the *Bobrav Uplands*, and from the south and southeast it is bordered by the *Dyjsko-svratecký glen*. Thanks to its position in the basin of the *Svratka and Svitava Rivers*, the town and its environs have vast expanses of beautiful countryside and pleasant climatic conditions that are ideal for hiking and recreation.



BRNO

The most important sights of the city include the castle and fortress **Špilberk** and the **Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul** on *Petrov hill*, these two formerly medieval buildings form the characteristic cityscape and are often depicted as its traditional symbols. The other large and preserved castle in the city is **Veveří Castle** near the *Brno Dam Lake*, this castle is a subject for a couple of legends like a number of other places in Brno. Another important monument of Brno is the functionalist **Villa Tugendhat** which has been included in the **UNESCO** list of World Heritage Sites. Brno is surrounded by relatively pleasant nature, one of the especially attractive areas nearby being the **Moravian Karst**. The city's environs are full of natural reserves, parks and sites where history was changed. One of these sites is the **Slavkov Battlefield**. Yes, this is the very place where one of the most famous battles of the Napoleonic Wars took place. **Brno Exhibition Centre** ranks among the largest exhibition centres in Europe (23rd in the world), this huge complex first started functioning in 1928 and established the tradition of large exhibitions and **trade fairs** held in Brno, now it also ranks among one of the sights of the city. The city is also known for hosting big motorbike and other races on the **Masaryk Circuit**, this tradition was established in 1930 and the most prestigious races include the **Road Racing World Championship Grand Prix**. Another notable cultural tradition includes an international fireworks competition **Ignis Brunensis**, this event usually attracts one or two hundred thousand visitors every day it's being held. Brno is also an important centre of higher education, with 33 faculties of 13 universities and about 89,000 students. There is also a studio of the Czech Television and the Czech Radio in both cases by

law. The city is also home to Brno Television, a small local television station.

With a considerable amount of exaggeration it can be said that **the Moravian Karst** has the greatest density of speleologists per square metre in all of Europe. Why? Because it is one of the most fascinating karst regions in Central Europe with over

1100 caves, five of which are accessible to the public. Another



MORAVIAN KARST

one of its major attractions is the deepest gorge in the Czech Republic, **Macocha** (138,5 metres). Even for those who find the underground world far from lovely, the Moravian Karst region and its environs are ideal for a holiday. In spring, autumn and summer the region attracts tourists with its romantic landscape. A dense network of clearly marked trails runs around mighty castles, fairy tale-like chateaux, windmills and rugged rocks. When the snow falls, thousands of cross-country skiers come here to take on Mother Winter (Paní Zima) and test their physical limits. The heart of this region is the protected landscape area of the Moravian Karst, which is situated north of the city of **Brno**. This natural wonder consists of karstified Devonian calcite that creates enchanting scenery both on the Earth's surface and deep underground. There are also hundreds of caves that were populated by Neanderthal man 120 thousand years ago. The oldest footprints of our ancestors were discovered in the *Kůlna Caves*. In the *Pekárna Caves*, archaeologists unearthed drawings dating back 13 thousand years. Most of them are of animals. A fleeting glimpse into the less distant past reveals that the Moravian Karst and its environs were the ironworks of the Bohemian and Moravian lands in the Middle Ages. You can find reminders of this period along the Iron (Železa) hiking trail and at **Blanenský Chateau**, where there is an exposition devoted to metallurgy. In addition to this, the Moravian Karst offers many different options for tourists. The local climate and clean countryside is perfect for sporting activities, such as hiking, cycling, horseback riding and sport fishing, and is ideal for simply relaxing by the water.

**Slovácko** is home to the beautiful *Chřiby* and the *White Carpathians*. The meanders of the beautiful *Morava river* nourishes a wide valley full of green meadows and enchanting *Lužní forests* between the mountains. There are charming chateaux in **Milotice**, **Buchlovice** and **Bojkovice**. There are the fortifications **Buchlov** and **Malenovice Castles**. There are the great Moravian hradisko of **Staré Město**, **Mikulčice** and **Pohansko**, as well as pilgrimage sites such as **Velehrad**.



LUHACOVICE



ROTUNDA ZNOJMO

There are roads that kings once rode along, *Slovácko's* festivals, folklore festivals, wine tastings, a magical world of folk songs, costumes, dances, celebrations, and traditional crafts. There are numerous vineyards, picturesque little paths to wine cellars in **Petrov**, **Vlčnov** and **Mařatice**, where you will find industrious vintners. It is an ideal location for biking, hiking, horse-back riding, riding along the **Bat'a Canal**, and flying over and boating on the **Ostrožský Lakes**. It is perfect for sport and recreation, and fishing and just admiring the scenery. It has grass-carpeted paths and snow-carpeted ski runs. There are spas in **Luačovice** and **Hodonín**. There is also a *zoo in Hodonín*, a famous **Strážnice outdoor museum** with an engaging folklore program, a remarkable archaeological *outdoor museum in Modrá*, and an *aviation museum in Kunovice*. *Slovácko* is famous not only for its wine and slivovice (plum brandy), but also for its curative springs. Use of the local healing waters has a long tradition that dates back to the 16th century. In addition to official spa sites in the region, there were, and still are, innumerable local springs and wells, many of which have legendary curative powers. Today you can enjoy contemporary spa facilities in **Luhačovice**, **Ostrožská Nová Ves**, **Buchlovice-Smrad'avec**, **Hodonín** nebo **Zlín-Kostelec**. Important aspects of treatment here, in addition to the aforementioned healing waters, include the beautiful environment, which offers several pleasant walks in the countryside, and numerous cultural and social events. In this regard, the spa facilities in *Slovácko* deserve more than just an honourable mention.

For a long time, much of **Podyjí** was inaccessible to the public because it encompassed a vast border zone with Austria. Thanks to this, the countryside around the *Dyje River* remains well-preserved in its original unpolluted form. The *Dyje* twists, curves and meanders, and on its left bank it is

blessed with the best of southern Moravia's vineyards, such as **Šobes**. By taking a trip along the river, you will come across the ruins of long-abandoned mills, you can enter vineyards and sample their wine, and, as soon as you leave the *Dyje Valley*,

you'll find yourself in sun-drenched fertile lowlands with fruit orchards and more vineyards.

The region seems to have been made for pleasant strolls from spring to autumn, for bike rides, and of course for a gourmet experience – in addition to all the wine there are Znojmo's baked goods and its pickles. Several monumental castles and romantic chateaux stand guard along the border that spans over the length of the Dyje. Additionally, the Czech Republic's smallest and youngest national park is situated along the river. The region's network of marked hiking and biking trails is more than sufficient and enables visitors to choose the difficulty that best suits their wishes and abilities. Of course, it goes without saying that you can also go horseback riding in Podyjí. In the summer months, the water conditions at the **Vranov Dam** are good; the same can be said about the summer **swimming pools in Únanov** and **Znojmo**. And finally, wine enthusiasts can set out along the beautiful paths of the local vineyards and charming wine cellars. However, you should be careful when it comes to the somewhat contradictory practice of combining cycling and wine.

The region's natural centre is the town of **Znojmo**. Znojmo is one of the Czech Republic's oldest towns and today it constitutes southwestern Moravia's natural cultural and commercial centre. Several outstanding historical monuments are situated in Znojmo, of which the most notable is indisputably the Romanesque **rotunda of Saint Catherine** with its unique frescos. Visiting Znojmo during the Znojmo Wine Festival (*Znojemské vinobraní*) is highly recommended. The festival is situated throughout almost all of the city's historical centre. Its biggest attraction is the historic procession of King John Luxemburg (Jan Lucemburský), which takes place either on the Friday evening or Saturday afternoon of the festival and ends with a historic scenario on the main platform.

Refreshments are available at any of several dozen stylised taprooms and "mázhauz" (roughly translated: "measuring houses"). Two more popular attractions are the knight tournaments and a historical market with craftsmen and merchants. This medieval town also has the most extensive labyrinth of **underground tunnels** in the Czech Republic. The tunnels beneath Znojmo cover 26,5 kilometres under the historical part of the city and 12 kilometres outside of that part.

In some sections there are four stories above one another, only one part in **Znojmo – the Loucký Monastery** – also has a fifth floor. The monumental **Loucký Monastery** is a significant Znojmo landmark. It offers tours of its art gallery, Romanesque crypts, a cooper's and vintner's museum, and stucco halls and cellars. A tour of the monastery ends with some wine sampling. A visitor's centre provides information about the operations of **Moravian wine cellars in Šatov** and the *Malovan cellar*, as well as more about wine tasting at the *Šobes vineyard* and new sampling stands in the *Havraníky vineyards*, in parts of the *Křížov cellar in Přímětice*, in the *Znojmo underground*, in **Znojmo Castle**, and you can learn more about the region's historical wine train. The sightseeing train travels to the most attractive parts of the royal town of **Znojmo**.

The touristic **Lednice - Valtice district** is not limited to being "Europe's Garden" for it also encompasses **Pavlov's Peaks and Pálava**, the **Novomlýnský reservoir system**, and a wine region

in the environs of **Mikulov** and **Hustopeče**. Since the dawn of history, a favourable climate and fertile soil have drawn people to *the region under Pálava*. This was once the site of great mammoth hunts, and one of the oldest specimens of prehistoric ceramics – the world-famous carving of the **Věstonická Venuše** – was



**DOLNÍ VĚSTONICE**

made here. The sculpture was discovered in the village of **Dolní Věstonice**, and it gained international renown.

The Roman legion of Emperor Mark Aurelius also discovered a route to here and centuries later, the Lichtensteins decided to create "Europe's Garden" in this region – a lovely world of rare trees, ponds, meadows and artful vistas, in which there are a number of stylised buildings, from chateaux through colonnades, statues and chapels, to artificial ruins.

When you walk through the district, you have the feeling that you are in a spa town. Hikers, cyclists, water sport enthusiasts, anglers and wine lovers can all feel like the countryside under Pálava was made just for them.

**The Pálava Hills Protected Landscape Area** was declared in 1976 to save the valuable countryside of the Pálava Hills and surrounding area. In 1986 it was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. In 2003 it was expanded to include the neighboring **Lednice-Valtice Area** and part of lower *Moravia River*.



PÁLAVA

The highest peak of the range is *Děvín* (550 m), guarded at the north end by the ruins of castle *Děvičky*. On the Pálava Hills every season is amazing own way.

In the spring you can't miss the blooming irises and Adonis flower. In the summer your path might be crossed by a green lizard or prying mantis. In fall you can look forward to colorful change of leaves in the forest and vineyards, while in the winter you might spy a majestic osprey circling below the clouds.

**Pálava** is one of the Czech Republic's true natural gems. Its abundance of plant and insect specimens is incomparable in this country and easily outshines all of our national parks.

This is partly owing to its limestone subsoil, with guarantees a great degree of diversity, and partly because of its geographical location in the very south of Moravia, which has a significant climatic impact on the heat and aridity of the Panonská **Lednice-Valtice Area** district. The combination of these two natural factors cannot be found anywhere else in the country, and this is what makes Pálava so extraordinary. As Europe's most expansively landscaped countryside, the *Lednicko - Valtice district*, was entered into UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list.

The unique work art known as the **Lednice-Valtice Area** is a cultured landscape formed over the course of centuries by the aristocratic family Liechtenstein. Architectural follies and structures in Romantic, Classicist, Empire and Neo-Gothic are meant for relaxation and entertainment, and are set into the countryside next to farm buildings in a way clearly signals: this is the Garden of Europe, Chateaus, pavilions and observations platforms are set into the landscape to form a single, harmonious creation spreading over an area of almost 200 square kilometers.



LEDNICE CHATEAU

The pearl of is one of Europe's loveliest Neo-Gothic architectural complexes: **Lednice Chateau** dates from 1850. The result was a mansion with eight wings and surrounding courtyards, two towers, a Baroque riding hall and a greenhouse attached to the main chateau. Behind the chateau is an extensive park with *Minaret*.



MINARET

The chateau is especially famous for its interiors, including fabulous wood carving, cassette ceilings and floors.

The crowning work is a carved wood spiral staircase leading up to the library.

The **Baroque chateau** with its chateau park dominates the small town of **Valtice**. The original Gothic castle was rebuilt in the 16th century into a fortified late Renaissance mansion.

The reconstruction in the 17th century gave it a rectangular shape with a central courtyard. Two monumental sculptures guard the entrance: Hercules and three-headed dog Cerberus. At the end of 18th century a Baroque theater was added.

The chateau's enormous wine cellars hold vast quantities of excellent wine and wine tasting at *Wine Salon of Czech Republic*, selecting the country's one hundred best wines each year.

The old town **Mikulov** is famous for the panorama of its grand chateau, the **Holy Hill** behind it and the forbidding **Goat Tower**. **Mikulov Chateau** is the headquarter of the *Regional Museum in Mikulov* and in the chateau cellar is a giant Renaissance wine barrel. Below the chateau extends Mikulov's long Baroque town square. **The Renaissance house** on the corner called **U Rytířů** is decorated with sgraffito. The axis of the town centre is dominated



HOLY HILL

by a column consecrated to the *Holy Trinity*. The dominant feature on the east side of the square is the massive **Dietrichstein Tomb**. For three hundred years Mikulov was the cultural and religious centre of Moravian Judaism. The former Jewish quarter covered the western slope of Chateau Hill and consisted 317 houses crammed together



MIKULOV CHATEAU

along narrow, winding streets. The *Jewish cemetery* in Mikulov is one of largest and oldest in the country. The oldest of the 4000 tombstones here dates from 1605. In addition to having the largest preserved remains of a flood-plain forest, this region abounds with a wide assortment of historical chateaux and castles, colonnades, statues and forest chapels. The *Lednicko - Valtice district* also tends to the needs of those seeking any type of outdoor recreation. Some come here to set out on pleasant hiking trips, others to enjoy the abundant network of bike paths, or the scenic voyages along the Dyje River. Water sport enthusiasts, surfers and yachting enthusiasts head to the upper reaches of the extensive *Novomlýnský reservoir* ( the three bodies of water of the reservoir at the confluence of the Dyje, Jihlava and Svatka Rivers).. By the willage of Pásohlávky, not far from the main route Vienna-Mikulov-Brno, is one of the most popular campgrounds in the Czech republic with thermal pool. The *Pásohlávky Recreation Area* offers excellent

conditions for windsurfing and adrenalin sports.

**Hustopeče**- the town of good wine and almond. Hustopeče had first-class vineyard slopes and the local winegrowing was closely connected with Brno whose inhabitants owned one third of the vineyards there around 1365. Today visitors can visit



PÁSOHLÁVKY

several wine cellars and wine shops in the town ( Na Hradbách a Vinařská streets) and the *Permanent Wine Exhibition* located



U SYNKU

in the historic cellars of the **Renaissance house** “**U Synků**”. *The Velké Pavlovice and Moravian wine cycle routes* crossing Hustopeče and the opening of the Andre Region cycling route running through Hustopeče and Vrbice was one of the memorable events of June. The region is suitable for growing apricots and even

almonds. *Hustopeče almond gardens* are unique throughout



ALMOND GARDEN

the Czech Republic. A new outlook-tower was opened in the almond garden this year and the fest of almond and wine was in the end of March. **The town hall** was built in German Neo-Renaissance style in 1906 and in the upper part of the square is the **Renaissance house** “ **U Synků**” from 1579, where is the Museum,

gallery, information centre and the permanent wine exposition.

**Foto 14** The **Baroque plague pillar** has a sculpture of the Holy Trinity(1736). **The stone fountain** date back to 1595. Ancient Triton with dolphins rises from the centre of the fountain. It

was one of the few sources of drinking water in the town. Water was brought by wooden pipes from the western hillock where were several wells. Just a few decades ago the town square in Hustopeče could take pride in the dominant **Gothic building of Saint Wenceslas Church** from 14<sup>th</sup> century. The grandiose changes ( from 16<sup>th</sup> century to 1902) did not respect the overall stability of the building and the subsoil which to its collapse on February 26, 1961.



*BAROQUE PLAGUE PILLAR*

The **new church of St. Wenceslas and St. Agnes of Bohemia** took place on September 25, 1994. The new building includes many preserved artifacts from the original church. A walk through places connected with the first President of Czechoslovakia, **T.G. Masaryk** can also be interesting. Places relating to his family and his staying in the town during his studies. **The Cross hill** with its baroque **chapel of St. Roch**, natural amphitheatre and somewhat neglected forest park offers a pleasant atmosphere and a place to relax above the town. The original baroque chapel dedicated to plague patrons dates back to 1680.



*HUSTOPECE CHURCH*





## INFORMATION

### Fact for the visitor

**Istanbul** is a cosmopolitan city built on two continents. The most recent population census shows that it has a population of about 12 million people, from which almost 65% are inhabitants of the Asian side. Fulfilling the residential role of the city, it doesn't present a lot to see historically. In contrast, the European side is the commercial and cultural center, further divided into two districts (the Old City and the modern downtown) by a narrow channel of water called 'the Golden Horn'. Below you will find some helpful details to make your stay easier when you are in Istanbul.

### Arrival

Most countries' citizens require a visa to enter Turkey. For some countries this visa can be supplied directly upon arrival at the airport, for others it is advisable to pre-arrange it at a Turkish Embassy in the home country. Check with your local Turkish Embassy prior to departure.

### Climate

The regional location of Istanbul is the second most humid region of the country, with an average humidity of 73%. The maximum that has been recorded is 41°C (105.8 °F) - 16°C (5°F).

### Money

The currency used in the Turkish Republic is the Lira. Many prices are quoted in USD (especially in the tourist areas). Visa and Master cards are accepted generally everywhere, although American Express or Diners Cards can pose difficulties. Travelers' Cheques are not easily cashed as most of the banks and exchange offices (doviz burosu) charge a sizable commission. It is advisable to use them as direct payment where possible, instead of cashing them.

### Electricity

In Istanbul, electricity is supplied at 220 volts with plugs of two round prongs. As it is not easy to find adapters in the city, it is advisable to bring your own for use of any extra electrical item.

### Internet Cafes

It is very easy to find Internet cafes anywhere in the city with reasonable prices. A set time-related fee is charged for the use of the computer or the Internet, but use of scanners, printers etc. is usually extra.

### Taxis

All taxis in the city (a total of 22,000 !) carry a meter. If the meter does not appear to be working, it is advisable to change taxis. The night fare commences after midnight.

### Time

The whole country is in one time zone with a daylight saving period, so it is always two hours ahead of GMT. Daylight saving starts around April and ends around October.

### National Holidays

January 1st : New Years Eve, April 23rd : National Independence and Children's Day, May 19th : Youth and Sports Day, August 30th : Victory Day, October 29th : Republic Day. There are two other religious holidays, of which the times vary greatly, as they follow the lunar Islamic calendar of 354 days.

### Emergency Phone Numbers

Police 155. Traffic police 154. Ambulance 112. These numbers are toll free when you use a regular phone but if you are using a public or a cellular there is a charge.

### Public Telephones

There are three kinds of public phones:

- 1. Token phones:** For these you have to insert a special token that can be purchased from the post office. These phones are very hard to find and quite old-fashioned.
- 2. Card phones:** These work with a special prepaid card that can be purchased from the post offices and most street vendors. There are three kinds - 30 units, 60 units and 100 units. It is advisable to purchase 60 or 100 units for making international calls.
- 3. Credit card phones:** These work with all the major credit cards and they are available at the airport and all the major touristy sites. For international operators, here are the most common numbers: AT&T 0-0-8001 2277, MCI 0-0-8001 1177, US Sprint 0-0-8001 4477.

### Weight and Measurement System

Turkey uses the metric system.

## A TOUR OF THE OLD CITY

The world renowned cities of **Byzantium, Constantinople** and **Istanbul**, in total spanning almost 2500 years, have steeped **the Old City area of Sultanahmet** in Byzantine and Ottoman-ness, eminent from the marvelous palaces, churches and cisterns, mosques and baths. The main attractions are all



OLD CITY

within easy walking distance and cover the **Haghia Sophia Church, Topkapi Palace, Blue Mosque, Basilica Cistern and Hippodrome**. Below is a guide of interesting history and legend associated with them.

### SAINT SOPHIA

This massive 6th century building is the third church to be built at the same location. The first church was built in 360

AD but burnt down in 404, during the reign of Constantinus. The second was erected between the years 404-415, but shared the same fatal destiny as the first one, burning down during the Nika revolt in 532, during the reign of Justinian.

After these riots, a new structure (the current one standing) was ordered from two famous architects - Isidorus and

Anthemeios. It was completed and opened to the public on December 26th in 537, on the St. Stephen's day. However, the dome collapsed twenty years later and it had to be rebuilt by the nephew of the first architect. He opened up the dome by giving it 40 windows along its parameter. Although there were partial collapses of the dome in 989 and 1346, the shape of the



SAINT SOPHIA

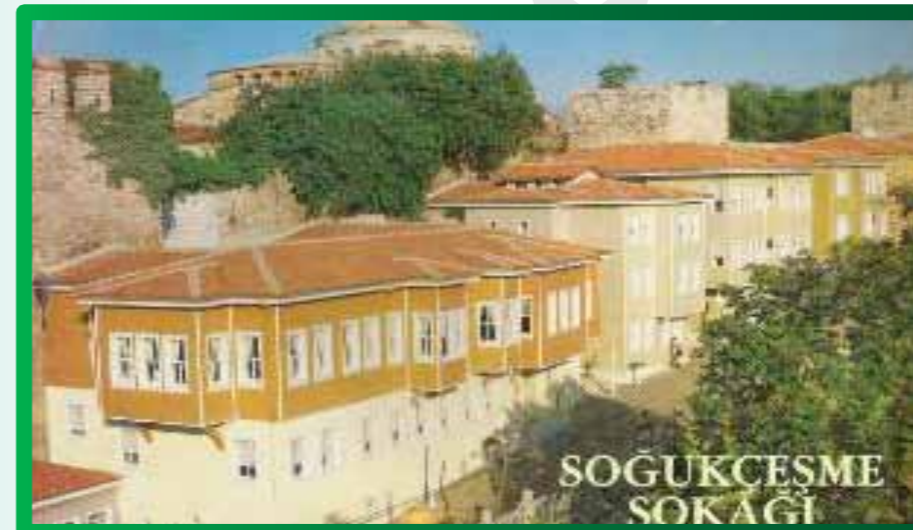
dome today remains as it was then.

It served as a church until the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks under the leadership of Mehmet II. Once he took power, he gave the order to convert the church into a mosque. After this conversion, Islamic additions were made inside and outside. The minarets, a mihrab, mimber, muezzin's lodge, sultan's lodge and library are all from this period.

In 1935, twelve years after Turkish Republic had been established, by the order of Kemal Ataturk it became a museum and remains so today. Aya Sofya, the Church of Divine Wisdom, stands as one of the landmarks of the city.

### SOGUKCESME SOKAK

Upon your exit from Saint Sophia, walk around it to your right and follow the tram-line down as far as the entrance to



SOGUKCESMESOKAK

Gulhane Park. Should you turn right, you will be able to walk up to Topkapi Palace via one of the old cities most pleasant and picturesque streets, named Soguk Cesme Sokak, or Street of the Cool Fountain.

This little cobbled streets clambers up between the walls of the Palace and the back of the Saint

Sophia museum, with blooming flowers and plants along its way. At the very top of the street lies a small fountain from which it takes its name, atop an old Byzantine cistern. Here also is the Sarnic Restaurant serving Turkish cuisine, which occupies part of the old underground cistern itself, a beautiful and atmospheric setting for a meal. Pressed against the palace walls are some beautifully restored typical Ottoman wooden houses, now the famous Aya Sophia Pensiyonlari. Each house is decorated in different colors and with typical nineteenth century decor. There is also the Ataturk Library here. Just as you exit from the top of this little street, note the marble Imperial Ottoman entrance at the corner of Aya Sophia, from where the Sultans could enter directly from the Palace to their loge.

### FOUNTAIN OF AHMET III

Just in front of the Palace Imperial Gate is the beautiful Fountain of Ahmet III, built by this Sultan in 1728.



FOUNTAIN OF AHMET III

### TOPKAPI PALACE

When the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, Mehmet II, the Conqueror, did not take to the Byzantine Palaces, so he built his own palace where the main buildings of Istanbul University currently stand. This palace is now known as the old palace (eski saray) as it was soon in disuse. Sultan Mehmet began to build Topkapi Palace in 1459 including the Harem and the fourth courtyard. The rest of the palace was built 6 years later. He adjusted the Byzantine city walls around the walls of the palace. In fact, the palace takes its name from the main sea gate in these defensive walls ('Topkapi' = Canon Gate). The palace is mainly divided into four courtyards:

The first courtyard is known as the courtyard of the Janissaries, who acted as one of the branches of the Ottoman army.

They were formed from boys who had been taken from their families at the ages of 9-16, during the Ottoman conquests in Europe. In this courtyard there are three important buildings: Aya Eirine (the Church of Divine Peace), the mint / outer treasury of the Ottoman Empire and the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

The second courtyard served as the official section of the



TOPKAPI PALACE

palace, holding the imperial kitchens, bakery, storage rooms and the divan (chamber of the Viziers).

The third courtyard opens with the Arz Odasi (audience hall for visitors to the Sultan). There are also rooms of the Enderun (palace school), and various sections displaying the ceremonial dresses of the Ottoman Sultans, holy relics, the portraits of the sultans, a library and the Treasury.

The fourth court is more of a garden than a courtyard, built on varying levels decorated by kiosks or pavilions. The Baghdad and Revan Pavilions, Mecidiye Kosk and a mosque can all be found here.

### BLUE MOSQUE / SULTANAHMET CAMII

Istanbul's **Blue Mosque**, also known as the '**Sultan Ahmet Mosque**' by local people, was built by Sultan Ahmet in 1609

and completed in 7 years, although foreigners have taken to calling it the Blue Mosque 'because of the beautiful blue Iznik tiles decorating the interior.

The architect who oversaw the mosque's design was Sedefkar Mehmet Aga, better known as a student of Sinan (the greatest architect ever seen in the Ottoman Empire). Not only was it built to serve as a mosque, but its huge surrounding complex



SULTANAHMET

also held a medrese (theological school), turbe (tomb), hospital, caravanserai, primary school, public kitchen and market, although the hospital and caravanserai were destroyed in the nineteenth century.

After the public kitchens were destroyed in a fire in 1970, they were restored and incorporated into the School of Industrial Art. It presently serves as the Dean's Office for the Marmara University.

**Opening Hours:**

The Blue Mosque is open everyday all year around but closes 5 times a day to tourists for short periods for prayertimes.

**BASILICA CISTERN / YEREBATAN SARAYI**

The largest of many Byzantine water storage systems in the city, the Basilica Cistern, supplied the palace and immediate suburbs. It was filled via rainwater and aqueducts from the Belgrade forest 20 km away. For a city so much besieged, it played a major role in maintaining its survival.

It is Emperor Justinian's sixth century effort that exists today, having absorbed the smaller fourth century Byzantine predecessor into its core. The mix-mash of over 336 columns suggested that they were recycled or pillaged from ruins elsewhere, as evident by the long-time submerged beautiful Medusa snake heads at the end of the cistern, and the tree-trunk/tear effect column with carvings of that effect. The two medusa snake heads were directed to face each other in the belief that the bad luck associated with her myth would reverse in the face of good luck.



BASILICA

**CAGALOGLU HAMAMI**

This is one of the oldest baths in Istanbul where you can still enjoy the traditional bathing experience from being washed, lathered, scrubbed to massaged, whilst lying on a heated marble platform. Now,



CAGALOGLU

cross back over towards the park near Blue Mosque to visit the remaining relics of the Hippodrome.

**SULEYMANIYE MOSQUE**

Built by the greatest architect of the Ottoman Empire - Sinan, between 1550 -1557, Suleymaniye Mosque stands

as undoubtedly his greatest work in Istanbul. Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, who enjoyed the longest reign in the Ottoman Empire, between 1520-1566, gave the order for its construction. The mosque also holds the tombs of the Sultan and his lover Hurrem (Roxelana).



SULEYMANIYE

**RUMELI FORTRESS**

Built in 1452 by Sultan Mehmet II prior to the conquest of Istanbul, his aim was to block any possible sea support which

might have come from the Black Sea to assist the flailing Byzantines. Therefore, it was to be situated on the narrowest point of the Bosphorus strait, facing another smaller fortress already erected on the Asian side. The construction work finished after 4 months and 19 days. Now it serves as a museum, displaying the canons that were used during the

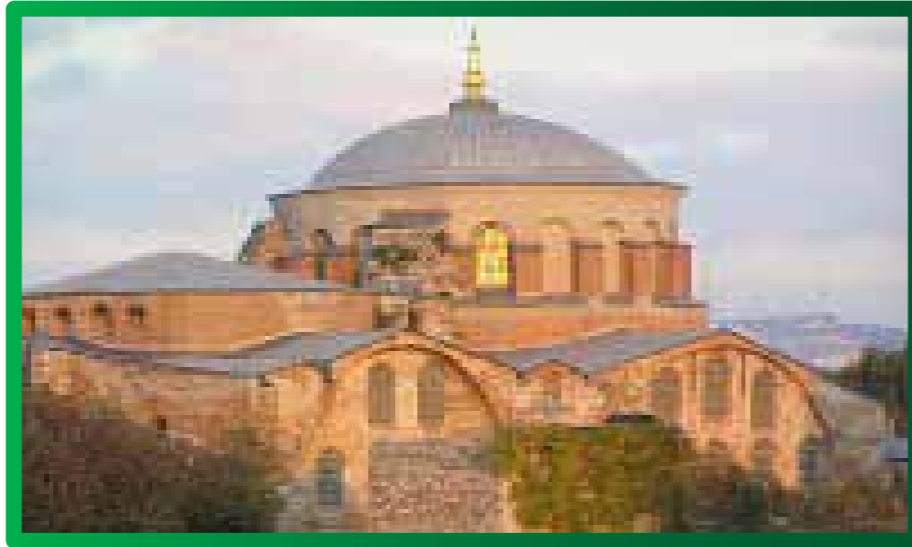


RUMELI FORTRESS

conquest. There is also an outdoor mini-amphi-theater used during the various music festivals in Istanbul.

## CHURCH OF CHORA

There is no longer any evidence of the church which was built originally under this name. The existing church was built in the 11th century and was remodeled in the 12th century. Two hundred years later, it received a further remodeling following the Latin occupation, which saw the inner narthex rebuilt and the addition of an outer narthex and paraclesion. In the early 16th century, it was converted to a mosque, but now serves as a museum. In the church, there are beautiful mosaics depicting the life of Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, as well as many attractive frescoes. In fact, these are the most well preserved mosaics and frescoes from the Roman era in Turkey.



CHORA



## Wallachia

The Romanians call in many ways the region situated in the Eastern side of the River Olt, a region blessed with a rare natural beauty. The most frequently used name is Wallachia, denoting one of the three historical provinces that formed in 1859 the first Romanian national unitary state.

In Nord-East of Wallachia, the Fagaras Massif erects its biggest peak and the highest of Romania "Moldoveanu Peak" (2 544m). Its alpine slopes gently become hills or gorges and farther in the south, well-groomed fields and of small family farms fade in the endless stretches of uncultivated land. In the other side of the Danube's basin, there are the Dealu Mare vineyards, producing one of the best wines in Romania.

Oil wells mark the Northern extremity of the oil fields around Ploiesti. Dating from 1850, they are among the oldest in Europa. During the Second World War they were considered so important, that the allies decided it was better to bomb Ploiesti rather than leave the oil fields to fall into the hands of the advancing German army.

Today, the enormous land areas in the center of Wallachia are used for agricultural business development, while commercial and private buildings raised without restrictions, penetrate deeper into the countryside.

In the east of the Carpathians, Wallachia extends up to the well-known Baragan Plain. In the 1950s, the communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej exiled here thousands of Germans and Gypsies just for ethnic reasons. In the 30s the Baragan Plain was producing so many grains that made of Romania one of the richest nations in Europe.

In the Southern extremity of Wallachia, wide strips of flat reveran land seems to be abandoned. This part of Wallachia is neither too picturesque nor orientated towards tourism as the mountain part is, but exactly for this reason it presents some interest. Due to the proximity of the Danube and some remnants of pre-Communist prosperity, the towns located on the river bank have a strange charm.

But the traveller who wants to explore deeper the Romanian history and architecture must visit the Arges region and specially the historical town of Curtea de Arges and Campulung Muscel, which both, in old times, were the capital of Wallachia. He will found here frontier fortresses and nicely renovated mansions, and also, Not surprising for such a religious country, many old monasteries and churches varying from the humble hermitage up

to memorable and dominant cathedrals.

Part of the Arges region roads follow the medieval commercial routes which linked Wallachia with Asia and the Northern Europe. Others, as the Tranfagarasan, with its narrow curves are impressive engineering enterprises. Not to mention the thrill one can feel seeing the Vlad Tepes' (also called Dracula) Poienari Fortress raising over him.



**POIENARI FORTRESS**

of Posada when Basarab ruler stopped the Hungarians. The ruins of the Royal Court is surrounded by walls.

In the Court there are the ruins of the Saint Nicoara Church dating from the XIIIth century but the best preserved building of this big complex is Saint Nicholas church created in Byzantine style. Built somewhere between the middle and end of the XIV century, the church is among the oldest Orthodox places of worship in Wallachia and was included in the World Heritage. Its founder was Vlaicu Voda, who moved the capital of Wallachia from Campulung Muscel to Curtea de Arges in 1369. The majority of the frescoes are the original ones dating from 1395, and its exterior is impressive.

## Curtea de Arges

Former capital of Wallachia, Curtea de Arges is located near the Arges River, surrounded by hills. Curtea de Arges is one of the most important places of Wallachia, and since 1990 the town seems to be reborn attracting tourists with its two famous churches and medieval court. As its name suggests Curtea de Arges was the first capital of Wallachia. The Municipal Museum, in the north of the market near the main road towards Pitesti faces the Royal Court built in 1330, shortly after the Battle

To get an idea of how Curtea de Arges was during the communist period, explore the area around Market Centrale. The most of the houses in this neighborhood were built in the late eighteenth century and early twentieth century. Casa Goanga, is one of the oldest inn situated in the Viorelelor Street.

Thursdays are the most suitable day for a visit. After a walk among the counters of The Central Market, have a cup of Romanian beer and taste the delicious „mititei” in Mrs. Mitrofan’s restaurant opened in an old Phanariot mansion where you can see a genuine interior and painted ceilings dating from 1821.

The Vineyard and orcharding Museum, Golesti

Since 1939 when this splendid mansion situated near the Industrial center of Pitesti was opened for the first time combined the vineyard and orchard complex with a fascinating museum of the rural life, The Museum is formed of an entire village of houses made from wood with traditional interior. The mansion kept the interior of the Golescu family home.

The mountains with deep valleys in the north of Curtea de Arges offer a wonderful view and shelter isolated villages and solitary monasteries. This region marked the border between Wallachia and Transylvania from the 14th century until the beginning of the 20th century.

Before starting your journey, keep in mind that road signs in most of the Romanian rural areas are often absent. If you have doubts regarding the direction, always ask. Start from the Royal Court in Curtea de Arges center and take to the right towards Campul Muscel on DN73C. Pass through the Iasi Valley and after 14 Km you will reach Robaia and Musatesti where an indicator shows that you have to take the left to Bradet. Enter the narrow and poorly maintained country road and you will pass through Galesu and Bradulet villages until you reach Bradet. Bradet means pine forest. The town offering superb views is bordered by thick forests. If you want to stay overnight at Bradet you will find many pensions.

In the center of the village, near a mill and a bunch of trees take to the left on a steep trail that climbs a hill. After 2 km you reach a charming wooden hermitage from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Another path through the woods leaves the village and meanders along the River Vaslan towards the North, crossing the Vaslan Gorges. In some zone of the river, a prehistoric fish called *asprete* lives. At Musatesti return to the main road DN73C and take left. In the next village, Domnesti, cross the bridge and take another



“CORBII DE PIATRA”  
 (“STONE RAVENS”)  
 MONASTERY

country road to the left, drive along the Doamnei River and pass through Stănești, continue up to the Corbi village. The full name of the village is Corbii de Piatra (the Stone Ravens) and was founded in 18<sup>th</sup> century by Transylvanian shepherds from Jina. In the middle of the Corbi village take a right turn and keep going for about 1 km, the road will take you to Saints Petru and Pavel’s Monastery, dig in hard grindstone and painted in the most pure Byzantine style.

**Campulung** town is located in Campulung hallow, and it is crossed by Târgului River.

Being located at 54 Km from Pitesti and 87 km from Brasov, on the National Road 73, Campulung town and its surroundings have been always an active connection of Walachia with Transylvania.

First documentary mention dates from 1300, which makes Campulung the oldest town of Romania. Until the XVII century here lived a significant German community. But people lived in the area long time before.



CAMPULUNG

The oldest proofs of material culture are from (1700-1600 BC). At Pescăreasa, in the south of town, a necropolis, proof of human being existence, was discovered. Negru Voda Monastery was built in 1215 by Prince Radu Negru, the founder of Wallachia. Here there is the oldest tombstone of a ruler in Romania.

**The National Park “Piatra Craiului”** (King’s Stone)

A flora and fauna reservation, it was founded for protecting rare plants and animals as: the edelweiss, the alpine carnation of Piatra Craiului, *Nigritella nigra*, *Trollius europaeus*, *Cypripedium calceolus* (a very rare species of orchid), *Rupicapra rupicapra*

(the black goat), *Tichdroma muraria* (the butterfly of the rocks) and the viper.

### “Iezer” Reservation.

The reservation zone includes the Catunului and Iezerului glacier valleys and the Iezerul Mare peak. The Papusa - Iezer Massif is surrounded by the valleys of Dambovita and Lady’s Rivers, and is characterized by a landscape rich in glacial valleys and circuses. The presence of rare plants and glacier valley has determined the inclusion of this area among the reservations in our country.

The access to the reservation can be made by Rucar -Bran Passage, or coming from the Fagaras Mountains, and cross over Coltii Cremenii Athenaeum and the Athenaeum Cross.

The reservation is located in the south of the Leoata Mountains between the villages Cetateni and Cotenesti. Ruins of a Dacian fortress and of a medieval one, traces of settlements and a church dating back to XII-XV century were found in the area.

An area of the reservation is inhabited by approx. 50 species of wild plants that have been put under protection: *Dianthus spicullifolius* (the Hungarian beard), *Aconitum tauricum* (omagul), *Symphytum cordatum* (the Black Burdock), *Hepatica Transilvanica* (the Hero’s Cross), *oxalis acetosella*

(the Rabbit’s tail) and *Thymus vulgaris*. Species as: the white alder, the black currant, or *Lilium martagon* (the forest lily) increased their spreading area up to the Dambovitei Valley and on the slopes coming down the montains. The predominant animal spices are: *Tichdroma muraria*, the viper, the raven, *Aquila chrysaetos* (the alpine falcon), *Tetrao urogallus* (the alpine rooster), the linx, and the bear.



THE NATIONAL PARK  
“PIATRA CRAIULUI”  
(KING’S STONE)



“IEZER” RESERVATION.

### Dendrological Park from Mihailesti-Muscel

Occupying an area of 57.50 ha the forestry reservation is located in the village Mihailesti, 20 km from the Campulung-Muscel city. They planted various indigenous and exotic forest species were planted, such as Caucasian fir, pine strobe, red oak, some of them reaching 40 cm in diameters of and 30 m in height.

The predominant inland species are: the red oak, the ash, the juniper and the exotic species: the American walnut, the silvery pine, the gingo biloba, the Californian Cyprus and Virginia juniper.

Due to the important collection of inland and exotic species, the park from Mihailesti was declared natural reservation.



DENDROLOGICAL  
PARK FROM MI-  
HAILESTI-MUSCEL

### The Narcissus Glades from Negrasi.

The reservation of flowers was founded in 1966 and occupies an area of 4.6 ha in the zone of Negrasi village, between the rise plane and the Gavanu-Burdea one. The nature of soils and the mild climate encourages the optimal development of the narcissus that resist during two months of the year: May and June. Near the narcissus glades from Negras is situated the fauna reservation from Corbi-Ciungi.

### Valsanului Valley

Between the villages Musesesti and Bradulet, an aria of 17 km of the Valsanului Valley was declared a fauna reservation. Having a wonderful view, the reservation is known for the species of fish that are there especially for the asprete, the only fish that is called with the Romanian word all over the world. This species of fish was discovered in 1957 and has a small area, being close to extinction. It can be found in abundance in this area that’s why the area was declared a nature reserve. Beside asprete, in the Valsan water we can find other species such as: the loach, the broad snout, the trout.

### The Geological Reservations from Albesti

In Albesti village, near Campulung-Muscel are located the



reservations of granit and limestone of Albesti. These are very important for geological and paleontological researches being declared scientific reservations. The first sector includes over 80 blocks of granite that occupies an area of 250 square meters, having different sizes. These are covered by vegetation well represented by hazelnuts, herbs, alder, briar and blackthorn, and in the middle of this sector there are larger blocks, covered by moss and lichen. At 1.8 km from the first sector, there is the limestone of Albesti represented by a rock about 15 m thick, having two layers: the first layer is impure and lies at the bottom and the second layer is on the upper part and is pure. In the two layers were identified species of vertebrates and invertebrates, with a great scientific value.

### The Fossil Place from Suslanesti

Situated on the Arges Valley, 6 km from the town of Campulung, the reservation occupies an area of 1 ha, on the Hobaia Hill. In the foundation was preserved a rich fossil fauna represented by more than 30 species of fish, from which 13 are new for science. The scientific study of the fauna grouped them into three categories: local fish, deep sea fish and migratory fish. The fossil place from Suslanesti is recognized in the entire world being declared a natural monument.

### Dambovita Cave

Dambovita Cave is situated in Arges County, at 20 km from Bran, on the Rucar-Bran passage. The cave was formed in the chalkstone Massif of Piatra Craiului, as a result of Dambovicioara river action. It is a warm cave, with a moderate humidity and a temperature of 10-12 °C, because it is crossed by a stream of air. The road to the cave passes by Dambovicioara River which is full of small waterfalls. The road goes along with the river, offering some green spots for stopovers, surrounded by wonderful cliffs.

### Poienari Fortress

Poienari Fortress is placed 4 kilometers away from Vidraru dam, perched on a mountain pick, at 860 m altitude. The legend says this is the place where Vlad Tepes backed off from the Turkish army way. Inclusive nowadays, the access to the thick walls of the fortress is still difficult because 1.480 steps carved on the

hill must be climbed to reach them.

Poienari Fortress is also known as Vlad Tepes' Fortress. It was mentioned in some documentaries of famous channels like National Geographic, Discovery and History Channel.

### “Corbii de Piatra” (“Stone Ravens”) Monastery

The monastery is situated on Lady's River bank, at 35 km from Curtea de Arges in the “Corbi (Ravens)” village, on the Campulung - Domnesti road. The monastery church was dug in the grit stone. Because of the trees grown above which facilitate the water infiltration there is a real danger of crumbling.

The church is special not only for the way in which it was implanted into the rock, but also because it is full of paintings, which experts say are of the purest tradition dating from the Byzantine and XIV century.

### Balea Lake

It is situated in the heart of the Fagaras Mountain, the highest and the most magnificent mountain of our Carpathians. Balea Lake is part of the homonymous nature reserve and represents a typical glacial relief with moraine, terraces and a great valley in “U” shape, dominated by deep ridge.



**BALEA LAKE**

### Vidraru dam

Vidraru, an accumulation lake of 28 km length, was built in 1966 on the Arges River. Situated between Fruntii and Ghitu Mountains, the lake collects the

water of the Capra River, Buda River and other affluent streams with a total flow of about 5.5 ml/s. The total area of the lake is about 393 hectares, a length of 10.3 km and a maximum width of 2.2 km, in the Wolf Valley area - Calugarita. The depth of the water is generally of 155 m, near the high dam of 166 m and the capacity is 465 millions ml. The normal height of hinder is 830,000 meters above the sea. At night the outlines are electrically lit so that Vidraru can be seen from airplanes.

## The Transfagarasan Road

Through a 900 m long tunnel The Transfagarasan crosses the main peak of the Fagaras Mountain at 2000 m altitude and connects Transylvania with Muntenia (Vallachia). The Transfagarasan is the second height Romanian road, ascending up to 2042 m and offers a spectacular view of the region. Driving on the Transfagarasan is a real excitement. Suddenly you find yourself almost lost in the fog, even during summer.



*THE TRANSFAGARASAN ROAD*



## Namesti Monastery

Namesti Monastery, hidden into a rock, at 765 m altitude, is situated into an old picturesqueness area with historical traces. Placed at 5 km north-east from Campulung, the church is all dug into the rock by unknown hands, in the first half of the XVI century.



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