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MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATED TOURISM PRODUCT INCLUDING A JOINT THEMATIC ROUTE “ART AND CULTURE” 2021 - 2027



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I. Introduction

This document has been developed in accordance with Contract No. 06-09-01/09.06.2021, with subject *Marketing strategy for the implementation of an integrated tourism product including a joint thematic route “Art and Culture”*, under the project **ROBG - 576 “Art and Culture - common cross-border assets in support of sustainable tourism development”** funded under Priority Axis 2 “A Green Region”, with specific objective 2.1 “To improve the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage” of the Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme 2014-2020. The implementation of the contract is managed by a team of EFTA SERVICES EOOD (Contractor).

The project is implemented by Veliko Tarnovo Municipality in partnership with Calafat Municipality, Dolj County, Romania, and the Face for Art and Culture Foundation, town of Pleven. The project’s main goal is to assess and improve the sustainable economic use of the existing potential of cultural properties and resources of the common cultural heritage in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region by developing an integrated tourism product based on the promotion of a new joint thematic route “Art and Culture”, contributing to supporting the sustainable development of tourism.

One of the tools to achieve this goal is *Marketing strategy for the implementation of an integrated tourism product including a joint thematic route “Art and Culture”*, one of the key products for the promotion of a common thematic route composed of sites of classical and contemporary culture and art in the urban environment in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.

The development of the Strategy is a necessary condition for the realization of the potential of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region for the sustainable development of cultural tourism. Tourism, in particular cultural and cultural-historical tourism, are key sectors for the development of the target region, as stated in strategic and programming documents at various levels of government. The territory is rich in a number of cultural locations and sites.

The presented marketing strategy is in line with the current applications of marketing in the field of tourism. It is fully consistent with the specifics of the tourism product, namely - an integrated tourism product “Art and Culture”.



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The marketing positioning of an attractive and innovative tourism product, which is at the same time extremely flexible in its offer depending on the specific cultural programmes and art forms that may be part of the product, requires a well-planned environment that supports and allows for development.

In this sense the document is based on:

- The results of a SWOT analysis and the identified problems, needs and challenges;
- Situation analysis;
- Results of a survey of stakeholders' views on the potential and opportunities for sustainable positioning on the tourist market of the extended joint integrated tourism route "Art and Culture".

On this basis, the main pillars of action of the marketing strategy are defined as follows:

1. Marketing positioning of the tourism product;
2. Promotional policy for positioning the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" on the domestic markets of Romania and Bulgaria and aimed at foreign markets, through a personalized approach;
3. Creating the necessary conditions for enhanced partnership between stakeholders for synergistic promotion and offering of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" by all participants in the process.
4. To implement these pillars, the strategic goals of the marketing strategy have been defined, which should reflect these directions of action in accordance with the main goal - sustainable development and market positioning and promotion.

To achieve these goals, the classic marketing mix in tourism is used, but it is presented in a modern way with a focus on consumers - the tourists. The presented strategy focuses on people in two aspects - those offering and creating, and responsible for the development and sustainability of the tourism product, and its consumers - the tourists.

These two directions are visible in the goals, measures and activities for implementation. The intended focus for joint work of all stakeholders and participants in the supply of the tourism product builds on the direction of action from one product to the marketing of an overall vision and model of tourist consumption. Attention is paid to the way of offering, unifying the tourist



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experience and creating a design for consumer experiences along the entire route, which will help to improve the product and its promotion by consumers.

The strategic framework has been developed in compliance with:

- The objectives and activities under the main EU priorities for sustainable development of European tourism, as well as the national priorities for the development of cross-border tourism;
- The national strategic documents for tourism development in Bulgaria and Romania;
- The defined strategies for development in the districts/counties and municipalities where the route passes and where the sites included in the route are located;
- Cross-border cooperation policies.

II. Situation analysis

In the preparatory stage for the development of a *Marketing strategy for the implementation of an integrated tourism product including a joint thematic route “Art and Culture”*, under project ROBG - 576 “Art and Culture - common cross-border assets in support of sustainable tourism development”, several methods were applied for gathering the necessary data and information for developing the situation analysis and the strategic framework of the Strategy. These include document analysis, comparative analysis and 2 types of surveys among stakeholders. The volume and quality of the information obtained were sufficient to prepare detailed thematic analyses, according to the requirements of the Contracting Authority.

For the purposes of the Strategy, the authors have adopted the following working definition of the term “integrated tourism product”: a set of developed products in the implementation of the project and their future development towards creating a tourist experience when visiting the target regions.

In implementation of Contract No. 03-05-01/05.03.2020 two routes have been developed - a main route and an extended route - as the subject of this strategy:

Joint integrated tourist route “Art and Culture”

Starting point: Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria



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Intermediate points along the route: Pleven, Bulgaria; Vidin, Bulgaria; Calafat, Romania; Craiova, Romania; Turnu Magurele, Romania - Nikopol, Bulgaria (transport intermediate point - ferry) *

End point: Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Tourist sites included: Regional Art Gallery "Boris Denev" (Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria), Art Gallery Donation "Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev" (Pleven, Bulgaria), Art Gallery "Nikola Petrov" (Vidin, Bulgaria), Drama Theatre "Vida" (Vidin, Bulgaria), Marincu Palace (Calafat, Romania) and The Art Museum - the Jean Mihail Palace (Craiova, Romania)

Extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"

Starting point: Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Intermediate points along the route: Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pleven, Knezha, Belogradchik, Vidin - Bulgaria; Calafat and Craiova - Romania; Turnu Magurele, Romania - Nikopol, Bulgaria (transport intermediate point - ferry)

End point: Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Tourist sites included: Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria): Regional Art Gallery "Boris Denev", Multimedia Visitor Centre "Tsarevgrad Tarnov", Samovodska Charshia, Hadji Nikoli Inn, and Music and Drama Theatre "Konstantin Kisimov"; Gorna Oryahovitsa (Bulgaria): Art Gallery "Nedyalko Karaneshev"; Pleven (Bulgaria): Art Gallery Donation "Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev", Regional Historical Museum, Art Gallery "Ilya Beshkov", Panorama Pleven Epopee 1877, and Drama and Puppet Theatre "Ivan Radoev"; Knezha (Bulgaria): Municipal Historical Museum; Belogradchik (Bulgaria): Belogradchik Historical Museum; Vidin (Bulgaria): Art Gallery "Nikola Petrov", Drama Theatre "Vida", Sinfonietta and the State Puppet Theatre; Calafat (Romania): The Marincu Palace; Craiova (Romania): Art Museum (Jean Mihail Palace), Baniei House (Casa Baniei), Oltenia Philharmonic, National Theatre "Marin Sorescu" and Theatre for Children and Youth "Colibri".

The developed joint integrated tourist routes provide ideas for practicing cultural tourism. The development of the routes is based on the definition of cultural tourism of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): "Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions and products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that



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encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions”.

This document reviews the general framework for tourism management and strategic planning in the field of cultural and cultural-historical tourism in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region and the European Union. Tourism, in particular cultural tourism, is a key sector in the development of the cross-border region, as set out in strategic and programming documents at various levels of government.

The strategic framework is a key element of the overall Strategy. The framework presents the objectives, the place and role of the developed Strategy in the overall system of documents for strategic planning in the field of tourism and, in particular, cultural tourism in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region. An overview is made of important strategic and programming documents from different levels of government, regulating the development of tourism, in order to explain the main approaches and principles in the preparation of the Strategy, and to justify the logic of its structuring.

Supranational documents

- ❖ Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO on 16 November 1972;
- ❖ European Cultural Convention of 19 December 1954;
- ❖ Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe CM/Res (2007) 12 on cultural routes of the Council of Europe ¹;
- ❖ Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe CM/Res (2013) 66 on the extended partial agreement of the Council of Europe on cultural routes of 18 December 2013 ²;
- ❖ Announcement of the EC COM(2010)352 Europe - leading world tourist destination - new political framework for European tourism ³;

¹ https://seecorridors.eu/filebank/file_46.pdf

² https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c69ac

³ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com\(2010\)0352_/com_com\(2010\)0352_bg.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com(2010)0352_/com_com(2010)0352_bg.pdf)



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- ❖ European Parliament resolution of 25 March 2021 on establishing an EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism 2021 ([2020/2038\(INI\)](#));⁴
- ❖ International Cultural Tourism Charter (ICOMOS 1999)⁵;
- ❖ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, EC;
- ❖ Project SEE AF/A/653/4.2/X Transnational Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Danube Region with a Focus on Tourism (DATOURWAY);
- ❖ A Common Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Cross-Border Area Romania-Bulgaria (SPATIAL).

Applicable strategic and regulatory documents at national level

Republic of Romania

- ❖ National general plan for investments in tourism;
- ❖ Strategy for sustainable development of Romania 2030;
- ❖ General plan for tourism development in Romania 2007-2026⁶;
- ❖ Regional plan for development of South-West Oltenia 2021-2027;
- ❖ Economic and social development strategy of Dolj County in the period 2014-2020;
- ❖ Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, ratified by Law No. 389/2006;
- ❖ Law No. 72/2014 on the ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, adopted in Bratislava on 27 May 2011 and signed by Romania in Bratislava on 27 May 2011;

Republic of Bulgaria

- ❖ National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030 ⁷;
- ❖ Updated National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria 2014 -

⁴ http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/global_report_cultural_routes_itineraries_v13.compressed_0.pdf

⁵ http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/global_report_cultural_routes_itineraries_v13.compressed_0.pdf

⁶ https://www.mi.government.bg/files/useruploads/files/turisticheska_politika/pril_2-koncepcia.pdf

⁷ <https://www.minfin.bg/bg/1394>



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2030⁸;

- ❖ Concept for dividing Bulgaria into tourist regions⁹;
- ❖ Strategy for development of culture in Veliko Tarnovo Municipality¹⁰ Marketing strategy of the Stara Planina Tourist Region 2021-2024 ¹¹;
- ❖ Plan for integrated development of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality¹²;
- ❖ District strategies for development of the districts of Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven and Vidin for the period 2014 - 2020¹³;
- ❖ Tourism Act (State Gazette, iss. 17 dated 25 February 2020)¹⁴.

2.1 Analysis of the current situation in the destination (joint integrated tourist route)

2.1.1 Analysis of the external environment

Development trends in the tourism sector have made it one of the main economic sectors in the world. According to various strategic estimates, in 2019 “travel and tourism” was the third largest category for exports (after fuels and chemicals), which accounts for 7% of world trade. Its development is of structural importance for economies, public services and livelihoods globally. These conclusions are also relevant to Europe, which is one of the leading tourist destinations in the world. In the same year, tourism accounted for 10.4% of Europe’s gross domestic product and provided 334 million jobs.

⁸ https://www.tourism.government.bg/sites/tourism.government.bg/files/documents/2018-01/nsurtb_2014-2030.pdf

⁹ <https://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/strategicheski-dokumenti/koncepciya-za-turistichesko-rayonirane-na-bulgariya>

¹⁰ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/obyavi-i-sobsheniya/obshtestveno-obsazhdane/obshestveno-obszhdane-2019-godina/strategiya-za-razvitie-na-kulturata-v-obshina-veliko-tarnovo-2020/>

¹¹ Source: provided by Veliko Tarnovo Municipality

¹² <https://veliko-turnovo-next7.eu/novini/>

¹³ <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/List.aspx?lang=bg-BG&categoryId=2&typeConsultation=2&typeCategory=0&docType=1>

¹⁴ <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135845281>



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The sector is one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a negative impact on the overall economic development in Europe and worldwide. The effects of the crisis and the opportunities for recovery of the sector are subject to future assessment, but the crisis has reduced the number of jobs by about 62 million. According to various estimates, the most vulnerable are small businesses (which account for 80% of world tourism) and women, which make up 54% of the tourism workforce.

In comparison, in Europe the effects of the crisis on employment in the sector are more moderate. The economic and social measures adopted at EU level have created conditions for preserving the labour force in the sector, which is also a prerequisite for the post-crisis recovery of this segment of the European economy. By 2019, Europe and Eurasia were the most competitive region in terms of tourist travel. The region has the most favourable environment in the world and is key to the development of European regions due to the targeted and coordinated policy for its development, especially in less developed regions, as a tool for their economic development and a prerequisite for job creation. The opportunities for strategic management and investment in the sector, the availability of a predictable environment and a targeted policy make Europe one of the most strongly developing tourism markets despite its relative maturity - according to data displayed in the Tourism Competitiveness Index, the region has had the biggest improvement since 2017, especially in terms of price competitiveness, air transport infrastructure and ICT readiness.

A key element of the political environment related to the pandemic crisis is political decisions related to the restriction of movement and travel, as well as the partial or complete closure of the borders of countries worldwide. Although such measures have an overall economic impact, they affect the tourism sector the most.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has estimated that, as a result of these restrictions, international tourist arrivals will fall between 58% and 78% in 2020, putting 100 to 120 million direct jobs in tourism at risk. The effects of COVID-19 also have a direct impact on the entire chain related to the sector - airlines, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, food suppliers, farmers, retailers and a wide range of other small and medium-sized businesses. The various effects of the crisis on the global, European and regional economy are examined in greater depth in the analysis of the current state and prospects for the development of tourism in a global and European perspective.



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The prospects for market recovery in general and the sector in particular will be directly linked to the effectiveness of governments regarding crisis management, economic instruments and the communication strategy for post-crisis impact. Part of this recovery is related to restoring the trust of tourists regarding their safety, which requires active management of a country's image and the implementation of effective marketing strategies.

The main perspective for the post-pandemic economic recovery Europe-wide, which directly affects Bulgaria and Romania, is the European Recovery and Resilience Facility and the financial instruments set aside for this purpose. The development of national recovery plans that reflect the main priorities of Bulgaria and Romania related to the recovery of their national economies is also instrumental in overcoming the consequences for the economies and the travel and tourism sector.

Although a number of economic estimates predict an expected growth of 6% in emerging markets and economies in 2021, the recovery is likely to be limited by the resurgence of COVID-19, slow vaccination rates and the reduction (cancellation) of government measures for economic support. Again, according to various estimates, these prospects for emerging economies are likely to be overshadowed by the lasting effects of the pandemic on the erosion of skills resulting from job losses; lowering the quality of education; decline in investment; increased burden of government debt, etc. Among this group of economies, growth is forecast at 4.7% for 2021.

The analysis of the external environment (the macro framework in which the marketing strategy will be implemented) is one of the elements of the general analysis of the current situation in the destination. For its purposes, key factors are identified that have a potential effect on the tourism and culture sphere, in particular cultural tourism. In order to perform an analysis of the macro environment, the PEST technique (political, economic, social and technological factors) is applied. This technique assesses the nature and degree of influence of the individual factors and identifies different groups that pose risks, obstacles and opportunities for the implementation of cultural tourism and the current marketing strategy.

Regarding the Bulgarian economy, tourism is a key sector accounting for 12.8% (USD 6.6 billion) of the country's GDP in 2016. The sector provided a total of 362,900 jobs in the respective year. In 2019, this share decreased to 10.7%, as the crisis reduced it to 4.8%. Jobs also decreased to 341.6 thousand in 2019 and 296.1 thousand in 2020 (-13.3%). For Romania, these shares are



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relatively lower - 6.1% of GDP in 2019, reduced to 2.9% in 2020. However, the loss of jobs is significantly lower - 2.8%, from 575.8 to 559.6 thousand workers.

The main problems related to the labour market in the sector are high youth unemployment, aging population, active migration processes. At the same time, climate change, increased pressure on the environment and other negative factors in both countries have an increasingly strong impact on the state of tourism resources and the development of the tourism industry.

Key factors for the development of the sector in Bulgaria and Romania are the positions of the two countries on the tourism market in the region, in the European Union and globally, as well as the main trends related to the factors of political, economic and social context in which the marketing strategy will be implemented.

2.1.1.1 Political factors

Regarding the analysis of the political environment, a key factor is the membership of Bulgaria and Romania in the EU. The predictable and sustainable European legislation, the access to financial resources for implementing economic policies, as well as the stability of the EU political system have a strong positive impact on the development of the tourism sector in both countries. The main indicators determining the competitiveness of the industry are the safety and security indicators. These indicators have a particular impact on the travel and tourism sector in different countries. In this context, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI), Bulgaria and Romania are in a favourable environment. For 2020, Bulgaria and Romania held respectively the 28th and 22nd place in the world, and in the years from 2008 to 2020 Bulgaria climbed from the 35th place, while Romania retains similar positions over the years.

The index of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) ranks 172 independent countries and territories (99.7% of the world's population) according to an assessment of the level and potential for peace. In its 2020 report, the study shows that the level of the index is deteriorating by an average of 0.34% per country, globally. In 81 countries the index is improving, but in 80 countries deterioration has been measured for the period 2019-2020. The report's data reveal a trend for reduction of conflicts, a decline is observed over the past decade, but also a new wave of tension and uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is seen. These data show the need for the countries, in particular Bulgaria and Romania, to take additional measures to ensure the security of tourists, a communication strategy and a



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significant increase in the funds allocated for safety and security and restoring the trust of tourists.

The main guarantee for overall stability and security is the membership of Bulgaria and Romania in the EU. However, in the period after Bulgaria's accession to the bloc, the government's efforts to improve the business environment have been lagging behind those in comparable economies, as a result of which Bulgaria is losing positions globally.

In the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 survey, Bulgaria ranks 59th and last in the EU in terms of conditions for doing business. Despite improving its result by 0.11 points compared to the previous year, Bulgaria has fallen by 14 positions compared to 2009. Romania, for its part, ranks 52nd, ahead of Hungary, Cyprus, Croatia and Bulgaria among EU countries. For comparison, in 2009, it ranked 47th, which placed it after Bulgaria.

The main advantages of Bulgaria's economic environment are the relatively low taxes and the introduction of the flat tax of 10%. In 2020, a temporary VAT reduction to 9% was adopted for tour operators, travel agents and occasional transport related to tourist services, as well as partially for restaurants. The measure is to be repealed at the end of 2021, as at this point there is no assessment of its effect in overcoming the effects of the crisis. There are still a number of challenges to the tax policy in the field of tourism, concerning the determining of the total price of tourist services which are part of a package trip, and the taxation of the individual components in the structure of a tourism product. The issue of VAT in services related to the sector remains relevant, but there are no serious prospects for its change.

In the prepared "Analysis of the socio-economic development of the country after its accession to the EU" by the Bulgarian government, it is noted that according to the ranking Economic Freedom of the World 2018 (data are for 2016), Bulgaria ranks 46th (19th in the EU) in the degree of economic freedom, ahead of countries such as France, Italy and Belgium. This position of the country is largely due to the low government size (55th place), as well as the good performance in terms of credit regulation (22nd place), freedom to trade internationally (35th place), access to sound money (36th place) and the labour market (55th place in the overall ranking). At the same time, the country's performance with regard to the inviolability of private property, as well as general business regulations remains extremely unsatisfactory (93rd place). The low results on these components presuppose that the business sector does not rely on the police to enforce the laws and to ensure security and order, which inevitably affects decisions for potential investment in the country.



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For the same period, Romania has been ranked 20th in terms of economic freedom, mainly due to high performance in key market regulations (14th in the world) and freedom to trade internationally (9th place). It also has relatively high results in the components general regulations (34th place), labour market regulations (41st place), as well as the legal system and property protection (43rd place). The access to sound financial resources is assessed relatively lower, the country is in 52nd place. The size of the government continues to be relatively problematic (67th place), but the lowest result is in the area of business regulations. Reforming the business environment and downsizing the government is a major challenge to Romania's economic development.

In both countries, one of the main problems facing the competitiveness of the economy continues to be related to public institutions and their functioning. In the study of the World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018, Bulgaria and Romania share as their most problematic factors the inefficiency of public institutions, corruption and the amount of taxes, albeit to varying degrees. The lack of trust in public institutions and the perceived lack of independence of the judiciary undermine the international competitiveness of the economy, as they compromise market exchange and large-scale long-term investment commitments by investors, as this conclusion is also relevant to the tourism sector. The reinforcement of such an image - of the most inefficient and corrupt governments within the EU - poses serious challenges to building an attractive reputation of the two countries as destinations for investment, travel and tourism.

At the same time, Bulgaria's and Romania's membership in the EU links the development of the sector in both countries to the policies pursued at European level for establishing Europe as a leading tourist destination. Such commitment provides access to financial and expert resources and is a prerequisite for improved cooperation between countries and economic development. The common visa policy, as well as visa regime facilitation within the EU and vis-à-vis third countries, also has a positive political impact on the development of the travel and tourism sector. The realization of the potential of Bulgaria's tourist regions is directly dependent on the compliance of the conducted tourism policy with that in the wider European context - "stimulating the competitiveness of the sector; promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism; consolidating the European tourist image and profile; and optimizing the potential of EU policies and financial instruments for tourism development."



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Bulgaria's and Romania's membership in various international tourism organizations also has a strong positive effect on the development of national policies in the field of tourism. Such membership links national policies to major global development processes, ensures better positioning in the global tourism market and boosts the development of the sector.

To ensure the sustainable development of the tourism sector, Bulgaria and Romania need to address the challenges of today's environment and competition, marketing, existing governance deficits and the legal framework. A number of assessments and analyses in various strategic documents note the need to increase the capacity of the Ministry of Tourism, but also of the organizations for management of tourism regions as a factor for the regional development of tourism. The problem of shortage of qualified personnel for the entire economy as well as for the tourist sector is also pointed out. Coordination between private and public institutions is needed in the construction and maintenance of the tourist, technical and information infrastructure.

2.1.1.2 Economic factors

The main factors influencing the development of tourism on a global scale are the degree of economic growth and the uniformity of the economic development of the countries. For the period 2013-2017, Bulgaria's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was growing faster than the EU average - 50% of the EU average in 2017. A serious problem is the interregional differences at NUTS 2 level. The gross domestic product (GDP) indicator fluctuates widely. For 2013, the difference is more than 40% - from 7.07% for the North-West region to 47.27% for the South-West region. In general, at the national level, but also at NUTS2 level, there are one or more districts that are significantly ahead of the others in the same regions at level 2¹⁵.

According to the GDP per capita indicator, the differences between the regions, as well as the internal differences in them are also clearly observed. For 2010, the differences range from BGN 6,090 to BGN 17,013, compared to the national average of BGN 9,924 per capita. In 2013 perceived as a base year, this proportion is maintained, although for the entire surveyed period (2010-2017), the absolute value of the indicator in all Level 2 regions increases. Nevertheless,

¹⁵ Ibid.



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the Bulgarian regions, with the exception of the South-West region remain in the last places in the EU regarding this indicator.

According to the analysis of the socio-economic development of Bulgaria, in terms of the overall economic development, the direct contribution of Bulgarian tourism to the country's economy in 2017 was BGN 3.1 billion - 3.1% of the GDP. The total contribution of tourism covered 11.5% of GDP (BGN 11.4 billion). In the same year, the sector maintained 90,000 jobs - 2.9% of national employment. The total contribution of the sector was expressed in 10.7% of employment, or 335.5 thousand jobs. Investments in the sector amounted to BGN 1.45 billion - 7.4% of total investments in 2017. The forecast for upward development of all commented aspects in the next 10 years is justified, excluding the effects of the pandemic crisis. These data are discussed in more detail later in this analysis.

Regarding the development trends of tourism, the main factors are the degree of economic growth and the uniformity of the economic development of the countries. According to the forecasts of the International Monetary Fund, the average economic growth for the next 6 years in the countries with developed economies will fluctuate from 0.8% to 2.1%. This forecast is between 4.1% and 4.4% for emerging economies. As part of the EU, Bulgaria and Romania are directly linked to the functioning of the single market. According to the EC, economic growth in the EU declined by 6% in 2020, with inflation of 0.7%. However, the forecast is for a positive growth in 2021 of 4.8% and 4.5% in 2022. According to the same data, the growth for Bulgaria is 4.6 and 4.1%, respectively, and for Romania - 7.4 and 4.9%. Close market interconnection, the recovery and resilience facility and enhanced cooperation are prerequisites for a sustainable economic growth and its positive impact on the tourism sector.

The level of financial stability of Bulgaria's and Romania's economies have a strong influence on the development of tourism and the tourism industry and have a direct bearing on the welfare of the population, income levels and the propensity to consume tourism products and services. The availability of financial resources and access to credit, as well as the stability of the banking sector, are assessed significantly higher in The Global Competitiveness Index than those in Romania. The results are significantly higher than the overall score for the country, while for Romania they are similar to the overall score.



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2.1.1.3. Environmental factors

All international reports and assessments identify the factors related to climate change, as well as to the depletion, sustainable management and conservation of natural resources as one of the main challenges facing the tourism industry.

The effects of global warming are directly related to significant climate change, as indicated in the analyses of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹⁶. The main effects on a global scale are related to rising sea levels, rising average temperatures, heat waves and more frequent fires in Central and Southeastern Europe. This has a direct bearing on a number of sectors of the economy (in particular agriculture, forestry, energy and tourism) globally and regionally, as well as on overcoming damage from various natural disasters.

Despite the relatively weak impact of climate change on Bulgaria and Romania, the issues of sustainable management of environmental resources, control on harmful emissions are key to the development of the Bulgarian and Romanian economies, especially in the context of the European Green Deal and the recovery and resilience plans. Political decisions will directly affect the travel and tourism sector in both countries.

2.1.1.4 Socio-cultural factors

Socio-cultural factors have a significant impact on the behaviour of tourists and the overall consumption of tourism products. Demographic changes - number and structure of the population, increase in income, changes in lifestyle - mobility, urbanization, migration, introduction of modern technologies, changes in the educational, healthcare and cultural system are among the main factors influencing the development of the sector. In this sense, tourism products and their marketing should take into account the changing conditions with regard to the mentioned factors. There is a serious resource for the development of alternative forms of tourism, in view of the aging of the European population, which requires related development of the healthcare system. Involvement in common European cultural initiatives in view of the educational structure of the EU also presupposes a huge potential for the establishment of Bulgaria and Romania as tourist destinations not only in the EU but also worldwide.

¹⁶ <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/download/>



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At the same time, however, a number of demographic trends have a strong negative impact on the sector's competitiveness and its potential for sustainable development. Population aging, low educational (professional) qualification of the workforce, high unemployment, high crime rate and fluctuating political stability in the region are some of the negative factors affecting the travel and tourism sector.

These demographic trends are reflected in the updated National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria 2014-2030 and in the tourism development strategy of Romania. The changes are mainly related to the motivation and preferences of tourists. Trips to nearby destinations, reduced overnight stays, but more frequent trips, demand for higher quality tourist products are some of the noted changes¹⁷. The advent of modern technology also presupposes changes in the expectations and behaviour of tourists. The image of the "online" tourists has emerged as that of "impatient, curious, communicative tourists with a strong personality, active users of information on the Internet"¹⁸. Such changes are directly related to increasing the number of tourist offers, the creation of specialized tourist products that are directly aimed at individual preferences of customers.

2.1.1.5 Technological factors

Technological factors have a direct impact on social and economic processes. The intensive development of the information society and the digital economy affects the development of the tourism industry and travel, as well as the motivation of the choice and the manner of spending one's leisure time. The main factors relevant to the sector are scientific discoveries and innovations, the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), as well as the development of transport.

The Covid-19 crisis has accelerated the process of developing, implementing and expanding new technologies in various tourism products and services. However, the pace of ICT development in both regional economies lags significantly behind the EU average.

¹⁷ National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria 2014-2030
https://www.tourism.government.bg/sites/tourism.government.bg/files/documents/2018-01/nsurtb_2014-2030.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.





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The development of transport infrastructure is still significantly lagging behind the more developed economies in the EU. Targeted investments in Internet communications and product development in the digital environment, as well as the development of a modern transport network is key to establishing the region as an attractive tourist destination.

Factors of regulatory, legal and strategic nature

Policies in the travel and tourism sector is currently governed by dozens of international pacts, conventions and declarations. This body of regulatory documents has a direct and indirect impact on the conditions for the development of the sector, the main trends and prospects for growth.

At the same time, as part of the economies of the two countries with a relatively high share in them, tourism falls within the scope of many other legislative acts and strategic documents. All relevant political, regulatory and strategic documents are described in detail at the beginning of the Situation Analysis.

As a positive feature, the synchronization of the Bulgarian and Romanian legislation with the EU legislation can be pointed out again.

2.1.2 Analysis of the internal environment

2.1.2.1 Tourist-geographic location of the product

In Bulgaria and Romania, there are four clearly observed seasons and a relatively milder climate than that of Central, Eastern and Northern Europe, which is a good prerequisite for the development of the tourism product as a year-round destination.

The territorial scope of the route is located in the relatively densely populated but less urbanized parts of Europe. This feature determines the lower mobility of the population in the region for recreation and tourism purposes as well as a more limited scale of tourist migrations compared to those in Western, Southern and Central Europe.

Demographic developments in this cross-border region show a trend towards depopulation and aging of the population, especially in rural areas, where the natural population increase is negative, there is a low birth rate and a high mortality rate. This situation is combined with



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the migration of skilled labour to urban centres outside the cross-border region and a pronounced trend towards long-term migration (especially in the Bulgarian part)¹⁹.

The joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" (extended) is 743 km long, as the starting and ending point is Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria), and the intermediate points along the route are: Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pleven, Knezha, Belogradchik, Vidin in Bulgaria and Calafat and Craiova in Romania.

The route and its road infrastructure cross the following districts in Bulgaria and counties in the territory of Romania:

- Districts of Bulgaria: Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven (falling at NUTS2 level, Northwestern planning region) and Veliko Tarnovo (NUTS2 level, North Central planning region).
- Counties in Romania: Dolj, Olt (falling at NUTS2 level, Southwest Oltenia region) and Teleorman (level NUTS2 South Muntenia region).

The border points connecting the two parts of the route, on both sides of the border, are defined so as to make the most of the transport connections between the two countries. These border points are the following, from west to east: Calafat (Dolj) - Vidin and Turnu Magurele (Teleorman) - Nikopol.

¹⁹ Source: Common strategy for sustainable territorial development of Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region





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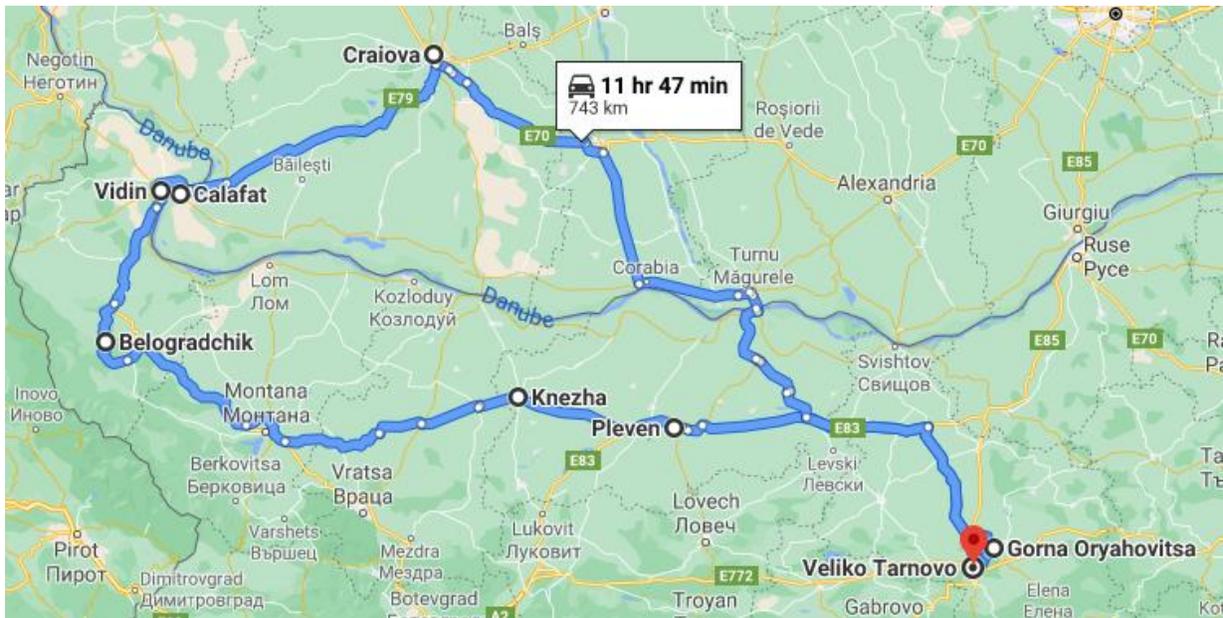


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Map 1 of Extended joint integrated tourist route “Art and Culture”²⁰



The cross-border region is under the influence of four important cities: the capital of Romania - Bucharest, the capital of Bulgaria - Sofia, the capital of Serbia - Belgrade, and Istanbul - the most important commercial centre of Turkey.

An important feature of the region are the seven pairs of port cities: Calafat - Vidin, Beckett - Oryahovo, Turnu Magurele - Nikopol, Zimnicea - Svishtov, Giurgiu - Ruse, Oltenița - Tutrakan, Calarasi - Silistra.

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region is accessible via the navigable Danube River, part of the 7th Pan-European Transport Corridor. It is crossed by two TEN-T corridors connecting Central and Northern Europe with the south-eastern part of the continent and the Middle East.

The main Danube ports on the Romanian-Bulgarian border are: Calafat, Turnu Magurele, Giurgiu, Oltenița, Calarasi in Romania, and Vidin, Lom, Oryahovo, Svishtov, Ruse, Silistra in

²⁰ Source: Report 4 developed by Jupiter TS EOOD, under Contract № 03-05-01/05.03.2020, as part of the ROBG-576 project “Art and Culture - Common Cross-Border Assets in Support of Sustainable Tourism Development”



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Bulgaria. These are points that give tourists access to the developed route, also allowing one-day visits to Bucharest, Ruse, Svishtov, Veliko Tarnovo.

The region is served by 3 international airports in Romania: Constanța (receiving flights from Paris, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Bergamo, Pisa in summer), Craiova (flights from London, Cologne/Bonn, Bergamo) and Bucharest-Otopeni located closest to the border. In Bulgaria, the nearest airports are in Sofia and Varna. The density of the road and rail network in both countries is well below the European average of 93 km/100 sq. km, placing them in the last two places among the networks in the European Union. The analysis of the quality of road and railway infrastructure and transport services in both countries shows that they are further back in the European ranking, although land transport has the largest share in both Romania and Bulgaria.

The starting point of the developed route is the town of Veliko Tarnovo, which is well served by national road, railway, intercity bus networks and four international airports. It is also well connected via long-distance hiking trails, cycling routes and rivers. The town's central location in Bulgaria provides a relatively easy access from all parts of Bulgaria and Romania. The town is connected to Europe through the EU's international transport corridors, as it is part of the main and comprehensive trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) in terms of road and rail connections. Internationally, Veliko Tarnovo enjoys direct road and rail connections to Turkey and to the European continent via Romania to the north (two river crossings), via Serbia to the west (and farther to Croatia, Austria, etc.) and via Greece to the south, with further ferry connections to Italy, France and others.

The national road network connects Veliko Tarnovo with all major cities in the country, including Varna, Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse and Burgas. The town area is served by two national highways designated as part of the Trans-European Road Network (TERN).

International road connections are built with Greece to the south (two crossings), Turkey to the east (directly to Istanbul) and from the rest of Europe via three main routes: via Serbia by highway connecting it directly with Austria, Hungary and Italy, via Romania through the Danube bridge at Vidin-Calafat, an international bridge at Ruse-Giurgiu and ferry connections at Nikopol and Oryahovo.

Railway stations: The local railway stations - Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa - provide access to the Bulgarian national railway network and thus direct railway services to all parts of



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the country, including direct international services to Istanbul, Bucharest and Athens, with direct connections throughout the continent, including, inter alia, Vienna, Budapest and Kiev.

Water (river) transport: The main Danube ports on the Romanian-Bulgarian border are: Calafat, Turnu Magurele, Giurgiu, Oltenita, Calarasi in Romania, and Vidin, Lom, Oryahovo, Svishtov, Ruse, Silistra in Bulgaria. They are important for both freight transport and tourists.

An advantage for the tourist sites of the route is the presence of a bridge or ferry to cross the Danube. There are functioning ferry connections at: Lom - Rastu; Oryahovo - Beckett; Nikopol/Somovit - Turnu Magurele.

Air: International air travel to Veliko Tarnovo can be operated through five international airports located in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Craiova and Bucharest. Each of these airports is about a three-hour drive away, which is comparable to many door-to-door trips in major cities and regions across Europe. These airports provide adequate access for both weekend trips and longer stays.

Cycling: In 2009, the Danube Cycling Initiative was completed, providing a specific cycling route (EV6) from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, running along the entire length of the Danube in Bulgaria/Romania. The Danube cycle route passes through the northern part of Veliko Tarnovo district and covers the districts of Vidin, Vratsa and Montana. The EV6 route has been on the map of Romania for more than 20 years. Unfortunately, this route has no physical infrastructure (in terms of signalling, marking, connections, accommodation options).

Hiking: There is a network of long-distance trails throughout Bulgaria, including through and around the developed joint tourist route, which in turn are connected to European long-distance trails (eg. the Stara Planina trail from Sofia to the Black Sea passes through Vratsa and Veliko Tarnovo, as well as the Danube pedestrian route, parallel to the above-mentioned cycling route). They have been restored in recent years with new signs, new and improved maps and accommodation for tourists. Many of them are being further improved.

The tourist-geographical location in a narrow sense is defined as the spatial relationship between the places of formation of the tourist demand and the places of its satisfaction²¹. This

²¹ Current state and trends in the supply and demand of accommodation in the Northwestern region of Bulgaria, V. Marinov and M. Juleva, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia, 2020





implies assessing the remoteness of the developed route from major centres generating tourist demand, such as the larger cities in Bulgaria and Romania.

Table 1 Accessibility of the towns included in the route from larger cities in Bulgaria and Romania (distance and travel time by car)²²

	Veliko Tarnovo	Vidin	Montana	Vratsa	Pleven	Gorna Oryahovitsa	Nikopol	Knezha	Belogradchik	Calafat	Craiova	T.Magurele
Sofia	219 km	193 km	110 km	111 km	160 km	228 km	217 km	150 km	169 km	214 km	335 km	223 km
	2.40 hr	3.13 hr	1.59 hr	1.13 hr	2.08 hr	2.57 hr	2.46 hr	2 hr	2.50 hr	3.29 hr	4.47 hr	3.29 hr
Burgas	216 km	600 km	445 km	477 km	333 km	223 km	339 km	377 km	583 km	618 km	466 km	345 km
	2.29 hr	6.20 hr	5.39 hr	4.33 hr	4.01 hr	2.28 hr	4.12 hr	4.31 hr	6.3 hr	6.47 hr	6.37 hr	4.56 hr
Varna	222 km	508 km	423 km	403 km	299 km	214 km	305 km	343 km	491 km	493 km	410 km	311 km
	2.44 hr	6.44 km	5.33 hr	5.10 hr	3.43 hr	2.38 hr	3.55 hr	4.15 hr	6.26 hr	5.34 km.	5.34 hr	4.40 hr
Ruse	107 km	358 km	273 km	253 km	149 km	101 km	135 km	193 km	341 km	307 km	224 km	142 km
	1.30 hr	4.52 hr	3.41 hr	3.15 hr	1.55 hr	1.25 hr	2.04 km	2.25 km	4.33 hr	4.21 hr	3.20 hr	2.53 hr
Bucharest	183 km	327 km	348 km	328 km	224 km	176 km	144 km	268 km	381 km	317 km	233 km	136 km
	3.03 hr	4.53 hr	5.20 hr	4.59 hr	3.32 hr	3.03 hr	3.14 hr	4.01 hr	5.39 hr	4.37 hr	3.31 hr	2.25 hr
Timișoara	704 km	336 km	425 km	461 km	549 km	698 km	475 km	502 km	390 km	326 km	338 km	470 km
	9.11 hr	5.12 hr	6.35 hr	6.59 hr	8.23 hr	9.03 hr	7.34 hr	7.37 hr	6.01 hr	5.00 hr	5.06 hr	6.58 hr
Brașov	373 km	357 km	446 km	464 km	365 km	365 km	290 km	409 km	411 km	347 km	261 km	282 km

²² Source: <https://www.google.bg/maps>



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	Veliko Tarnovo	Vidin	Montana	Vratsa	Pleven	Gorna Oryahovitsa	Nikopol	Knezha	Belogradchik	Calafat	Craiova	T.Magurele
	5.56 hr	5.56 hr	7.17 hr	7.43 hr	5.48 hr	5.35 hr	5.35 hr	7.02 hr	6.45 hr	5.41 hr	4.35 hr	4.48 hr
Ploiești	243 km	352 km	409 km	389 km	285 km	237 km	210 km	329 km	406 km	342 km	256 km	196 km
	4.08 hr	4.52 hr	6.18 hr	5.56 hr	4.32 hr	4.03 hr	3.48 hr	5.05 hr	5.46 hr	4.41 hr	3.36 hr	3.10 hr

The table shows the distance between the main points along the route and the major cities in the two countries, as well as the time it takes to travel by car.

Below is a visualization of the possibility to select individual points of the route as a starting point of the route by attracting tourists from major cities in both countries. The criterion for determining the city from which it is possible to attract tourists is the time for travelling by car of up to 3 hours, criteria for choosing a destination by tourists for trips longer than 7 days.

- ✓ Veliko Tarnovo: Ruse, Bucharest, Sofia, Burgas and Varna
- ✓ Vidin: Sofia
- ✓ Montana: Sofia
- ✓ Vratsa: Sofia
- ✓ Pleven: Ruse, Bucharest, and Sofia
- ✓ Gorna Oryahovitsa: Ruse, Bucharest, Sofia, Burgas
- ✓ Nikopol: Ruse
- ✓ Knezha: Sofia and Ruse
- ✓ Belogradchik: Sofia
- ✓ Turnu Magurele: Bucharest and Ruse

Calafat: the farthest point from the big cities in both countries, the point with the lowest potential to attract tourists from the big cities, as a starting point of the route.



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Craiova: one of the most remote points from the major cities, but a point with an international airport.

From the presented data it can be concluded that the roads of the national road network in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region are insufficiently developed.

2.1.2.2 Tourist regions

In 2015, Bulgaria adopted a Concept for dividing the country into tourist regions. Its goal is to support the formation of regional tourism products and the implementation of regional marketing and advertising. The document distinguishes 9 tourist regions:

Danube Region, comprising 67 municipalities

Stara Planina Region (32 municipalities)

Sofia Region (23 municipalities)

Trakia Region (35 municipalities)

Rose Valley Region (19 municipalities)

Rila-Pirin Region (23 municipalities)

Rhodopes Region (27 municipalities)

Varna Black Sea Coast Region (25 municipalities)

Burgas Black Sea Coast Region (13 municipalities)

Each region has a certain tourist specialization, divided into basic and extended specialization, as for the Danube and Stara Planina regions (through whose territory the joint integrated route passes), the specialization is:



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Table 2 Tourist regions with a specific tourist orientation Bulgaria

Stara Planina region	Basic specialization	Advanced specialization
	Mountain and eco tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mountain hiking and recreational tourism 2. Adventure and eco tourism 3. Cultural-historical, festival and creative 4. Rural tourism 5. Religious and pilgrimage tourism 6. Mountain ski tourism
Danube region	Basic specialization	Advanced specialization
	Cultural and cruise tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultural and historical tourism 2. River cruise tourism 3. Adventure and eco tourism 4. Urban leisure and shopping tourism 5. Wine and culinary tourism 6. Religious and pilgrimage tourism

The strategic goal of the target route fully corresponds to the strategic guidelines for tourism development presented in the concept.

The Stara Planina Region covers the entire Stara Planina Mountain, including parts of 10 administrative districts - Montana, Vratsa, Lovech, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Targovishte, Sliven, Shumen, Burgas. To the north it borders the Danube tourist region, to the south - Sofia and Rose Valley regions, to the east - Serbia, and to the west the two Black Sea Coast regions - Varna and Burgas.



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In the extended joint integrated tourist route are included sites on territories of the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa from the Stara Planina tourist region.

The Danube region is the largest tourist destination in the country in terms of territory, sites on the territories of the municipalities of the regions - Vidin, Belogradchik, Knezha and Pleven, are included in the joint integrated thematic route.

The Concept for defining the tourist regions of Bulgaria stipulates that each tourist region should have a well-defined centre, which is selected on the basis of a number of criteria:

- ✓ central geographic location and convenient transport accessibility within the region;
- ✓ possibility for administrative interaction (due to which mainly district cities are proposed as regional centres);
- ✓ Sufficiently high level of actual tourism development (the developed tourist centre takes a leading role in the management of the whole region).

The town of Veliko Tarnovo has been declared a management point for the Stara Planina region, so the developed route could benefit from the indirect marketing effects in the future.

Romania

In 2006, Romania adopted a Master Plan for Tourism Development in Romania (2007-2026), which aims to identify weaknesses in the Romanian tourism industry and provide strategic guidance on how it can be restructured, secured and regenerated in order to compete effectively in the world market. This plan is a common policy that includes various strategies described so as to optimize the sector's contribution to the national economy.

The Master Plan outlines 6 areas with potential for tourism development, which also do not cover the entire territory of the country. These areas are identified as priority areas for tourism development based on available tourist resources and attractions, analysis of accessibility and condition of infrastructure. They are called "clusters", but have no delineated boundaries and it is not clear whether they are in line with the country's administrative division. Leading types of tourism are listed for each of them:

1. Bucharest - cultural tourism, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) and entertainment;
2. Transylvania - cultural, natural, ecotourism, health, ski and adventure tourism;



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3. Black Sea Coast - seaside recreation, cultural and health tourism, sea cruises;
4. Bukovina - cultural tourism, ecotourism, nature knowledge, wellness, skiing and adventure tourism;
5. Maramureş - cultural, natural, ecotourism, skiing and adventure tourism;
6. The Danube Delta - nature, ecotourism, river cruises and entertainment.

The document emphasizes that each cluster has a wide range of opportunities for tourism, and within the various types of tourism a variety of thematic programmes and routes can be offered.

In 2018, in the Statistical Reports²³ of Romania's National Statistical Institute on the state of tourism, the list of tourist regions is expanded as follows:

- ✓ Bucharest - capital of Romania - the largest political, industrial, administrative, cultural, scientific and tourist centre of the country;
- ✓ The Carpathians - due to its width, easy access, versatile and beautiful mountain landscapes, rich mineral springs and many opportunities for winter sports, it is the largest and most complex tourist area in the country;
- ✓ Romania's Black Sea coast - it is 245 km long, with the Danube delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoe to the north, while to the south, about 70 km, is the coast itself;
- ✓ Danube Delta - located in the northern part of the Romanian coastline, 122 km from Constanta. This is a very large area of water lilies, carnivorous and amphibian plants, poplar forests and weeping willows;
- ✓ Northern Moldavia, Bukovina or the "Mountains of Moldavia" - known internationally for its monasteries and churches in Voroneţ, Moldovita, Suceviţa, Humor, Arbore, Dragomirna, Putna, etc;
- ✓ Maramureş - Oaş - this area is one of the most original historical and ethnographic regions of the country;
- ✓ Oltenia - a very important tourist area located between the Southern Carpathians and the Danube;

²³ <https://insse.ro/cms/en/content/romanian-tourism-statistical-abstract>



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✓ Transylvania - known as such since the Roman conquest, it is a geographical region of Romania located inside the Carpathian Arch;

✓ Central Moldavia - this is the Romanian historical region located east of the Eastern Carpathians;

✓ Danube - since ancient times it has been a communication channel between Central Europe and the Balkan Peninsula.

✓ Banat - this ancient region of human habitation and a region of Romanian culture is located in the southeastern part of Romania between the Danube, the Mureş River and the Southern Carpathians.

The strategic idea of the integrated tourism product, including a joint tourist route "Art and Culture", fully complies with the conceptual guidelines for tourism development in both countries.

2.1.2.3 Tourist resources

This section presents the tourist resources in the Bulgaria - Romania cross-border region and, in particular, in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pleven, Knezha, Belogradchik and Vidin in Bulgaria and Dolj County in Romania, in terms of:

- ❖ Cultural-historical resources
- ❖ Cultural resources
- ❖ Parks and gardens in an urban environment
- ❖ Natural tourism resources
- ❖ Festivals and events
- ❖ Tourist routes

The prepared analysis is developed from the point of view of enrichment of the product palette of the integrated tourism product, including joint integrated thematic routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended), developed during the implementation of Contract No. 03-05-01/05.03.2020 with subject "Development of a joint integrated thematic route "Art and



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Culture". The target region in question covers three districts in Bulgaria - Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven and Vidin, and one county in Romania - Dolj.

The development of cultural tourism in recent decades has been most strongly affected by the processes of globalization and technological progress in the field of logistics and information technology. As a result, this leads to qualitative and quantitative changes that alter the nature of this form of tourism activities. In the context of a globalized society in the 21st century, concepts such as "near" and "distant", "foreign" and "unknown" take on a blurred meaning and adopt new forms of content such as "authentic", "specific", "unique", which correspond more fully to the new reality. The informational and logistical accessibility of any point and place in the world changes the overall worldview and perception of travellers and they, in turn, seek new forms and manifestations of their tourist experience. This relatively new need in the demand is answered via an increasing degree of specialization and diversification of the tourist supply.

During the last decade, an intensive regional policy has been pursued at the national and European level, aimed at promoting the cultural and historical heritage of the countries from the Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border region as a common, shared resource, the carrier of a significant pan-European value and proof of dramatic historical past and development of the region.

The development of tourism is traditionally associated with the development of culture.

The tangible (e.g. historic buildings, monuments, churches) and the intangible cultural heritage (e.g. traditions) of a country can attract a wide range of visitors. The unique cultural characteristics of a region serve as a basis for the formation of the offer in the field of culture and are necessary for the local community, but at the same time they contribute to increasing its tourist competitiveness.

The Bulgaria-Romania cross-border region is rich in cultural and historical heritage from all eras: Paleolithic and Neolithic artifacts, archaeological, architectural, ethnographic and religious sites, monuments of totalitarian and contemporary art.

Cultural tourism creates a prerequisite for linking it with other types of tourism. The region in which the integrated thematic tourist route has been developed has well-established forms of nature tourism, wine tourism, pilgrimage and religious tourism, cycling tourism, event tourism, adventure tourism, etc.



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VELIKO TARNOVO MUNICIPALITY²⁴

The Extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" developed by the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo includes the following sites:

- ❖ Art Gallery "Boris Denev";
- ❖ Multimedia Visitor Centre "Tsarevgrad Tarnov";
- ❖ Samovodska Charshia;
- ❖ Music and Drama Theatre "Konstantin Kisimov".

A) Cultural-historical resources

In 1955, the town of Veliko Tarnovo was declared an architectural and museum reserve. The state of the cultural and historical heritage of its Old Town today is the result of over 100 years of efforts to save and preserve it.

The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) gives grounds for believing that the values of the Old Town have the necessary "exceptional universal value" and, if not entirely, certain sites or areas of its territory, together with the natural framework, may be nominated and included in the World Heritage List.

The region has a rich cultural and historical heritage comprised of historical and cultural landmarks and artifacts, fortresses, churches, monasteries.

The indicative list of the Republic of Bulgaria for UNESCO World Monuments includes **the ancient Roman town of Nicopolis ad Istrum**²⁵ located near the village of Nikyup, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality.

Tsarevets Fortress, Veliko Tarnovo is located on the hill of the same name in the old part of Veliko Tarnovo and has been turned into an architectural museum reserve. Visitors can see there the reconstructed royal palace with its throne room, the royal church and royal rooms. Above the palace, at the very top of the hill, is the restored Patriarchal Church. It impresses with its scale and unique architecture, as its iconography depicts the rise and fall of the Second

²⁴ Source: Plan for integrated development of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality 2021 -2027 <https://veliko-turnovo-next7.eu/> and Strategy for cultural development in Veliko Tarnovo Municipality <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/media/filer/2020/06/01/strategia-kultura-vt.pdf>

²⁵ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/bg>



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Bulgarian Kingdom. On the territory of the museum reserve visitors can also see Baldwin's Tower, which is restored in the likeness of a preserved mediaeval tower from the Cherven Fortress located near Ruse. The biggest attraction of Tsarevets is the Sound and Light audiovisual show. Using a background of music, countless colourful lights, laser beams and church bells, the glorious and tragic history of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom is told.

The infrastructure of the museum activity is presented by the **Regional Historical Museum** which unites many separate museums (separate expositions) and museum sites. Veliko Tarnovo's Regional History Museum has about 134,000 museum units. The Tsarevets Architectural and Museum Complex is of a representative character.

The Trapezitsa architectural museum reserve is the fortress district of the medieval capital Tarnograd, located northwest of Tsarevets. It is surrounded on three sides by the smooth meanders of the Etar River (Yantra). Naturally protected by the high rock crown, Trapezitsa Hill had strong fortress walls that followed its curves. It covers an area of about 8 ha.

The Archaeology Museum also has a long tradition in museum work and stores a large number of archaeological monuments illustrating the millennial history and culture of the Veliko Tarnovo region. In addition to it, in Veliko Tarnovo there is a subsidiary of the National Archaeological Institute with a museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, performing research activities.

The Archaeology Museum is located west of Saedinenie Square in Veliko Tarnovo. The exhibited archaeological monuments illustrate the millennial history and culture of the Veliko Tarnovo region, with an emphasis on the period when the town was the capital of the mediaeval Bulgarian state.

The Museum of the Revival and Constituent Assembly, Veliko Tarnovo, is housed in the building of the former Turkish konak built in 1872 by the great Revival period master builder Kolyu Ficheto. It is a cruciform building with an arched entrance from the north. It houses the exhibition "National Revival Period and Constituent Assembly". **The Contemporary History Museum** is located next to the Prison Museum in Veliko Tarnovo. One of its halls showcases the temporary exhibition "Veliko Tarnovo and the Bulgarian statehood". The leading goal of the exhibition is to present the town as a symbol of the continuity of the Bulgarian statehood in the first decades after the Liberation.



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The Prison Museum in Veliko Tarnovo is located south of the Konak built in 1872 by master builder Kolyu Ficheto. The construction of the prison began around the mid-19th century. In 1854 it was already used for its intended purpose. The building is built entirely of stone, with a wall thickness of 0.70-0.90 m. The building has one ground floor and two upper floors.

The Sarafkina House Museum, Veliko Tarnovo, is located on Gurko Street in the historical National Revival period part of Veliko Tarnovo. It was built in 1861. It was originally intended for the home and workplace of Dimo Sarafina. It became better known by the name of his wife Anastasia, as the house of Atastasia Sarafkata or Sarafkina house. In 1965 it was declared a cultural monument of national importance. Since 1981 it has been a museum site where ethnographic exhibitions are presented.

The Petko Rachev Slaveykov House Museum of the famous Revival Period writer born in Veliko Tarnovo in 1827. He was one of the most prominent figures in the struggle for an independent Bulgarian church. He also took part in the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation of 1877-1878. The house was restored in 1971.

The Konstantsalieva House Museum is one of the most remarkable and representative monuments of residential architecture in the village of Arbanassi near Veliko Tarnovo. Its original construction dates back to the late 17th century. In the following centuries, the residential building underwent several renovations, which led to its current appearance.

The Philip Totyu House Museum is located in the Gartzite neighborhood near the village of Voneshta Voda. It is situated 40 km south of Veliko Tarnovo. The legendary Bulgarian voivode Philip Totyu was born here on April 10, 1830. He formed a small rebel detachment in 1854, carrying out punitive operations against the Ottoman authorities.

The Nicopolis ad Istrum Archaeological Reserve is located 20 km north of Veliko Tarnovo. Situated on a low plateau on the left bank of the Rositsa River, the ancient city was founded by the Roman emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus (98-117) to commemorate his victory over the Dacians in 106.

The Historical Museum in the town of Kilifarevo is located 11 km south of Veliko Tarnovo. The exposition of the museum is showcased in a building erected in the first half of the 19th century.

The Saralieva House is a site of a general historical character.



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The **Osenarska River Ethnographic Complex, Veliko Tarnovo**, is located in the valley of the Osenarska river near the Gartzite neighbourhood close to the village of Voneshta Voda. It is 40 km south of Veliko Tarnovo. In the complex visitors can see a residential building as well as an operating tepavitsa (fulling mill) and a watermill typical for this part of the Stara Planina Mountain (Balkan Range).

The museum sites within the system of Veliko Tarnovo's Regional History Museum are as follows:

Tsarevets Architectural and Museum Reserve - For more than two centuries Tarnovgrad was the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (late 12th - 14th century). It was the centre where the most important political, religious, administrative and cultural issues in the life of the mediaeval Bulgarian state were resolved.

The Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs, Veliko Tarnovo, was built and painted at the will of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II, in honour of his great victory over the Epirus ruler Theodore Komnenos in 1230. In the mid-13th century the royal monastery of the Great Laurel was established near the church. This emblematic church in Tarnovo is used as venue for a number of important events.

The churches to Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Ivan Rilski. The **Sts. Peter and Paul church, Veliko Tarnovo**, is located at the northern foot of Tsarevets Hill. Its erection is connected with the act of transferring the relics of St. John Polivotsky to the capital Tarnovgrad by Tsar Kaloyan in 1204.

The church of St. Ivan Rilski (Saint John of Rila) in Veliko Tarnovo is part of the monastery complex at the Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

Shishmanova Banya (Shishman's baths) in Veliko Tarnovo is one of the most authentic cultural monuments from the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. It is located at the northern foot of the Tsarevets fortress, between the churches of the Assumption of the Theotokos and the church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, on the left bank of the Yantra River, next to the Vladishki (Bishop's) Bridge. It is one of the few well-preserved mediaeval baths in Bulgaria.

The Saint Demetrius Church in Veliko Tarnovo is located at the eastern foot of the Trapezitsa fortress. Historical annals connect it with the declaring of the uprising of the brothers Asen and Petar, which led to the restoration of the Bulgarian state in 1186. The Church of St. George is located at the eastern foot of the Trapezitsa fortress. It is a massive stone building measuring



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10.40 x 5.12 m. In the form that has survived to this day, the church was built in the early 17th century. In its narthex there are preserved remains of two layers of painting.

The Church of the Nativity of Christ in the village of Arbanassi was built in the second half of the 16th century. Its iconography was completed in 1597. Within these nearly nine decades, a unique mural ensemble emerged, which equals no other in the Bulgarian lands.

The Church to the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the village of Arbanassi is a massive stone building elongated along the East-West axis covered with a gabled roof. In the form that has survived to the present day, the church was built in the last third of the 17th century. Before that there was an earlier cult building on the same place, whose construction took place in the late 16th - early 17th century.

The Saint Demetrius Church in the village of Arbanassi was built in 1621, on the basis of an older building from the middle of the 16th century, which makes it the earliest cult monument erected in Arbanassi. Iconography from this period illustrating the life cycle of St. George has been preserved.

The Saint George Church in Arbanassi is located in the southwestern part of the village. It is a massive stone building measuring 21x10.05 m, covered with a gabled roof. In this form the church was built at the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century - between 1700 and 1709. The iconographic cycles presented include the Great Feasts, the Passions of Christ and the post-Easter cycle.

The church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Veliko Tarnovo is the most famous mediaeval Bulgarian monument in Veliko Tarnovo. It was built and painted at the order of the Bulgarian tsar Ivan Asen II, in honour of the great victory of the Bulgarians at the battle of Klokotnitsa over the troops of the Epirus ruler Theodore Komnenos, on March 22, 1230. In the 13th-14th centuries the Forty Holy Martyrs church was the main church of the Great Laurel monastery, which was located at the foot of Tsarevets, on the left bank of the Yantra. It was also a royal church during the reign of Ivan Asen II. It consists of two parts - the elongated basilica with six columns placed in two rows, three semicircular apses and a narrow narthex from the west, and an outbuilding added later to its west side.

The Asenevtsi Monument is dedicated to the tsars Asen, Petar, Kaloyan and Ivan Assen II. It was built in 1985 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the uprising of the brothers Asen



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and Petar. The sword around which the four members of the Asen dynasty are depicted symbolizes the power and flourishing of mediaeval Bulgaria.

Sound and Light audio-visual show (Tsarevets Hill)²⁶ - the aim of the show is, with the means of music and spectacular lighting, to build a memorable emotional image of the Tsarevets hill and fortress, encompassing the historical essence, grandeur and glory of the mediaeval capital Tarnovgrad which has become synonymous with the Bulgarian spirit and national pride. The leading element is the specially composed music, with the help of which the historical events are traced and their invisible images come to life.

The interactive educational game "Mediaeval crime mysteries - The secret of the 9 keys"²⁷ offers visitors an exploratory tour of the Tsarevets fortress in an unusual but entertaining way. The goal is for all participants to reach the end of the route while learning interesting historical information in a fascinating way. Players go round Tsarevets unravelling a mediaeval mystery of treasures, secrets, betrayals and traps in the very heart of the royal court. Guided by the thoughts and deductive insights of the Grand Royal Primicerius, the adventurers must unravel various mysteries and reveal the secrets kept in the bowels of the fortress.

The miniature models park "Tarnovgrad - the Spirit of Millennial-old Bulgaria"²⁸ in Veliko Tarnovo is the first park-museum of its kind in Bulgaria, featuring precise miniature models of landmarks and sites from all over the country. It covers an area of about 1.5 ha, near the Tsarevets fortress, under Baldwin's Tower. A total of 80 miniature models, on a scale of 1:25, of significant historical and natural landmarks from Bulgaria are put on display. Among them are: the Tsarevets Fortress and the Asenevtsi Monument in Veliko Tarnovo, the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the building of the National Assembly in Sofia, the Ancient Amphitheatre in Plovdiv, the Baba Vida Fortress and others. The place has been carefully chosen, as it is located near the only parking lot for buses, from where the entire tourist flow will pass in the future.

B) Cultural resources

Petko Rachev Slaveykov Regional Library, Veliko Tarnovo. In November 1889, the Public National Library was established with its own seal, statutes and regulations on the basis of the

²⁶ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg>

²⁷ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg>

²⁸ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg>





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Statutes of the Development Society and its Regulations. On July 11, 1921, Decree No. 145 legalized the National Library in Veliko Tarnovo, established by the Public Education Act, adopted at the Second Extraordinary Session of the 19th Ordinary National Assembly, 5 days earlier. On August 15, 1922, the National Library in Veliko Tarnovo (third in Bulgaria after those in Sofia and Plovdiv) was opened in the building of the Angel Popov board, at 3 Tsentralna Street. By order No. 18231 of the Ministry of National Education, as of September 1 of the same year, Mosko Moskov was appointed seconded director of the library. Today, the P.R. Slaveykov Regional Library is the largest public information centre in the region. Every citizen has the right to use the library documents and its services after registering as its reader.

Marno Pole park and summer theatre - Veliko Tarnovo. The open-air summer theatre was restored in 2013 and is located in Marno Pole Park, in the town's centre. It has 1,470 amphitheatrically arranged seats, meeting all requirements, providing enough space and good visibility to the stage from any point. The open-air stage is 119 m in size, constituting a massive platform on which a structure can be built, meeting all the necessary requirements.

Rafael Mihailov exhibition halls are located in the centre of Veliko Tarnovo, about 200 m north of the "Mother Bulgaria" monument. The halls are used as a venue for international, national, collective and individual exhibitions, symposia, plein airs, trade fairs and bazaars, concerts, conferences, etc.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

Veliko Tarnovo also boasts the unique **garden square with a monument "Mother Bulgaria"** which has been declared a monument of garden and park design in 1990.

Sveta Gora Park - the Sveta Gora Hill is a four-walled pyramid opposite the town centre and ends with one of the most picturesque places in Veliko Tarnovo - Asenevtsi Park. Many of the famous manuscripts of the Tarnovo Literary School were written in the literary workshops located on the hill.

The Boruna locality - the picturesquely sculpted Boruna hill at the bend of the Yantra River is located in the central part of the town and is among the most impressive and attractive views in Veliko Tarnovo. Looking like a huge ship, the natural landmark remained undeveloped until the 1920s. The Boruna locality is surrounded by the Yantra River Protected Area for the protection of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna. It covers the watercourse and the banks



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of the river, and the subject of protection are many habitats, plant and animal species that can be found in the Boruna area.

D) Natural tourism resources

Trapezitsa Hill is located on the opposite side of Tsarevets Hill. These two formations are explained by topographic soil erosion caused by the Yantra River. "Trapezitsa" is characterized by its uneven terrain. The landscape, which stands out along with the rest of the hill, conveys a sense of freedom, adventure, abundance and even danger. A romantic topography. Archaeological finds from 3,000 BC confirm that this hill was home to ancient civilizations.

Savchov Chair Nature Reserve is located on the land of the village of Kladni Dyal, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality. The reserve was created to preserve a high-yielding pristine beech forest. This is the only area with well-preserved centuries-old beech forests in the area of the Forestry enterprise of Veliko Tarnovo. The average age of beech plantations is 110-130 years, but among them there are specimens of significantly older age, with preserved stems, with valuable genetic qualities having survived from the past generations of the forest. The average height of the trees is 25 m. An interesting scientific fact is that older beech groups are often found on the hills of the rugged terrain of the reserve. Among the plantations there are groups of other tree species: hornbeam, aspen, maple, Norway maple, cherry, etc. Until the establishment of the reserve, the places under the slope were planted with white pine and spruce. The Savchov Chair Reserve, where grassland species typical of forest communities grow, has been called an "oasis" for the preservation of the genetic plant diversity having survived in this area to this day. It is permanently inhabited by deer, roe deer, wild boar, rabbits, foxes, badgers, squirrels, diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey and songbirds, and other rare animal species.

Transfiguration Monastery Protected Area. Location - village of Samovodene, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality. It is given a protected status in order to preserve a natural habitat of the Turkish hazel in the area of the Transfiguration Monastery. It covers the forests around the monastery of the same name, 5-6 km north of Veliko Tarnovo. It is located in the picturesque gorge of the Yantra River, called Derventa. The vegetation is extremely rich, influenced by the specific climate. The existing natural habitat of Turkish hazel is a protected site. Different types of linden, oak, hornbeam, Norway maple, maple, elm, sage, manna ash, walnut and other trees grow in the area. The world of birds is also diverse - there are protected species such as black storks, Egyptian vultures, owls, buzzards, falcons, swifts and others. Different types of bats live in the caves and rock crevices.



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Nikolinski Kladenets Protected Area. Location - Altunovtsi locality, village of Vetrentsi, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality. Declared protected in order to preserve a group of century-old oak trees.

Kosovo Protected Area. Location - village of Balvan, village of Vetrentsi, village of Novo Selo, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. Declared a protected area in order to preserve a characteristic oak forest.

Manastirskoto Protected Area. Location - village of Kapinovo, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. It was declared protected in order to preserve a local oak forest.

Derventa Protected Area - village of Samovodene, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. It was declared protected in order to preserve a characteristic mixed deciduous forest.

Glavite Protected Area. Location - village of Voinezha, Veliko Tarnovo municipality, village of Drenta, village of Todyuvtsi, Elena municipality. Declared a buffer zone of the maintained Savchov Chair reserve.

In 2012, by Order No. RD-359/04.05.2012 of the Ministry of Environment and Water, a protected area “Veselina River” was declared with a location - the village of Kapinovo and the village of Mindya and an area of 98.62 ha.

Emen Canyon of the Negovanka River natural landmark, the village of Emen, Veliko Tarnovo municipality, and the village of Mihaltsi, Pavlikeni municipality. It is declared protected in order to preserve characteristic karst formations (caves, rock niches, etc.) with specific vegetation and fauna in the region of the Middle Fore-Balkans. The canyon is described in a fascinating way in the Environmental Protection Programme.

Kapinovo Waterfall natural landmark, village of Velchevo, near the Kapinovo Monastery, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. This landmark is a waterfall on the Veselina River with a fall height of 4.5 m, located at 200 m above sea level with an area of 0.2 ha around it. The river has carved the rocks, flows through narrow bends and forms many waterfalls, one of which is the beautiful Kapinovo waterfall, under which a deep pool is formed. This is one of the favourite places for rest and relaxation of the residents and guests of the municipality.

Kaya Bunar natural landmark, village of Hotnitsa, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. It is a waterfall and a gorge on the Bohot river in the Kaya Bunar area, with a height of 17 m, located at 200 m above sea level with an area of 9 ha around it. The area of the waterfall covers the spring and the picturesque gorge of the Bohot river with a length of 1,600 m and a width of 25 m on both



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sides of the crown of the rock, characterized by interesting rock formations and remarkable views.

Dryankov Hill natural landmark, village of Pushevo village, Veliko Tarnovo municipality. It is declared protected in order to preserve a unique paleontological site with fossilized remains of ancient marine organisms: corals, mussels, snails, brachiopods, sea urchins, nautiluses.

Vardim Island protected area - estuary of the Yantra River, Veliko Tarnovo region. Habitats Directive area overlapping with a protected area under the Birds Directive. Includes the Old Oak Protected Area. The area is of great importance for the preservation of rare plant and animal species and communities. There are a variety of natural habitats, alluvial forests, riparian and mixed forests. There is a natural riparian forest of oak, elm, poplar and alder trees. Vardim Island is the third largest island in the Bulgarian section of the Danube. The protected area includes a second adjacent island. The area is inhabited by 71 species of birds, 21 of which are in the Red Book of Endangered Species.

Tarnovo Heights protected area. Protected area under the Habitats Directive, which borders on a protected area under the Birds Directive. The area includes protected zones.

Transfiguration Monastery, Derventa, Bozhur Meadow. The protected area features a karst landscape with many caves - 22 in number. It is an important area for the protection of many species of invertebrates. There are 9 habitat types under Directive 92/43. The area is inhabited by 38 protected species: bats, amphibians and reptiles, fish, invertebrates, including butterflies, plants.

Yantra River protected area, Veliko Tarnovo District. Protected area under the Habitats Directive, which borders on a protected area under the Birds Directive. The area is of great importance for the conservation of natural habitat types, habitats of species and their populations, including Pannonian salt steppes and salt marshes, alluvial forests, eutrophic lakes and others. Includes a habitat of the common licorice.

Natural habitat of *Salvia scabiosifolia* protected area (in Ruse district, village of Popsko Kosovo), river corridor of the Yantra River from the town of Gabrovo to the mouth of the river. It is surrounded by arable land, meadows, riparian willow and poplar forests, dry slopes, old riverbeds. Between Gabrovo and Veliko Tarnovo, the river passes mainly through rocky canyons. The area is inhabited by 51 protected species.

E) Festivals and events



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In the municipality of Veliko Tarnovo there are traditional and well-established events²⁹, contributing to the preservation and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage from the region in the country and abroad.

The Fair at Sts. Peter and Paul Monastery (Petropavlovski sabor)³⁰ - a joint initiative of the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, the Municipality of Gorna Oryahovitsa and the Municipality of Lyaskovets. The national fair has been held every two years since 1993 on the eve of St. Peter's Day, in the vicinity of the Sts. Peter and Paul monastery located above the town of Lyaskovets and features popular mass games and singing contests. The fair is a forum of international cooperation and a venue attended by guest performers from Hungary, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Serbia, Slovakia, Montenegro, Poland, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and others. Some of the most popular Bulgarian folk singers such as Iliya Argirov, Horo Orchestra, Kalinka Zgurova, Hristina Lyutova, Lyubka Rondova, Ivan Dyakov, Nikolay Slaveev, Rositsa Peycheva, Nikolina Chakardakova and others have performed at the fair.

The National Folklore Festival "In the middle of the square in Arbanassi"³¹ is organized by the Ilarion Dragostinov Community Centre in Arbanassi, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality and Arbanassi mayor's office. The event is a continuation of the festival "Horo sred selo" in the village of Arbanassi in 1987 and 1988, organized by the Town Association of Culture and Tourism in Veliko Tarnovo. It is held on an open-air stage every year in early June.

The national competition for humorous folklore³² has been held in the town of Kilifarevo since 2015. It is organized by the Napredak Community Centre, the town of Kilifarevo, at the end of August. The event distinguishes the participants in the sections of authentic folklore and adapted folklore, with subsections for verbal, song, dance folklore and individual performers and a section for original works on a folklore basis, with subsections for oral and song folklore.

The International Ancient Roman Festival "Nike - the game and the victory"³³ has been held since 2015 in late August in the archaeological reserve Nicopolis ad Istrum and is organized by the Future for Nikyup Association, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality, Veliko Tarnovo Regional History Museum, the mayor's office of the village of Nikyup and the "Mos Maiorum Ulpiae Serdicae"

²⁹ Strategy for the development of culture of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality 2020-2030

³⁰ <https://petropavlovskisabor.weebly.com/>

³¹ <http://nff-nasred-megdana-arbanasi.weebly.com/>

³² <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/kultura-i-turizm/festivali-sabori-izlozhenia/nacionalen-konkurs-za-humoristichen-folklor/>

³³ <http://www.velikoturnovo.info/bg/events>





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Association based in Sofia. The festival programme includes workshops for demonstrations of ancient Roman board games, fashion and hairstyles, games with the audience, re-enactment of rituals, demonstrations of equipment, battlefields and battles, an ancient Roman court trial, a slave market and gladiatorial fights, sports games, ancient Roman cuisine, recital of poetry from Antiquity, concerts of groups for early music, etc.

The International Festival of Historical Reenactments³⁴ has been held since 2015 at the Tsarevets Fortress and is organized by the Tarnovtsi Association, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality, Veliko Tarnovo Regional History Museum. The festival presents various aspects of the life of the capital Tarnovgrad in the 12th -14th century - crafts, lifestyle, cuisine, military skills, weapons, games and entertainment. Groups for historical reenactments from Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary take part in the festival.

Night of the Samovodska Charshia and Crafts Festival³⁵ is held in late September on the territory of the Samovodska Charshia Architectural Exhibition Complex. The organizer is Tsarevgrad Tarnov EOOD and Veliko Tarnovo Municipality. The holiday turns the most famous street in Veliko Tarnovo into a place for special events that promote local traditional crafts.

Trabant Fest showcases contemporary projections of the cultural heritage. The festival has been held since 2010 in March. The organizer is Veliko Tarnovo Municipality.

The season of the Bulgarian opera theatres "Stage of the Ages"³⁶. The forum has existed since 1985. For this purpose, a special stage facility has been built on the territory of the Tsarevets architectural museum reserve where opera and ballet productions are presented, specially adapted for this venue. Especially for the event, among the remains of the Tsarevets Palace, a special open-air stage is built. The stage space is organized in harmony with the authentic historical environment, as seats for over 1,000 spectators are located around the stage and at the foot of the Patriarchal Church.

The international competition for young pop performers of a popular song "Silver Yantra"³⁷ is held in late September and early October since 2002 on the stage of the Konstantin Kisimov Music and Drama Theatre in Veliko Tarnovo. The organizer is the Silver Yantra 2003 Association in partnership with the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo. The programme includes an international

³⁴ <http://www.velikoturnovo.info/bg/events>

³⁵ <http://www.velikoturnovo.info/bg/events>

³⁶ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg>

³⁷ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg>



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competition for young pop singers of a popular song. The main goal of the event is to enable international creative contacts and to establish in young performers a taste for the best examples of Bulgarian and world pop music.

The International Festival of Military Orchestras has been held at the end of September 2007. The organizers are Veliko Tarnovo Municipality and the Vasil Levski National Military University. The festival has become part of Veliko Tarnovo's modern identity and is part of the town's cultural calendar. The art of military musicians arouses respect and admiration on behalf of the numerous audience.

Mindya Rock Fest³⁸ has been held since 2009, at the end of August, in the village of the same name in the northern part of the Balkan Mountains. The initiator is the famous political scientist Prof. Evgeniy Daynov, who also plays in one of the participating bands. The organizers define the mission of the festival as a festival of free blues and rock - an annual ritual to say goodbye to the summer. The festival is organized by volunteers and provides a stage where well-known bands and young talents meet.

The festival for classical chamber music "Arbanassi Summer Music"³⁹ has been held in July since 2009 in the village of Arbanassi in the museum church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and since 2018 also in the museum church of St. George. Its organizers are a Belgium-based association, the Veliko Tarnovo Regional History Museum, and the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo.

The International Tourist Exhibition "Cultural Tourism"⁴⁰ is the first specialized forum in Bulgaria, established in 2004 as its the main organizer is Tsarevgrad Tarnov EOOD. The attitude and use of cultural heritage, architectural facts, monumental art, cultural events, festival life in general determine the uniqueness of this type of tourism.

In summary, the cultural heritage in Veliko Tarnovo Municipality is characterized by a stable and well-functioning institutional structure, various museum expositions and sites and diverse events promoting the intangible cultural heritage of the region, the country and the world. The information about the Regional History Museum is well-presented in a dedicated website.

³⁸ <https://vt2019.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/sabitiya/2014/8/>

³⁹ <https://www.arbanassisummermusic.com/bg>

⁴⁰ <https://culturaltourism.info/>



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The **International Biennial of Church Arts**⁴¹, Veliko Tarnovo has been held since 2009 in October-November in the Rafael Mihailov Exhibition Halls. It is organized by St. St. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Faculty of Orthodoxy and Theology - Department of Church Arts, Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo. Partners are the Holy Bishopric of Veliko Tarnovo, the Union of Bulgarian Artists, the representation of the Union of Bulgarian Artists in Veliko Tarnovo, and the Pokrov Bogorodichen Foundation. The exhibition is a forum of contemporary art in the field of Orthodox church arts: icon painting, woodcarving, mural painting and mosaics; church plate, textiles, graphics, miniatures and others; multimedia presentation of realized works.

The **Biennial of Drawing**⁴² has been held since 2011, in autumn, at the Rafael Mihailov Exhibition Halls. Organizers are the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, the subsidiary of the Union of Bulgarian Artists in Veliko Tarnovo, the Association of Graphics and a Varna-based International Graphic Centre. The Biennale presents three awards of BGN 500 each, three awards of BGN 200 each, awards for young authors of BGN 100 each, as well as awards of sponsors.

In the Register of tourist festivals and events at the Ministry of Tourism⁴³, a total of 49 events are registered in the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, see Annex 2 "Register of festivals and events".

F) Tourist routes

National cultural and historical destination "Bulgarian architecture and crafts"⁴⁴: Sofia - Panagyurishte - Koprivshtitsa - Sopot - Kalofer - Shipka - Gabrovo - Veliko Tarnovo - Sliven - Kotel - Zheravna - Stara Zagora - Plovdiv - Peshtera. The sites from Veliko Tarnovo Municipality included in the route are: Arbanassi (Arbanassi architectural reserve) with its preserved magnificent architectural monuments from the Bulgarian National Revival period, old churches and beautiful courtyards immersed in flowers and greenery. The town of Veliko Tarnovo - the old part of the town, Gurko Street, Samovodska Charshia (the street of crafts) with the opportunity to see buildings erected more than 200 years ago. The crafts street is a kind of

⁴¹ <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/kultura-i-turizm/festivali-sabori-izlozhenia/mezhdunarodno-bienale-na-crkovnite-izkustva/>

⁴² <https://sites.google.com/view/bienalenarisunkatavt/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BE>

⁴³ Register of tourist festivals and events, <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>

⁴⁴ <https://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/pages/kulturno-istoricheski-destinacii>





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ethnographic complex with various craft workshops, souvenir shops and galleries. The old town is also where most of the local museums are located, including the Archaeological Museum, the Revival and Constituent Assembly Museum, the Museum of Contemporary History, Sarafkina House, the museum house of Petko Rachev Slaveykov, Stambolov's Inn, Hadji Nikoli Inn and others.

National cultural and historical destination "The capitals and cities of the Bulgarian tsars and patriarchs"⁴⁵: Veliko Tarnovo - Ruse - Shumen - Pliska - Madara - Preslav - Silistra - Provadia - Varna. The sites included in the route from the town of Veliko Tarnovo are: Tsarevets Architectural and Museum Reserve which is one of the most visited tourist sites in Bulgaria. "Trapezitsa" - the second fortress of the inner mediaeval city, located northwest of Tsarevets on a hill constituting a natural citadel surrounded on three sides by the river; as well as the churches of the Forty Holy Martyrs, of Saint Demetrius, and of Sts. Peter and Paul.

There are nine developed common tourist routes "White, purple, blue, green - the vestiges of eternity", connecting the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa and Dryanovo⁴⁶.

The routes are thematic and each of them can last three to four days as follows:

In the field of Cultural Tourism, the developed routes are: "Back in time", "Back to Antiquity", "Symbols of Faith", "Masterpieces of the Master", "Weekdays and holidays of the past".

Eco routes include: "Emotions in green", "Adventure here - bold and daring", and in the field of rural tourism the routes offered are "Emotions to the end", "On a visit".

A total of 68 cultural and historical sites and natural landmarks on the territory of the three municipalities are included.

"Gardens and open-air spaces - cultural heritage sites in Central Bulgaria" route: The route includes gardens and open-air spaces from different periods of garden landscape art and the maintenance of open-air spaces in Bulgaria: in Bachkovo Monastery, Karlovo, Tsar Simeon's Garden in Plovdiv, and Ayazmoto Park in Stara Zagora; Asenevtsi monument located in the Boruna locality in Veliko Tarnovo, Penyo Penev Memorial Park in Dimitrovgrad; Stratesh Park

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Source: Plan for integrated development of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality 2021 -2027 <https://veliko-turnovo-next7.eu/>





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located on the hill of the same name in Lovech, and Tyulbeto Park with a Thracian tomb in Kazanlak. The suggested starting point for the tour is Veliko Tarnovo.

Yalovo Winery⁴⁷ is a small boutique cellar located at the foot of the Balkan Mountain, 15 km south of Veliko Tarnovo. The wines of Yalovo Winery have the ambition to bring to mind the traditions and the past, combining unadulterated techniques and aesthetics in a craft production. The winery also offers a separate tasting room for groups of 12 to 15 people, a bar with an open kitchen and a dining area, as well as a spacious landscaped yard.

GORNIA ORYAHOVITSA MUNICIPALITY⁴⁸

The Extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" features one site from Gornia Oryahovitsa Municipality.

- ❖ Nedyalko Karaneshev Art Gallery.

A) Cultural-historical resources

Historical Museum of Gorna Oryahovitsa. The start of the museum activities in the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa was set in 1962. The initial fund of the museum collection amounted to about 500 exhibits. Over the next ten years, the intensified collecting activity increased their number several times. In 1972, the reconstructed two-storey building at 1 Antim I Str. in the central part of Gorna Oryahovitsa (where the Historical Museum is housed to this day) was provided. The new exposition was opened on June 2, 1973. The building has a total area of 1,210 m². A storage room has been built on the ground floor, and in the yard there is a separate building with an area of 65 m², which houses the Tourist Information Centre and the latest exhibition entitled "Gornooryahovski Sudzhuk". The structure of the museum includes two branches - Ethnographic Museum in Dolna Oryahovitsa (established in 1981) and the museum house of Asen Raztsvetnikov in Draganovo (opened in 1985). The Tourist Information Centre was added to the structure of the museum in 2004. The pertaining building stock of the three sites was provided to the Gorna Oryahovitsa Historical Museum for operational management. The museum showcases a specialized exposition called History with the following sub-divisions: Archeology, Ethnography, Tourism, Funds, Scientific Archives. There is also a library with over 5,000 volumes. The museum has a booth for souvenirs, advertising publications and books. The

⁴⁷ Source: <https://winetours.bg/tour/winery-yalovo/>

⁴⁸ Source: webpage of Gorna Oryahovitsa Municipality- <https://www.g-oryahovica.org/>



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Gorna Oryahovitsa History Museum is the winner of the award "Best Museum for 2009 year in the region of Central Stara Planina Mountain of the Regional Tourist Association "Stara Planina".

Ethnographic Museum in Dolna Oryahovitsa. The Ethnographic House Museum in Dolna Oryahovitsa was opened on the eve of Easter on April 15, 1993, in the completely restored house of the Kozlevi family. The Ethnographic Museum is located on 2 decares with over 400 sq.m. of exhibition and exposition space. The museum consists of two separate parts. On the ground floor there is: a pishtnik, a room, an exhibition hall, a plank barn. In the upper part there is a guest room (haet), a youth room, a weaving loom. The barn has been completely restored and adapted for an exhibition hall. The yard is spacious and planted with vegetation typical for the village. The museum stored over 1,000 exhibits, documents and photographs, representing the ethno-demographic and social characteristics of the Gorna Oryahovitsa region. Also included are unique items related to the development of gardening in the area during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Ethnographic Museum has been declared a cultural monument of local significance.

Asen Raztsvetnikov House Museum. The native house of the poet Asen Raztsvetnikov, in the village of Draganovo (Gorna Oryahovitsa municipality), was restored in 1986. The following year, in honour of his 90th birthday, an exhibition was unveiled containing personal belongings of the poet; books with his autograph; translations of Goethe, Moliere, Homer and others from Russian, French, German and Ancient Greek; documents and letters telling about the writer's life and work. Draganovo, the birthplace of Asen Raztsvetnikov, is a village of gardeners and poets.

Monastery of Holy Prophet Elijah - it is located one kilometre southwest of Gorna Oryahovitsa. The existence of the monastery dates back to the 11th-12th century. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, in 1908, the first excavations of the monastery remains began: the foundations of the church measuring 8 by 4 metres and fortification walls more than 1 metre in thickness encircling the monastery yard were found. A mediaeval icon of the Holy Mother of God was found, dating to the 16th century, which is kept to this day in the newly built church. The monastery was rebuilt in 1937-38 with donations from locals, and the church was consecrated on September 22, 1940. In 1941, it acquired a brass bell from Czechia, and it was restored and painted in the 1970s. In 1973, the monastery was declared a cultural monument of national importance.



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Church of St. Athanasius the Great in Gorna Oryahovitsa is the oldest spiritual temple in the town, built in the late 15th century by the first settlers of today's Gorna Oryahovitsa.

Church of St. George the Victorious in Gorna Oryahovitsa - it was built in the 16th century. In the church yard were located the buildings of the first cell school founded by Father Zotik in 1822, of the first mutual school founded by Father Stefan Ivanov in 1850, as well as that of Napredak community centre opened on July 13, 1869.

The church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, St. Nicholas Church, the Holy Trinity Church in the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa; Saint Demetrius Church in the village of Pravda; Saint Marina Church in the village of Polikraishte; Church of the Ascension of Christ in the village of Parvomaytsi; Church of the Holy Theotokos in the village of Gorski dolen Trambesh; Church of St. Ivan Rilski in the village of Gorski goren Trambesh.

Neolithic settlement in the Cherven Bryag district, the village of Pravda, in which clay and flint artefacts have been found, testifying to the way of life of the ancient people.

Ryahovets Fortress - 3 km west of the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa, dates to the 3rd-4th century AD. The fortress is not registered with the Ministry of Culture as a historical site. Group archeological immovable cultural property.

Kaleto Fortress located near the village of Gorski goren Trambesh.

B) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

Children's Corner Park, Gorna Oryahovitsa.

Alley for hiking - from the fork on the road at Mano Todorov Street, passing by the area Churukovets locality and reaching the monastery of the Holy Prophet Elijah.

C) Nature tourism resources

The protected area "**Bozhur Polyana**" (peony meadow), with a unique plant species - the peony - a symbol of the town, preserved natural environment, eco trails, rock formations.

Kamaka Forest Park - Kamaka Forest Park begins next to the southwestern outskirts of the town. There are some rare species of birds, such as the bald eagles whose images can be found on a mediaeval signet ring discovered at the Ryahovets fortress. Pairs of black storks also nest within the forest park.

D) Festivals and events



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Gorna Oryahovitsa Municipality is the organizer and host of many cultural events of international and national importance:

- ❖ International Folklore Festival "Rahovche";
- ❖ International competition for young performers of a popular song "New Music";
- ❖ International Festival of Youth Amateur Theatres;
- ❖ International Plein Air "Zhivopisatira", Fair of Folk Art at the Petropavlovski sabor;
- ❖ National Children's Festival "Rahovche";
- ❖ National festival of folklore clubs and groups "Folklore rosary";
- ❖ National Review of Rural Amateur Chitalishte Theatres;
- ❖ National holiday of authentic folklore "On the square";
- ❖ National holiday of Peony and flowers, May days of culture;
- ❖ Festival of the Gornooryahovsky sudzuk (Gorna Oryahovitsa sausage);
- ❖ Municipal folklore holiday of the folk choirs and groups for authentic folklore;
- ❖ Regional review of the old city song "Peonies";
- ❖ Regional holiday of the "dripava" banitsa (pulled cheese pastry);
- ❖ Municipal review of the amateur ensembles at the pensioner's clubs;
- ❖ Municipal folklore holiday "From the source";
- ❖ Municipal Fertility Festival "A day feeds a year";
- ❖ Holiday of gardeners, and others.

In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events at the Ministry of Tourism⁴⁹ there are 44 events registered in the municipality of Gorna Oryahovitsa. See Annex 2 "Register of festivals and events".

E) Tourist routes

⁴⁹ Register of tourist festivals and events, <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>



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Kamaka (The Stone) ecotrail: length of the route - 3 km, duration - 1 hour. The beginning of the ecotrail is in the Churukovets area, about 300 m southwest of Gorna Oryahovitsa. From there - the route enters the boundaries of the Kamaka forest park - a locality of rare plant and animal species. The rock Kamaka (nearly 500 m above sea level) is one of the symbols of Gorna Oryahovitsa and provides a wonderful panoramic view of the town, the Yantra River, the surrounding villages and the peaks of the central part of the Balkan Mountains. The route ends at Bozhur hut.

Ecotrail in the village of Pravda: length of the route - 10 km, duration - 3 hours. The eco trail starts near the railway station of the village of Pravda, passes through the area of Staroto Selo, where the remains of the previous landed estate of the village of Pravda are located. From here the route runs along the Yantra River and includes the picturesque river and riparian areas of Vartopa, Blato and Ashava. All of them are convenient places for hunting, fishing and photographing of different species of waterfowl and small game. The trail ends at the Cherven Bryag locality near the territory of the town of Dolna Oryahovitsa, where the excavations of a late Neolithic settlement took place /in 2006 many ceramic and flint artifacts related to the life and cults of prehistoric people were discovered here/.

Cycling path "Children's corner": Churukovets - Mravunyaka - Suleiman fountain - Bozhur hut.

KNEZHA MUNICIPALITY

The Extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" includes one site from Knezha Municipality.

❖ Municipal Historical Museum.

A) Cultural-historical resources⁵⁰

The cultural heritage in the municipality⁵¹ includes some of the most important intangible cultural heritage sites in the region and Bulgaria, as 4 sites of "national importance" are identified, which have exceptional scientific and cultural value for society.

Birth house of Stefan Kratunski, located in the village of Brenitsa.

⁵⁰ Municipality of Knezha - <http://knezha.bg>

⁵¹ Source: Plan for integrated development of Knezha Municipality for the period 2021-2027 - <http://knezha.bg/section-143-content.html>





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Prehistoric settlement - Kremenitata mound, located 7 km north of the village of Brenitsa.

12 mounds in the old vineyards and sumach vegetation, located in the village of Enitsa.

Tomb with a tombstone cross located in the village of Enitsa.

In the territory of the municipality there are 7 sites from the category of sites with “local significance”, including:

Mediaeval settlement located 4 km north of the village of Brenitsa.

Ancient and mediaeval settlement located 4 km northeast of the village of Brenitsa in Kraina Brenitsa locality. Prehistoric /early Chalcolithic/ settlement located 11 km northeast of the village of Brenitsa in the Lakata locality.

Dimitar Ivanov Butanski's native house, located in the town of Knezha.

Late Antiquity and early mediaeval settlement located 8 km north of the town of Knezha in the Gostilya locality.

Late Antiquity settlement located 4 km northwest of the town of Knezha in the Marinov Geran locality.

Late Antiquity settlement located 5 km west of the town of Knezha.

Holy Trinity Church, town of Knezha. The church's architecture reflects the artistic tendencies of Bulgaria's Revival Period, the high national consciousness of Bulgarians. The Holy Trinity Church in the town of Knezha is a valuable architectural monument, given that the construction was carried out more than 140 years ago.

Church of the Ascension, village of Brenitsa. The church in the village of Brenitsa was built in 1870. Prior to its construction, religious rites were performed at the school on the estate of the local Bayraktari community. The extension of the church was made in 1890, and in 1900 Archpriest Verban Bachovski, assisted by the village mayor Marin Yonchovski, made repairs to the church. The stone slabs were removed from the roof and replaced with roof tiles. The wooden iconostasis was replaced by one made of bricks. In 1930-1931 when Archpriest Tseno Pandurski served at the church, the belfry which is an integral part of the church building was built.

B) Cultural resources



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Borba Cultural Community Centre, Knezha. On December 23, 1896, the Borba National Educational Society was founded. It was only in 1929 that it was renamed to Borba Chitalishte (community centre). Along with its emergence, the beginning of amateur theatre groups was set and a library was opened. The hall and the stage of the community centre are one of the places in the town where people gather for meetings with culture and other socio-political and economic events.

Narodno saznanie Community Centre, village of Brenitsa was established in 1897. Since then until today, it shines with the dignity of a sage who can give you advice and spiritual support. The idea of creating a community centre arose before the Liberation. Before the construction of the building, the library did not have a permanent place. The books were kept in the school. The initial book fund was formed by books donated with love by the founders who had their personal libraries. A subscription to newspapers and magazines was also made. The library now has 14,240 volumes of literature. It serves about 500 readers a year.

The first performances of local theatre amateurs date back to 1898. Teachers, graduates of the Lom pedagogical school, together with their pupils, created the first amateur theatre group. The traditions in amateur theatre have recently been continued by the students from Hristo Botev School with the presentation of plays and sketches prepared by the teachers and the instructors in extracurricular activities. The first civic choir at the community centre was created in 1942 by Dimitar Barzakov, evacuated from Sofia to Brenitsa. Later, a civic choir was formed, led by Makavei Pavlov who was assisted by Marin Savchev. In 2007, on the initiative of the community centre management, a singing group of 12 performers and two accordionists was formed, led by Konstantin Petkov Marinski from the town of Knezha. The name of the group is "Harmony". The singers perform old urban songs and arrangements of Bulgarian folklore.

Izgrevev Community Centre, village of Enitsa. The community centre "Izgrevev - 1897" is known for its many years of experience in various fields of amateur art: theatre, singing and vocal-instrumental. The rich and diverse cultural activity has always been a characteristic feature of the spiritual life of the village of Enitsa for the preservation of artistic creativity.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

Gergana Forest Park, with a total area of 546 decares, is one of the few picturesque places in the region. It houses the only zoo on the territory of the Municipality. It has existed since 1980, covering 28 massive buildings inhabited by bears, deer, ponies, goats and others. It also includes



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a recreation area, enriched with a playground, swings, and picnic spots. There are good indicators for hunting and ecotourism. It is often visited not only by the locals but also by guests of the town. It is used to celebrate many holidays, for sporting events, hunting, recreation, etc.

D) Nature tourism resources

In the municipality of Knezha there are protected plant species such as the horse chestnut and century-old oak and some rare species of birds, including: the rough-legged buzzard, the great crested grebe, the little grebe, the little bittern, small water bull, the common kestrel, the common moorhen, the corncrake, the jacksnipe, bee-eaters, the common kingfisher, the European roller, the common blackbird, etc.

Protected area for the habitats of the Iskar River with identification code BG0000613, within territory of the village of Brenitsa - EKATTE-6375;

Konunski dol protected area with identification code BG0000627, within the territory of the town of Knezha EKATTE - 37376.

E) Festivals and events⁵²

International Northern Festival of Amateur Theatres "Stardust"

It was established in 2008 by Borba 1896 Community Centre, Knezha, with the exclusive assistance of the Ministry of Culture and the Bulgarian Association of Amateur Theatres (BAAT). Having already gained national and international prestige, today the festival is a representative forum of amateur theatre, a common platform for the development of amateur theatre. It presents a valuable and diverse programme of theatre performances, creative workshops and an accompanying programme of bright cultural events - traditional and innovative cultural events. The festival is held annually from June 27 to July 3.

Maiski kukutanovets Knezha. Folk singing contest of participants from different towns and villages, a mass celebration at the regional level. The event is held annually on May 1.

⁵² Source: Register of tourist festivals and events - <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>





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National Tourist Student Fair, Knezha. The fair is aimed at tourist entertaining and educational games for students from different parts of Bulgaria. The fair is held annually in the period March 30 - April 1.

Corn Festival. The highlights in the festival programme focus on the desire to preserve and promote folk art and Bulgarian traditions - song, dance, costume, cuisine. The event provides a stage for amateur singing and dancing groups, and ensembles for Bulgarian folklore. An exhibition of dishes made from corn is organized. The festival is of local importance and is held annually at the end of September.

Regional multi-genre festival for people with disabilities “Brenitsa sings and dances”. Festival for amateur art by disabled people from the Pleven region. It is held annually in May.

Knezha Rock Fest. Rock concerts of famous Bulgarian and foreign rock bands. The festival is held annually from 22 to 24 May.

Regional meeting - singing contest of pensioners’ clubs "A Song is flying over the field". Singing contest of pensioners’ clubs with a competitive character in two genres - folk songs and old urban songs. Knezha Municipality organizes the regional event annually on July 21.

In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events at the Ministry of Tourism⁵³ there are 7 events registered from the Municipality of Knezha.

PLEVEN MUNICIPALITY⁵⁴

The Extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" includes the following sites from the Municipality of Pleven:

- ❖ Art Gallery Donation "Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev";
- ❖ Regional Historical Museum - Pleven;
- ❖ Art Gallery “Ilya Beshkov”;
- ❖ Panorama Pleven Epopee 1877;
- ❖ Ivan Radoev Drama and Puppet Theatre;

⁵³ Register of tourist festivals and events, <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>

⁵⁴ Source: webpage of Pleven Municipality - <https://www.pleven.bg/bg/informatsiya-za-turisticheskite-obekti>





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A) Cultural-historical resources

St. George the Conqueror Chapel Mausoleum. The St. George the Conqueror Chapel Mausoleum was built in the period 1903-1907 in memory of the Russian and Romanian soldiers killed in the battles around Pleven during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The chapel mausoleum was inaugurated and consecrated on September 3, 1907, in the presence of Prince Ferdinand I, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich of Russia, son of Emperor Alexander II, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna of Russia, and members of the Tsar Liberator Alexander II Committee.

House museum “Tsar Liberator Alexander II”. In this house on December 11, 1877, a day after the fall of the city of Pleven, the Russian Emperor Alexander II was solemnly welcomed and on behalf of the citizens of Pleven he was given a note of gratitude. Here in the presence of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich of Russia, Prince Carol I of Romania, the Russian Minister of War Miljutin and prominent Russian generals, he met with the captured Turkish field marshal Osman Nuri Pasha. In this house from December 12 to 22, the first military governor of Pleven, General Skobelev, lived and worked. At the initiative of the Tsar Liberator Alexander II Committee, the house was later purchased for a museum. During its creation (1904-1907) a beautiful park was formed around it, for which neighbouring properties were expropriated. Russian and trophy Turkish cannons, rifle barrels, sabers and bayonets provided by the Russian Ministry of War were used to make the original fence. Two artillery batteries and monuments to Emperor Alexander II, Gen. Skobelev, Gen. Gurko, Gen. Totleben, Gen. Mihail Cerchez Cristodulo, Prince Nicholas Nikolaevich, captain Nicolae Valter Mărăcineanu and others. The museum exposition in the house shows scenes from the Russo-Turkish war and the siege of Pleven.

The old bridge on the Vit River near Pleven. The old bridge over the Vit river is part of the suburban infrastructure of the town of Pleven, which played an important role in the development of its economic and trade relations with other places and an important part in the history of the city. In the course of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, Pleven was at a crossroads in the battle the two warring empires and here the further course and outcome of the war was decided. The bridge over the Vit river has been declared a cultural monument of national importance in issue 93 of the State Gazette of 1969. On the hill above the bridge is the Victory Monument - one of 11 similar monuments built in the first years after the liberation at the initiative of the Russian Ministry of War by personal order of Emperor Alexander II. They mark the sites of the most decisive battles and the most significant victories of the Russian army during the Russo-Turkish War. The monuments were designed by architect Vocar and were



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built in the period 1878-1881. Pyramidal in shape, they are about 11 metres high, made of limestone and granite, with marble medallions and decorations on the front. It is noted on the monument that it was erected in honour of the three attacks on Plevna, the battles of Gorni Dabnik and Telish, the last battle for the city and the capitulation of Osman Pasha.

Romanian mausoleum, village of Grivitsa. The mausoleum was built between 1892 and 1897 in memory of the fallen Romanian soldiers, with donations from the Romanian people. It was unveiled in 1902. In the area of the Grivishki redoubts, immediately after the war, 17 Russian and Romanian monuments were erected. A memorial park with an area of 360 decares was built around the Mausoleum in 1958. In 1967, a museum exposition was opened, which depicts the battles near the village of Grivitsa during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the battle route of the Romanian army. In the mausoleum, which consists of a temple room and an ossuary, the bones of the Romanian soldiers who died in the battles near the village of Grivitsa are kept in marble sarcophagi. The frescoes in the temple room are the work of Romanian artists. The iconostasis is carved, with four icons - of Jesus Christ, St. Nicholas, Archangel Michael and The Virgin and Child. According to the famous Bulgarian painter and art critic Prof. Asen Vasiliev, the iconostasis in the Romanian mausoleum in the village of Grivitsa was made by Debar masters of the famous Filipovtsi family from the village of Osoy, who came to liberated Bulgaria in 1880. In a bronze medallion attached to the iconostasis a text is inscribed - a dedication in Romanian and the year "1902". In 1904, during a visit by Romanian teachers, a decorative bronze wreath was placed in memory of the heroes of the war of 1877-1878, decorated with oak and bay leaves, on which are inscribed the places where the Romanian army operated. The exposition in the museum presents Romania's participation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the battle near the village of Grivitsa during the Third Assault on Plevna on September 11-12, 1877. Original military uniforms, copies of Romanian combat uniforms and flags and objects related to the life of the local population are presented.

His Royal Majesty Carol I House Museum is one of the Military History House Museums established in 1907 on the initiative of the Tsar Alexander II Liberator Committee, opened in 1907. The museum exposition presents Romania's participation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the activities of the Headquarters of the Romanian Army during the stay of the Romanian Prince Carol I in Pordim in 1877. It presents a rich collection of Romanian uniforms, weapons and artillery donated by the Romanian Ministry of War - 1904, 1954 and 1967. The exposition was settled in the house of Varban Iliev, which is located near the headquarters of



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the Romanian army and of Prince Carol I during the battles for Pleven. The original building with its authentic atmosphere has been preserved.

Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich house museum is one of the Military History House Museums established in 1907 on the initiative of the Tsar Alexander II Liberator Committee. The exposition reflects the activity of the Headquarters of the Russian Army during the stay of the Commander-in-Chief Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich and Emperor Alexander II in Pordim from October 26 to December 15, 1877. It pays special attention to the participation and role of Russian artillery in the war of 1877-1878. The exposition is arranged in the house of Ivan Stoykov-Troyanchanina built during the period 1862-1865, later bought by the Bulgarian state and turned into a museum. From October 26 to December 10, the Russian Headquarters were housed here. In this house in the presence of Count Nikolay Ignatyev, Gen. Nikolai Obruchev, General Dmitry Milyutin, General Eduard Totleben, General Iosif Gurko held military councils, which took important strategic decisions for the course of the war, the blockade of Pleven, the winter crossing of the Balkans. The draft of the San Stefano Peace Treaty was discussed here.

Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker. The church of St. Nicholas of Myra the Miracle Worker is the oldest preserved church in Pleven and is the only monument of the National Revival Period of national importance. Historical documents show that there was a small chapel from the 13th century in the same place, which at the end of the 14th century, when the Ottoman Turks conquered Bulgarian lands, was repeatedly looted and burned. In 1699 the people of Pleven with great effort managed to obtain a firman from the sultan, which allowed them to build a larger temple on the site of the old chapel. Erected in 1834, St. Nicholas Church became the centre of the struggle for church and national independence. The building is dug some 2 metres into the ground, according to the requirements of the Turkish authorities. Its bell tower was built separately, not far from the main entrance of the church, in 1883, and the large bell in it was a gift from a Finnish merchant. The church is a typical three-nave basilica characteristic for Bulgaria's Revival Period. A plaque is placed on one of the walls, which gives brief information about the history of the church. In the eastern part of the church is the iconostasis, which was completed eleven years after the church's consecration. It is made of walnut wood by Master Petar and two apprentices from the Tryavna woodcarving school and is unique in that the relief figures have been replaced by sculptural images. Especially valuable are the Bishop's throne and the pulpit, which were made during the period 1843-1845. The walls are not painted, but the church has one of the richest collections of icons (68 in number), the work of Dimitar Hristov Zograf - brother of Zahari Zograf, and the other icons were painted



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by representatives of the Samokov school of iconography. A total of 462 clay pots are built into the walls, arches and galleries for better acoustics. In Saint Nicholas church in 1877, in the presence of the Russian Emperor Alexander II, a funeral prayer was held in commemoration of the soldiers who died for the liberation of the city. The Saint Nicholas Church has been declared a cultural monument - a place where Christian spirituality, historical memory and valuable iconography and architecture meet.

The Holy Trinity Church was built due to the increase in the population of the city of Pleven and the need of the inhabitants for a new church. The construction of the temple began in 1892 on a design by architect Vyacheslav Gavarda, but was stopped due to lack of funds. With intermissions, the construction of the church continued until 1899. The church has been operating since November 8, 1898, when the first holy liturgy was served there, but again due to lack of money, the consecration of the church was delayed. It was consecrated on May 14, 1912, and it was not until 1940 that funds were raised and the painting of the temple began. Architecturally, the church is a three-nave basilica, with a narthex on the west and a semicircular apse on the east side. Its foundations are made of stone and the walls are made of bricks and lime. Three domes rise above. The icons on the first layer of the iconostasis are the work of the icon painter Danail Nestorov, a native of Macedonia and date from 1899. Although the parishioners of the church were poorer people, some of the icons were paid for by them. At that time the Bishop's throne and the royal doors were made, decorated with beautiful wood carvings on linden wood. They were made by Avram and Stefan Vasilevi from Debar region - Macedonia. The iconostasis, on the recommendation of the Metropolitan of Vratsa Constantine, is high and densely built with bricks, and not woodcarved like in other churches.

St. Parascheva Church. The church of Saint Parascheva is located in the central part of Pleven. The church was originally built in 1850 in the then Manyova hamlet with modest donations from the local population. The temple is small in size, built of double hedges and lime, and the inhabitants of Pleven call it the "braid". It was destroyed during the Ottoman invasions. With the development of crafts and trade in the city and the increase of the population in the northern part, the small church had to be rebuilt. With a lot of effort, the church board, led by the patriotic Bulgarian Yanaki Benov and with the help of the famous merchant Georgi Tapchileshtov, managed to obtain a sultan's decree for its renewal, in which there were no restrictions on the size of the church. The construction began on May 4, 1870 and ended in the autumn of 1872, so on the site of the old "braid" a magnificent three-nave basilica came to life.



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It consists of a narthex, two side rooms, a central part with a solium and a holy altar. The stone columns supporting it were part of a monastery church around the villages of Slavovitsa and Oryahovitsa, destroyed by the Kurdzhalii bandit gangs. During its many years of existence, the Saint Parascheva Church has always been a centre of spiritual education and culture. From 1991 to 1996 there was a Sunday school at the church, where the young citizens of Pleven were educated in the spirit of Christian virtues.

Storgozia Fortress from Late Antiquity. The remains of the Storgozia fortress are located in the Kaylaka park about 4 km south of Pleven. It is built on a high flat plateau, on the left bank of the Tuchenitsa river, naturally protected by the steep banks of the river. The ancient settlement of Storgozia originated from the Roman road station on Via Traiana, connecting Oescus with Philippopolis and located in the centre of present-day Pleven. As a result of archaeological excavations, two fortress gates, three towers reinforcing the fortress defensive line, remains of residential buildings, a horreum (public grain warehouse) were discovered. Remains of an early Christian basilica from the 4th century have been found in the eastern part of Storgozia, with impressive dimensions - 45.20 m long and 22.20 m wide. In shape it is three-naved, three-apse with a large narthex from the west. Judging by the discovered archaeological material, this cult facility had a rich interior and exterior decoration. Archaeological finds from Storgozia and its necropolis - pottery, weapons, coins - testify that this fortified settlement existed until the end of the 6th century. During the Middle Ages, the village continued to exist as a strong fortress with well-developed crafts, trade, exchange activities. Local legends connect it with the last days of Tsar Ivan Shishman. The fortification system, the early Christian basilica and the horreum have been preserved and restored.

The ancient Roman city of Ulpia Oescus is located about 50 km northwest of Pleven, near the present-day village of Gigen, near the Danube River. Oescus is the Latin name of the Iskar River. Ulpia Oescus originated in the 1st century AD as the successor to a Thracian settlement. After the Romans occupied these lands, the 5th Macedonian Legion was stationed in Oescus. The military camp received the status of a city-colony after the glorious victory of Emperor Marcus Ulpus Traianus over the Dacians in 106. The city added Ulpia to its name as a sign of respect for the emperor's father, Ulpus. In the 2nd-3rd century Ulpia Oescus grew and became an important economic, transport and cultural centre of the whole province of Lower Moesia. The city was of great military and strategic importance to the Romans. The ancient city was built in the typical way for Roman cities - it has a rectangular shape, and the streets are directed east-west and north-south. Ulpia Oescus is one of the few cities in the entire Roman Empire,



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whose forum is adorned with 4 temples. Even today in Ulpia Oescus visitors can see the remains of streets and many buildings. In 1947-1951, archaeologists discovered a large public building. In one of its rooms one of the best Roman multicolored floor mosaics in the Bulgarian lands was discovered, which in the central part depicts a scene from the comedy "Achaean". The mosaic has been restored and preserved and can be seen today in the Regional Historical Museum in Pleven. During excavations a forum, temples of the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva), a large basilica, public buildings, baths and swimming pools with a complex system of pipes and more were unearthed. A huge drainage canal runs under the main street. One of the main temples in the ancient Roman city - the Temple of Fortuna is unique because of the discovered inscription which exactly dates its construction. It was built in just two years - 190-192 AD. However, an earthquake at the end of the 6th century destroyed the temple - that's why archaeologists found the parallel columns intact. The excavations also uncovered the original statue of Fortuna, which is now housed in the Archaeological Museum in Sofia. Other interesting remains are from the civil basilica - the only one of their kind in the Balkans.

The ancient Roman city is part of the sites of the Regional Historical Museum in Pleven, so some of the finds discovered in Ulpia Oescus are exhibited in a separate hall of the museum. In 2011, in Issue 104 of the State Gazette, Ulpia Oescus received the status of an archaeological reserve.

Cave Museum of Wine. The Wine Museum is the result of many years of development by a team of Bulgarian and French specialists, architects, designers, oenologists and museum experts from the Pleven Panorama and the History Museum. The museum is located in a cave formation, which consists of 5 galleries with an area of 650 square metres. The cave is located 5 km from the centre of Pleven, in the middle of the Kaylaka National Park.

The Wine Museum is also a place where visitors can taste and buy bottles of over 6,000 types of wine from all regions in Bulgaria. The museum offers the largest exposition in Bulgaria of over 7,000 exhibits of old wines from 30 to 90 years old. The historical hall exhibits objects and artefacts related to viticulture and winemaking in Bulgarian lands - from the time of the ancient Thracians, Greeks and Romans to the present day. The cellar offers various wines from all regions in Bulgaria, located in 100 barrels of French oak.

Complex of Revival Period houses - Bakardzhieva, Parvanova, Dachva⁵⁵. The only place in Pleven that has preserved to some extent the architecture of the National Revival is the so-called

⁵⁵ Register of Tourism Attractions, Ministry of Tourism - <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TARregister.aspx>



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Renaissance complex. It is located in the very centre of the city, on the sides of the Old Main Street. The complex consists of three restored houses from the first half of the 19th century - Bakardzhieva house, Dacheva house and Parvanova house. It reveals elements of the central architecture of the city with a natural transition from its modern look to its Renaissance spirit. Visitors can enjoy the authentic atmosphere and traditional Bulgarian cuisine in the taverns of the complex.

B) Cultural resources

Pleven Philharmonic⁵⁶. The numerous attempts of the people of Pleven in the field of orchestral groups were crowned with success in 1953 when the famous Bulgarian conductor Sasha Popov set up Pleven's State Symphony Orchestra in Pleven. Its first concert was on September 6, and the soloist was Pancho Vladigerov. Pleven became an attractive centre for a number of Bulgarian composers such as Pancho Vladigerov, Marin Goleminov, Veselin Stoyanov, Alexander Raichev, who gave solo concerts or appeared as guests in the performance of their works. The high professionalism of the Philharmonic under the baton of Maestro Notev has led to a number of invitations to participate in concerts and festivals, and from there to the realization of numerous tours in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Romania, Greece, Czechoslovakia as well as making many recordings for the National Radio and Television and for a number of foreign record companies. The repertoire of the Pleven Philharmonic includes works of all styles and eras, as well as many premiere performances of symphonic works and stage productions of operas. The Pleven Philharmonic Orchestra has proven its mastery on many stages in the country and abroad. The orchestra has repeatedly participated in the festivals "New Bulgarian Music", "Varna Summer", "Sofia Music Weeks", "Apollonia" and other prestigious music forums. It also actively participates in the International Music Festival Laureate Days "Katya Popova", and in 2006 organized the First National Competition for Young Opera Singers "Ghena Dimitrova".

Art Centre Pleven. Art Center Pleven opened its doors at the end of 2012. It is located in the ideal centre of Pleven, it has over 300 square metres of exhibition space and allows for large-scale art projects.

House of Artists art centre. The House of Artists, opened in 2007, preserves and promotes the permanent exhibition of works by Prof. Gredi Assa and his friends. Chamber exhibitions were

⁵⁶ Source: <https://visitpleven.com/listing/plevenska-filharmoniya/>



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also put on display in the house. In 2016, the House of Artists was included in and became an integral part of it. Now it has only exhibition halls which are provided for exhibitions of works of Pleven-based artists, visiting masters of fine arts, children's exhibitions and for organizing other cultural events.

Kaylaka Summer Theatre - Pleven. The open-air theatre and cinema stage "Kaylaka" is located in the famous locality Kaylaka near Pleven. It is designed for festivals, dance performances, theatre productions and other cultural activities.

Community Centre "Saglasie 1869" - Pleven. The community centre was founded on October 1, 1869 by the teacher Nestor Markov, only a few months after the organization of a private revolutionary committee in the city by Vasil Levski. At the constituent civil assembly a board of trustees was elected and money was raised. The assembly assigned Nestor Markov to write a statute of the community centre, and the board of trustees was assigned to order a seal from Vienna. Hadji Petraki Mazhkarov's cafe served as a premises of the centre.. In 1979 the building of Saglasie Community Centre was declared a monument of culture.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

General Skobelev park museum. Cultural monument of national importance. Established in the period 1904-1907 on the initiative of the "Tsar Alexander II Liberator" Committee chaired by Stoyan Zaimov. A memorial park museum located in the southwestern part of Pleven. In the centre of the park is a fraternal mound with ossuary. On it, in specially made niches of freestone, 4- and 9-pound cannons from the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 are placed, and on top is the St. George's Cross for bravery. The interior of the ossuary was rebuilt in honour of the 100th anniversary of the Pleven epic battles. The names of the regiments of General Skobelev's detachment which fought on September 11-12, 1877 are inscribed in oval-shaped medallions. In a sarcophagus of black polished granite placed in the centre of the ossuary are stored the bones of soldiers from Skobelev's detachment, who died during the 3rd assault on Pleven. In the immediate vicinity of the fraternal mound and ossuary is the redoubt "Issa aga", restored during the development of the park. Nine fraternal mounds and monuments preserve the memory of those who died at the Green Hills.

At the beginning of the park there is a bust of Gen. Skobelev and a memorial plaque with a text about the construction of the park. The main entrance is shaped with the muzzles of Russian cannons. The front gate was designed by P. Deyanov and made in the Sofia Arsenal. On both



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sides of the entrance visitors can see 24-pound cannons of the artillery battery at the command post of Alexander II at the positions near the village of Radishevo. The fence was built in 1904 by engineer Major Selyanovski, and in 1907 it was rebuilt based on a design by P. Deyanov. The park was designed by Jules Locheau, manager of the royal parks in Sofia, and the design was executed by D. Gulemetov. The main alley is covered with colourful river stones in the form of a mosaic with the motifs of Bulgarian national embroidery. Original cannons from the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 are arranged in batteries around the fraternal mound-ossuary and at the main alley of the park. Skobelev Park hosts the management of the Military History Houses Museums, later turned into Stoyan and Vladimir Zaimovi House Museum. Created on the site of the bloodiest battles for Pleven, Skobelev Park Museum fits into the category of memorial museums built on former battlefields.

D) Nature tourism resources

Kaylaka Park is located 6 km south of Pleven in the picturesque karst valley of the Tuchenitsa River. The decision to shape and ennoble the beautiful gorge as a park and to turn it into a place for recreation and tourism was taken in 1946 on the initiative of the prominent Pleven resident - General Ivan Vinarov. The management of the endeavor was entrusted to the construction committee "Kaylaka" and architect Tiholov. The park spread over an area of 10,000 sq decares and has been declared a protected territory as it is a habitat of plant species, birds and mammals unique for Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula and included in the Red Book of Endangered Species. Kaylaka part was a habitat of prehistoric animals and creatures which lived here millions of years ago, and fossils of ancient aquatic organisms can still be seen in most of the limestone cliffs.

Today, Kaylaka park offers excellent conditions for hikes, recreation, sports, and entertainment. There is a lake with boats and pedal boats, recreation areas, walking paths, tennis courts, playgrounds, swimming pools, dams, hotels and restaurants. The sheer cliffs more than 20 m in height are a magnet for rock climbers. The park also houses the city zoo and the summer theatre of Pleven. An interesting tourist site located in the park and the only one of its kind in Bulgaria is the Wine Museum, which is located in a natural cave and offers visitors interesting exhibits. All this combination of unique natural resources and opportunities for entertainment make Kaylaka Park an attractive area for tourism and recreation.

The nature reserve in the Chernelka locality is a picturesque karst canyon in the central part of the Danube plain, about 12 km from the city of Pleven. Along 7 km the small river Chernelka



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a picturesque canyon has formed with a width of 60 to 200 metres and a height of the rocks from 10 to 35-40 metres. The exceptional richness of rock formations, the specific avifauna and the diverse flora were the reason to declare the area a natural landmark in 1969. Here are representatives of over 200 species of birds, 9 species of fish, 5 species of amphibians and 11 species of reptiles. In addition to wonderful natural landmarks, Chernelka Reserve also boasts a rich historical past: late antique and medieval fortresses - Gradishte and The King's Cave; a Roman road - preserved to this day; an early Christian rock-hewn monastery, as well as a rock formation with a depth of about 15 metres and the shape of a ring, the so-called "Provertenik", associated with a supposed ancient human presence. You can also see several exceptional natural phenomena - the karst springs "Baba Raditsa", "Bublya" and "Kapchuka", the caves "Tsareva Dupka", "Mominata" and "Ivanovata". With its wonderful natural resources, unique historical and natural sites, Chernelka Reserve is an amazing place for complete relaxation and a variety of entertainment for the modern urban resident.

Karaboaz Protected Area. It encompasses the protected zones "Kutinata" and "Genchov Orman". The area is the largest existing flood terrace on the Danube. Today it has been greatly changed by anthropogenic activity.

Studenets Protected Area. Protected area under the Habitats Directive (SCI), code BG0000240, which overlaps with a protected area under the Birds Directive. It includes the following natural landmarks: Karst Gorge of the Chernelka River, Studenets, Fossils from the Tertiary, as well as the protected areas Kaylaka and Turiyata. The area is of great importance for the protection of rare plant and animal species and communities. It boasts a variety of natural habitats, including forest, grass, karst formations, caves and eutrophic lakes. The area is inhabited by 137 protected species.

Natural complex "Persina - Nikopol Plateau". The complex which includes Persina Nature Park, covered by a protected area under the Habitats Directive with code BG0000247 "Persina", protected areas under the Birds Directive "Lakut Island", Belene Islands Complex and Svishtov-Belene lowland. The scope of the park includes the Milka Reserve, the Kitka Reserve, the maintained Persina East Reserve and the Persina East Protected Area. Persina Nature Park partially overlaps with the Nikopol Plateau Protected Area, declared under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. The park's greatest wealth are the birds. More than 200 species have been described and almost all have conservation status. The Belene Islands complex is defined as one of the five most important habitats for the region of the great



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cormorant /*Phalacrocorax carbo*/, the pygmy cormorant /*Palacrocorax pygmeus*/, the black-crowned night heron /*Nycticorax nycticorax*/, the squacco heron /*Ardeola ralloides*/, the little egret /*Egretta gatzetta*/, the great egret /*Egretta alba*/, the purple heron /*Ardea purpurea*/, the Eurasian spoonbill /*Platalea leucorodia*/, the glossy ibis /*Plegadis falcneus*/, the ferruginous duck /*Aythya nyroca*/, the common tern and the little tern /*Sterna hirundo* u *Sterna albifrons*/. Also, a total of 475 species of higher plants are also described, 162 of which are closely related to the presence of water. Various plant formations are found in the island marshes, drainage and flood channels. The Nikopol plateau is important for the protection of karst plateaus with elements of steppe vegetation and caves.

Vit River Protected Area. A protected area under the Habitats Directive (SCI) including the Lugat-Drumkata protected locality. The protected area covers the Vit River north of Pleven, a system of swamps (old riverbeds), some alluvial forests and steppe communities on the hills above the river. Existence of rich fish fauna of 44 species, as well as riparian forests. The area is an important biocorridor.

E) Festivals and events

Katya Popova Laureate Days International Music Festival⁵⁷. The Katya Popova International Music Festival was established in 1966 as an annual music festival with the participation of laureates. Since its third edition, the Festival has been named after Bulgarian opera diva Katya Popova /1924-1966/, who was one of the founders and participant in the first edition. The laureate days present the achievements of the new generation in European and world performing arts, the successes of the Bulgarian singing and instrumental school. The international festival is held in Pleven every 2 years, in October, within no less than 5 concert evenings. The festival is organized by the Municipality of Pleven.

International Marimba and Percussion Festival⁵⁸. The festival is the only one of its kind in Bulgaria and its goal is to promote classical music to a wide audience - residents and guests of Pleven. The programme includes five concerts - one in each of the days of the festival, as well as master classes and lessons, which will be held at Panayot Pipkov National School of Arts in Pleven. The festival is held in July every two years.

⁵⁷ Source: laureati.cm-design.eu

⁵⁸ Source: <http://www.marimabfestival-bulgaria.com>





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Pleven International Guitar Festival⁵⁹. The International Guitar Festival has been held annually, in December, since 2015. The idea for the event was born two years earlier, and in 2014 the organizers of the festival established the association "Art next to me" and in the same year made a "dress rehearsal" with a preliminary national edition. In just 5 years, the Pleven International Guitar Festival has managed to become one of the leading events in the art of guitar performance in Europe. The festival includes: amazing concerts with performers from all over the world, an international competition at an extremely high level with a professional jury, an innovative evaluation system, an exhibition of the latest musical products, presentations of luthier-made guitars, numerous workshops, master classes, flawless organization, ideal conditions for accommodation and transport, lots of music and entertainment.

Biennial of Small Forms⁶⁰ The Biennial of Small Forms is a traditional and established forum for presenting contemporary trends and achievements in the field of painting, graphics and sculpture in the fine arts. The organization and holding of the biennial is carried out by Iliya Beshkov Art Gallery, in cooperation with the Representation of the Union of Bulgarian Artists in Pleven. The Biennale is held every two years in October.

The International Plein Air on Painting⁶¹ was established in 2021 under the name "Pleven" and the year in which it is held is added to it. The plein air is on painting, without a specific theme and the paintings are intended for the fund of Ilya Beshkov Art Gallery in Pleven. The works of art remain the property of the gallery, as the artists keep their copyrights. The international plein air is held in Pleven every 2 years, in September. It is held on 7 calendar days.

International AUTUMN JAZZ FEST⁶². The festival is a remarkable part of Pleven's cultural life. Its goal is to promote jazz and improvisational music and make them more accessible to a wide audience. Established in 2017, the festival is held every year in September on the stage in the park of the Regional History Museum, organized and funded by the Municipality of Pleven.

Theatre and puppet festival "COLOURFUL ROOSTER"⁶³. The festival was established in 2018 and continues the tradition of the international puppet festival "People and Puppets". It

⁵⁹ Source: <https://plevenguitarfestival.com/bg>

⁶⁰ Source: <http://plevengallery.com>

⁶¹ Source: <https://www.pleven.bg/bg/festivali-i-bianaleta/mezhdunaroden-pleneer-po-zhivopis-pleven>

⁶² Source: <https://visitpleven.com/listing/mezhdunaroden-autumn-jazz-fest/>

⁶³ Source: <https://visitpleven.com/listing/teatralno-kuklen-festival-shareno-petle/>





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presents the best achievements of professional puppet theatre in Bulgaria. It is held in the first half of July annually. The festival is organized and financed by the Municipality of Pleven, in partnership with the Ivan Radoev Drama and Puppet Theatre in Pleven and is part of the Cultural Calendar of the Municipality of Pleven.

In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events at the Ministry of Tourism⁶⁴ there are 3 events registered in Pleven Municipality.

F) Tourist routes

Ecotrail in the Chernelka locality. In 2001, under a project of the Municipality of Pleven, an ecotrail was built in the Chernelka area, where 18 bridges, many barbecue spots, gazebos, places for recreation were placed. The main goal of the ecotrail is to increase the environmental culture of visitors and the direct communication with the natural resources. In the middle of the route is the Kapchuka hut which has 20 seats, a tourist kitchen and a dining room, water supply and electricity. The beginning of the eco-trail can be approached from the village of Gortalovo as well as from the village of Kartožabene.

Haralambievi Wine Cellar⁶⁵ appeared on the wine scene relatively recently, but gained popularity extremely quickly with its quality wines and regional approach. The Haralambievi family grows over 85 ha of vineyards in the region of Pleven, in 4 separate vineyards, which they approach individually, both in the cultivation of the vineyards and in the vinification of the grapes from them. There are plans to build a tasting room, where tourists will be able to taste the wines of the winery, meet the family and learn about their philosophy.

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The Extended integrated thematic route “Art and Culture” includes one site from Belogradchik Municipality.

- ❖ Belogradchik History Museum.

A) Cultural-historical resources⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Register of tourist festivals and events, <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>

⁶⁵ Source: <https://winetours.bg/tour/haralambievi/>

⁶⁶ Source: Webpage of Belogradchik Municipality - <https://belogradchik.bg/?p=427>





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The Belogradchik fortress "Kale". A cultural monument of national importance and one of the best preserved fortresses in the country. It was built in the 3rd century AD by the Romans to guard strategic roads crossing the area. In Late Antiquity, it was part of the defence system of the Roman Empire and later the Byzantine Empire. The fortress was completed by the Bulgarians and is one of the last Bulgarian fortresses conquered by the Turks. It was used by them as a garrison and was converted for the use of firearms in the period 1805-1837. The fortress consists of three fortress yards and one battle platform. The architectural achievements in the construction of the first defense sectors and the massive gates are the main arguments in determining their status - monuments of national importance.

Latin kale (Latin fortress). It is located east of the Belogradchik fortress. Parts of the fortification wall are preserved. A metal staircase with a safety railing is built next to the ruins of the fortification. The site of the fortification is not secured. There are no signposts directing tourists to the site. There is no information board presenting the role and functions of the fortification. The site can be accessed by and there is a small parking lot. Next to it there is a panoramic viewpoint.

Museum of Natural History. The museum opened its doors to visitors in 1975 with the opening of an only exhibition of its kind in this part of the country. The exposition contains 520 exhibits, and the fund has another 2,500 (a total of 3000). Visitors to the museum can get acquainted with the most attractive part of the rich biological diversity of all Northwestern Bulgaria on a small space. The exhibits are arranged on an ecological principle, which allows visitors get a clear idea of dependencies in nature.

Astronomical Observatory - owned by the Institute of Astronomy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. It has three telescopes, a computer for processing and storing data from electrophotometric observations and those with a CCD camera. Astronomers here can observe the Moon, the rings of Saturn, the moons of Jupiter, the crescent of Venus, comets, stars, star clusters, galaxies. At present, the opportunities of the observatory as a tourist site are not fully used.

Hadji Hussein Mosque - built in 1751. It is of architectural and artistic value and has the status of a declared cultural monument. It has been partially restored.



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Cell school in the village of Rabisha - it is an architectural and cultural monument of local importance. It was built in 1830. The building has been restored with the possibility of building a museum collection.

Anishte locality, village of Granichak. A site of great cultural and historical significance, Anishte locality draws many visitors. It is located next to the road Salash - Belogradchik 2 km east of the village of Granichak. Remains of a ruined ancient settlement have been found here, representing a separate building consisting of 4 rooms. From the above -mentioned building there is a second ensemble similar in location to the first. There are also many fragments of pottery, coins and jewelry. It is believed that there are the remains of a Roman villa located on the Roman road Ratiaria-Naissus (present-day Nis), probably destroyed by barbarian invasions in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries.

B) Cultural resources

Belogradchik Summer Theatre. It is located in the town centre at the foot of rocks with a mushroom form. That is why it is called "The Mushrooms". The place has unique natural acoustics, which makes the venue a favourite place for cinema screenings as well as theatrical performances and concerts.

Art Gallery, Belogradchik. The gallery was opened in 1983. It exhibits over 180 canvases - graphics and paintings, including works by many famous Bulgarian artists such as Vladimir Dimitrov-Maistora, Svetlin Rusev, Stoyan Venev, Ivan Hristov, Ioan Leviev, Bakhit Bapishev and others. In addition to the permanent exhibition, the gallery often hosts temporary exhibitions.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

- ✓ The town park.

D) Natural tourism resources

Magura Cave. The Magura Cave hides a huge wealth of must-sees. It is home to the largest site of rock paintings in Europe. And in its depths the only champagne wine in Bulgaria is produced, which matures for 3 years under natural conditions. It is located 20 km from Belogradchik, near the village of Rabisha. The largest stalagmite found in Bulgaria can be seen there. The cave's underground part holds discoveries dating to 15 million years ago. The many colossal halls form a peculiar museum with fantastic limestone shapes. The most impressive are the Fallen Pine, the Big Stalacton, the Poplar, the Little and the Big Brother, the Mushroom, the Throne, the



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Petrified Forest. In the corridor of Glory visitors can see original cave paintings which are the most valuable masterpieces of primitive art in the Balkans. They number more than 700 and depict dancing female figures, hunting men, masked men and implements. Another part of them depict images of animals, plants and chessboards. The solar annual calendar, which dates from the late Eneolithic, was made, according to scientists, with great accuracy and precision of records. In the largest Triumphal Hall visitors can see the bones of cave animals and objects from the life of the tribes that inhabited this part of the Balkans. And in the former bat hall a natural sparkling wine with the brand "Magura" is made. Next to the exit of the cave is the famous Rabishko Lake - the largest inland lake in Bulgaria. Its depth reaches 35-40 m and offers ideal conditions for surfing and swimming.

Venetsa Cave - Oreshets, near the village of Oreshets. The length along its main axis is about 200 m. Extremely beautiful and rich in formations, easily accessible. The cave is ennobled with funds under a EU programme and is suitable for lovers of cave tourism. Today, the speleologists define the Venetsa Cave as the most beautiful of all 121 caves discovered during the expeditions of the White Bat Club. Inside the cave visitors can see all kinds of secondary calcite formations that nature can create with its unique imagination.

Lepenitsa Cave. Lepenitsa Cave is located in the Markashtnitsa area, 4 km from Belogradchik. It is in the middle of the Belogradchik rocks and in the middle of the sanctuary complex in Markashtnitsa. The entrance chamber of the cave is crossed on two floors, and it itself is horizontal and open for transitions into the bowels of the earth like the Magura Cave. It is estimated to be 8,000 - 8,500 years old, as the oldest artifacts found in it are about 7,000 years old.

Belogradchik rocks - Venetsa⁶⁷. Nature park.

Rock formation "The Mushrooms" - Belogradchik. The Mushrooms rock formation is located near the centre of Belogradchik. It forms part of the central group of Belogradchik rocks.

E) Festivals and events

⁶⁷ Route "Protected natural heritage in the territory of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region" - <http://ecotourism-robq.eu/bg/promotional-materials/>





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Folklore festival "From Timok to Iskar". It is held in the second week of June. The festival lasts two days and features folk groups and individual performers from the districts of Vidin, Vratsa and Montana.

The biggest uprising in Northwestern Bulgaria of 1850. It is celebrated every year at the end of May. The uprising of 1850 was the most powerful resistance of the Bulgarian people against foreign oppression in the first half of the 19th century. The homage to this event was manifested in the first days after the Liberation and gradually became a tradition.

International fair of the border regions in the Karaboaz locality. It is held annually in the third week of July. On the border between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia in the area of the villages of Salash and Novo Korito, Bulgarians and Serbs pass freely under an uncharacteristic access regime. The fair lasts three days - from Friday to Sunday and aims at trade and cultural exchange.

Summer Festival "Opera of the Peaks - Belogradchik Rocks". The Belogradchik peaks are the pinnacle of divine creation, so naturally the name Opera of the Peaks came to life - the peaks of Belogradchik rocks, the peaks of musical and stage drama, of composers and performers. The operatic art of Bulgaria is also a peak! Supreme are the Bulgarian opera singers, orchestrators and ballet dancers, without whom no opera theatre opens its doors because the Bulgarian spirit and talent has conquered the whole world. Opera of the Peaks is an innovative idea of the opera director Plamen Kartalov. The unusual stage design decisions and the idea of the director's interpretation were born amidst the magical beauty of the Belogradchik rocks and the millennial mysteries of the fairytale Magura Cave. Since 2015, the festival has been held annually in July.

In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events at the Ministry of Tourism⁶⁸, there are 6 events registered in the Municipality of Belogradchik .

F) Tourist routes

Belogradchik Rocks tourist route. The route: Tourist Information Centre - Historical Museum - Belogradchik Fortress - Museum of Natural History - Subashin Fountain locality. Length of the route - 4.00 km. Duration for hiking: 4 hours 30 minutes. The route is easy and passes along well-formed paths.

⁶⁸ Register of tourist festivals and events, <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>



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Magura Wine Cellar⁶⁹. The Magura Wine Cellar organizes wine tastings both on weekdays and weekends. The tastings are held in a unique atmosphere - in the Bats gallery of the Magura Cave. Deep in the depths of the cave, under the monotonous sound of the active stalactite, where bottles of natural sparkling wine mature and selected wines age, the wine tells the story of the winery and organizes a "journey" through the various wine styles represented in the cellar selection.

Borovitsa Wine Cellar⁷⁰ is located near the village of the same name and nestled among the Belogradchik rocks. The north-western region is extremely fertile for growing vines, and the wines are clearly terroir in nature. The winery's own vineyards are located under the rocks, on red sandy-stony soil, and the grapes turn into extremely limited series of wines, carrying the terroir of this region. There is a wide variety of styles of wines from the cellar - white, red, naturally sparkling and recently popular orange wines. Extremely limited series of terroir wines. The cellar has a tasting room.

Falkovets⁷¹ is located 14 km from Belogradchik. Nestled between the first elevations of Stara Planina and the massif of the Belogradchik rocks, it is a desirable destination for lovers of alternative tourism. In a quiet place is Madona Inn, Falkovets - a place with a relaxed atmosphere, delicious food and friendly hosts.

Planinitsa ecotrail⁷². Route: Tourist Information Centre ~ Place for rest ~ Hike to "Haidushko kladenche" ~ Hike from "Haidushko kladenche" to picnic spot at "Planinitsa" ~ Hike from the picnic spot at "Planinitsa" to the tourist base of "Planinitsa" ~ Hike from "Planinitsa" to the locality "Chukata" ~ Hike from the locality "Chukata" to Belogradchik. Time for visit and covering the whole route ~ 4 hours. Special requirements ~ guide and camping equipment. The route is moderate in difficulty. It passes along well-shaped paths. The eastern massif of the Belogradchik rocks is observed.

Zbegove ecotrail⁷³. Route: Hike from the Tourist Information Centre to the Belogradchik Fortress ~ Transition from Belogradchik Fortress to Razkusie locality ~ Transition from Razkrusie locality to Zbegove rock locality ~ Rest ~ Transition from Zbegove to Popska House ~ Rest ~

⁶⁹ Source: <https://magurawinery.bg/#vinarska-izba-magura>

⁷⁰ Source: <https://winetours.bg/tour/borovitza/>

⁷¹ <http://www.madonainn-bg.com/content/EN/id-49/Ecot-rails.htm>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.





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Transition from Popska House to Belogradchik Fortress. Time to visit and cover the trail ~ 6 hours. Special requirements ~ guide and tourist equipment. The route is moderately difficult with well-shaped paths. The western massif of the Belogradchik rocks is observed.

Vedernik Peak ecotrail⁷⁴. Route: Trekking from the Tourist Information Centre to Belogradchik Fortress ~ Transition from the fortress to the locality "Razkrusie" ~ Transition from the locality "Razkrusie" to the locality "Ivanov Kamak" ~ picnic place ~ Transition from the locality "Ivanov Kamak" to the locality "Stolove" ~ Transition from the locality "Chairs" to Vedernik peak ~ Transition from Vedernik peak to "Zaren" locality ~ Transition from "Zaren" locality to the village of Prauzhda. Total duration of the route: ~ 6 hours. Special requirements ~ guide and tourist equipment. The route is moderately difficult with well-shaped paths.

The World of Rocks ecotrail⁷⁵. Panoramic site "Mislen Kamak" ~ Panoramic site "Mislen Kamak" ~ Panoramic site Chachin Kamak - Natural History Museum ~ Panoramic site "Markashnitsa" ~ Lepenitsa Cave ~ Subashin Shelter ~ Belogradchik Fortress. Duration: ~ 6 hours. Special requirements ~ none. The route is easy. It passes along shaped paths. The central massif of the Belogradchik Rocks is observed.

Northwestern Balkans ecotrail⁷⁶. Town of Berkovitsa ~ Kom peak ~ village Chereshovitsa ~ village of Govezhda - "Areshkova chukka/Kopren" locality ~ town of Chiprovtsi ~ village of Gorni Lom ~ "Bekinska shobarka" locality above the village of Chuprene ~ village of Stakevtsi ~ town of Belogradchik. Duration of the route: ~ 9 days /150 km/.

VIDIN MUNICIPALITY

The following sites in Vidin Municipality are included in the developed Extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture".

- ❖ Nikola Petrov Art Gallery;
- ❖ Vida Drama Theatre;
- ❖ Sinfonietta Vidin;
- ❖ Vidin State Puppet Theatre.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.



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A) Cultural-historical routes⁷⁷

Baba Vida Castle, Vidin. The castle is one of the best preserved defensive facilities in Bulgaria. Its foundations were laid at the end of the 10th century on one of the towers of ancient Bononia. It was completed in the 14th century, when it was the ruling castle of the Vidin tsar Ivan Stratsimir (1352-1396 / 97). The castle occupies an area of 9.5 decares together with the moat. It has two fence walls, on which 11 defensive towers were located, one of them dating to the 17th century.

Krastatata Kazarma (The Cross-shaped Barracks) Museum. The cross-shaped barracks have a remarkable architectural plan in the form of an equal-armed cross. It was built by the governor of Vidin, Osman Pazvantoglu, in 1801, where the garden of the Old Seraglio was located and was used as a residence of the Janissaries. The internal distribution of the building has been rebuilt and changed according to the requirements and needs of the services that were located there. There are four almost separate courtyards, and the entrances are in the corners of the diagonals. The central part of the building creates a feeling of space and solemnity. The architecture is unique in its nature, as well as the spatial composition, it shows foreign influence and the advent of new ideas. After the Liberation, the building was used as a court and military barracks for the Bulgarian army. Today the remarkable building is a cultural monument and in it one can see various exhibitions, recreating the life of the Bulgarians from the Vidin region.

Archaeological Museum - Epigraphic Centre. The Archaeological Museum in Vidin is located in a building that is an architectural cultural monument of local significance, built more than 200 years ago. Its purpose was to store cereals collected by the Turkish authorities as a "tithe" tax from the Bulgarian population. The new museum was implemented under the European project "Creating public access to a cultural monument building - Turkish warehouse and the creation of an epigraphic center" under the Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Arts programme. The building has been restored and adapted for an epigraphic centre in order to preserve and exhibit archaeological finds from different eras. 38 movable archaeological and epigraphic cultural properties dating from Antiquity to the 19th century are put on display. The epigraphic centre

⁷⁷ Source: Webpage of Vidin Municipality - <http://vidin.bg/wps/portal/vidin/municipality/municipality-characteristics/tourists-information/zabelezhitelnosti>



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is located near the Baba Vida fortress and thus forms an interesting historical complex, which enriches the tourist product of Vidin.

Konaka Historical Museum is housed in a building with an interesting architectural style, built in the 17th century. Initially it functioned as a police department, and after the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 it was given for use to the church community in Vidin. The building has been rebuilt many times, there are elements of Bulgarian architecture typical of the National Revival Period, which gives originality to its appearance. After the Liberation, the building housed the Municipality and it was in it that decisions were made for the European modernization of the city. Today visitors to the museum can get acquainted with the rich history of the region from Antiquity to the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation (1877-1878).

Cathedral of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki. The spiritual pillar of the Bulgarians in Vidin is the cathedral church the Holy Martyr Saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki, the second-largest after the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia. It was built on the site of a wooden church from the 17th century and bears the same name. The cathedral was finally completed and consecrated in 1926. The frescoes are expressive and unique. The scene with the envoys of Tsar Peter (927 - 970), offering gifts to St. Ivan Rilski is especially noteworthy. There is no other similar mural in the Orthodox world, which depicts the faces of the leaders of the national liberation struggle of the Bulgarians - Hadji Dimitar, Georgi Rakovski, Lyuben Karavelov, Hristo Botev, Vasil Levski, Todor Alexandrov. The patriotic and spiritual duty are united in the name of the national salvation. The church has been declared a cultural monument of national importance.

St. Petka Church, Vidin. The church was built in 1627 on the foundations of an older church. It is dug deep into the ground.

St. Pantaleon Church. It is located in the yard of the Vidin diocese.

Saint Nicholas Church, Vidin. Built on the site of an old bell tower and an extension to the church St. Pantaleimon in 1926 based on a design of architect Kosta Nikolov.

Mosque and library of Osman Pazvantoglu, Vidin. The mosque is a massive stone building with strictly oriental architecture. It was built in the period 1800-1801.



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Turkish konak "Koluka", Vidin. It was built in the second half of the 18th century. The konak has been significantly modified over the centuries.

Turkish Post, two-storey stone building, Vidin. It was built especially for postal needs in the 1860s. The building is the only preserved old post office in the country.

The Synagogue, Vidin. It is located near the Bab Vida castle. It was built in 1894 for a Jewish house of prayer. Today the building is in the process of restoration.

Remains of a Roman fortress wall and tower in the Kaleto" district of Vidin. Gates: Vidbolska, Janichar, Florentin, Telegraf, Pazar, Stambol.

Bononia Ancient Fortress. The site is located in a modern urban environment and archaeological research is possible only on individual fragments that have survived modern construction. Geophysical surveys are currently being carried out on the site area, which will allow better refinement of the areas that can be explored in the future. Given the historical significance of ancient Bononia and its connection with the mediaeval Bdin until modern times, research is necessary in terms of the cultural and historical heritage and its emotional perception.

Small sections of the Roman fortress wall and towers have been discovered. A partial conservation has been made in the Baba Vida fortress of part of the wall and the towers. No restoration has been carried out, but the site is well exposed.

B) Cultural resources

The Drama Theatre in Vidin was built in 1891. This is the first building in Bulgaria created especially for theatrical needs.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

City Garden along the Danube, Vidin. The garden has a historically established character and a preserved original planning composition. It is designed in a landscape style, in which the bosquet forms of boxwoods (characteristic in shape for the Austrian baroque parks)



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harmoniously fit. This peculiar mixture of styles - landscape (bearing the character of English parks with alternating open and closed spaces, where the effect of tree groups and meadows is relied on) and the bosquet baroque forms of the bushes, creates its own harmony and brings qualities of a new style which can be defined as typically Bulgarian. The construction of the garden on the banks of the Danube took place in 4 main stages: 1878-1899, 1911-1928, 1928-1939 (when it covers the territory until Telegraph Gate) and until 1960 (all the way to the Baba Vida fortress). The park has significant architectural monuments (Vida Drama Theatre, Pazvantoglu's Mosque and Library, Telegraph Gate, the Turkish Post, the Baba Vida Fortress), archeological, memorial sites, preserved panoramic and scenic points, creating a visual contact with the surrounding architectural framework and the Danube river, many places for entertainment and recreation.

Vladikina Bahcha Park (old name "Tolbuhin") is located in front of the Georgi Benkovski sports complex in Vidin. The name dates back to Turkish times, here was the summer residence of the Vidin bishops. All folk celebrations took place here. This is one of the parks in Vidin, filled with lots of greenery and very pleasant for walks.

Rova Park (Garden above the moat), Vidin. A park, which was built on the buried part of the moat, surrounded the stone walls of the fortress, which surrounded the Old Town (Kaletu district). The park starts from Stambol Gate and continues to Janichar Gate.



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D) Natural tourism resources

Vidin Park Protected Area⁷⁸. Protected area under the Habitats Directive (SCI) with code BG0000522, which borders on a Birds Directive protected area. Includes Lipaka Protected Area. On the territory of the protected area there are deciduous forests of beech, linden, ash, maple, elm. Presence of mixed habitats between Moesian silver linden forests and thermophile beech forests. There are oak forests, widespread along the lower part of the Vidbol River, with many tree species typical of riparian areas. Natural and semi-natural grass communities.

Archar-Orsoya protected area⁷⁹. A protected area under the Habitats Directive (SCI) with code BG0000497, which borders on a protected area under the Birds Directive. The protected area includes floodplain Danube terraces and the surrounding sand hills with a height of 80-90 m. A Danube island with alluvial forests is also included.

The Magura Cave. It covers the Rabishka mound (461 m above sea level). The cave is one of the rarest nature landmarks in Bulgaria in its beauty and diversity. It is developed for tourists. Its underground labyrinths are about 2.5 km long with imposing halls, stalactites and stalagmites, and rare cave formations.

E) Festivals and events⁸⁰

Danube Waves Arts Festival. The festival is a synthesis of traditional and modern arts: photography and painting, sculpture and graffiti, music and dance, folklore and illusionist's art. This is the palette of the event which is constantly updated. It is held annually in the town of Vidin in July and is of national importance.

The Bridge Youth Arts Festival. Workshops on visual arts, music and dance are held during the festival days. The young people show what they have learned at various events during the week.

⁷⁸Route "Protected natural heritage in the territory of Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region - <http://ecotourism-robog.eu/bg/promotional-materials/>

⁷⁹ Same as previous

⁸⁰ Source: Register of tourist festivals and events, Ministry of Tourism
<http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>





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The festival is a unique summer experience for young people. The festival is held annually in August.

Badina Mediaeval Festival. Presentation of important events from the Bulgarian Middle Ages through historical reenactments and rituals. Children's animation is a mandatory element of the festival programme. New elements are added every year. The festival is held at the Baba Vida Fortress every year in August.

In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events at the Ministry of Tourism⁸¹, there are 6 registered events in the Municipality of Vidin.

F) Tourist routes

Route: A unique mixture of history and natural beauty in the Danube Park. The starting point of the walk could be at the Vida Drama Theatre, whose building was built in 1892 and is the first in Bulgaria for theatrical art. It impresses with the Austrian architectural style typical of the first decades after the Liberation. The Danube has always been a living link with the rest of Europe, it carries the breath of modernist Western society. Another architectural and cultural monument located near the theatre is the Nikola Petrov Art Gallery built in 1893. The building functioned as a military club, where the famous Viennese balls were held, it was the centre of many events held in the city. This tradition has been preserved, and the function of the building has been changed since 1964. The art gallery is a place where visitors can see masterpieces of fine art, works by contemporary artists, as well as marriage vows of fidelity. A leisurely walk will inevitably take the tourist to Telegraph Gate, which is part of the Kale fortification system and has no analogue in the country. It was built by French and Polish engineers in Turkish service in the period 1690-1720. This defensive line makes the city impregnable. The curious look falls on a house reminiscent of Bulgarian Revival architecture. This is because it was built by Debar craftsmen in 1858, but it played the role of a Turkish post office - the only one preserved in Bulgaria. The Turkish post office used a telegraph to connect Vidin as a border town in the Ottoman Empire with Calafat in the Wallachian principality. Little is known about the fact that the first wine-making school was opened in Vidin in 1887 with the assistance of Konstantin Stoilov, in his capacity as an MP from this region. The building is preserved in its original form (immediately next to the Turkish Post) and hints at the masterful wines with a Danube flavour, which are made in the area. After the tourists have already

⁸¹ Register of tourist festivals and events <http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>



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immersed themselves in the unique mixture of history and natural beauty, unexpectedly they are proudly faced with the timeless symbol of Vidin - the Bab Vida mediaeval fortress. The only fully preserved defensive structure from the Middle Ages rising on top of the Roman remains of the ancient fortress of Bononia. Rebuilt and expanded, the fortress is a silent witness to the historical vicissitudes in the Vidin region.

Route: The charm of the Old Town. In the old part of Vidin, called "Kale", monuments bearing the spirit of the past are preserved. The Old Town is entered through the main gate - Stambol Gate, which is part of the fortification system built in the period 1690-1720. After its construction Vidin became an impregnable city. It has the shape of a semicircle, with gates on the Danube and on land and is a cultural monument of national importance. What everyone will notice is the architectural style of the houses built in the early 20th century, with ornaments supplied from Vienna and Budapest. The road takes the curious tourist to the Metropolitan Complex, which consists of the Palace of the Metropolitan of Vidin, built in 1924. Next to it is the mausoleum of Exarch Antim I (1816-1888), a donor and worthy citizen. Part of the complex is the church of Saint Pantaleon dug into the ground and declared a national art monument. Bishop Sofroniy Vrachanski served in it during his stay in Vidin in 1800-1803. In the immediate vicinity is the church Saint Nicholas of Myra the Wonder Worker, the second largest in the city after the cathedral of Saint Demetrius. It is noteworthy that next to the Christian complex rises a mosque. The governor of Vidin, Osman Pazvantoglu (1793-1807), who did not obey the central sultanate, built public buildings, some of which have been preserved to this day. Apart from the mosque, the library of Osman Pazvantoglu, built in honour of his mother, is also preserved. An emblematic building in the town is the Krastata Kazarma Museum built in 1801 by the mentioned governor of Vidin. The shape of an equal-armed cross has determined its name. The location is convenient for anyone who decides to visit the old part of the city and immerse oneself in history of the last mediaeval Bulgarian capital. In Vidin there is another church dug into the ground, located opposite the cross-shaped barracks. The Saint Petka Church was probably built in the Middle Ages, but it is known that it was painted in 1636 with the help of the prince of Walachia Matei Basarab. Undoubtedly, the walk ends with a visit to the medieval Baba Vida fortress. The only fully preserved defensive structure from the Middle Ages that is erected on the Roman remains of the ancient fortress of Bononia. Rebuilt and expanded, the fortress is a silent witness to the historical vicissitudes that befell the Vidin region.

Route: the village of Ruptsi - Vidin - Chateau de Val Winery and Kalotof Winery. Chateau de Val winery was founded in 1998 by Mr. Val Markov with the tendency to revive the tradition of



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the Vidin region and restore the long-forgotten quality and unique wine. Chateau de Val produces high-quality natural red and white wines. The pride of the Chateau de Val winery is called GRAND CLARETT - red blended wine. Chateau de Val also produces: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cuvee, Riesling, Viognier. All our wines are produced in a traditional style (natural grape production), necessarily fermented and aged in American, French and Bulgarian oak barrels. Chateau de Val wines are highly regarded around the world, and have also received numerous awards at a number of competitions. Chateau de Val winery is located 3 km outside the village of Gradets, which is located 12 km northwest of Vidin, in the valley of the river Topolovets. The first written testimony about the settlement (then Urumlar) dates back to the 15th century. Later it became known as the Gartzzi, and received the name Gradets in 1934. Its greatest prosperity was reached in 1956 - over 4,000 inhabitants. The first church in the village of The Holy Prophet Elijah was built in 1854. About three decades later it was demolished and in its place in 1896 the current one of the same name was completed. 8 km west of Gradets is the Albotin Rock Monastery.

Novoselska Gamza Winery has a long history, it has gathered from the experience of many generations of winemakers and does not accidentally share that "Tradition is not only a classic, it is also the future."

Bononia Estate Cellar, true to its mission "Tradition carried over the centuries" offers a wide selection of white, rosé and red wines.

Culinary folklore fair Badnik, Vidin. The event is an exhibition and tasting of ritual breads from the Vidin region. It is held annually on December 22.

Summer Opera Festival "Fortress of Centuries" - Baba Vida Fortress. The historical landmarks and natural resources of the city are used as a background for the performances. A unique combination of art and cultural monuments near the Danube. The festival was held for the first time in 2017. Since then, it has been held annually in August. Organizers are: Vidin Municipality, Sofia Opera and Ballet, Ministry of Culture.



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DOLJ COUNTY, ROMANIA⁸²

The developed Extended Integrated Thematic Route "Art and Culture" on the Romanian side includes a total of 6 sites, of which 1 in the town of Calafat and 5 in the town of Craiova:

- ❖ Marincu Palace in Calafat;
- ❖ Art Museum (Jean Mihail Palace), Craiova;
- ❖ Baniei House (Casa Baniei), Craiova;
- ❖ Oltenia Philharmonic, Craiova;
- ❖ Marin Sorescu National Theatre, Craiova;
- ❖ Theatre for Children and Youth Kolibri, Craiova;

A) Cultural-historical resources

Memorial house of Elena Farago, Craiova. The poet Elena Farago lived in this building from her appointment as director of the Alexandru and Aristia Aman Foundation, on September 1, 1921, until her death in January 1954. The house also hosted a cultural hall, a meeting place for people with different backgrounds. The Elena Farago Memorial House hosts a permanent exhibition, including 396 exhibits: furniture, personal belongings, books and magazines, but also hundreds of original documents, photocopies, family photos and correspondence. It is visited annually by thousands of children and young people, as well as by people interested in the work and activities of Elena Farago.

Oltenia Museum - Department of History - Archeology, Craiova. In the 17th and 19th centuries, there was a water reservoir in the area where the building of the historical and archeological department of the Oltenia Museum is currently located. On the territory of the museum there was a part of an ancient forest, of which a small part has been preserved, in the present-day park Mihai Bravu. The construction of the building of the section "History and Archeology" of the museum "Oltenia" is according to the plans of the architect Bilek, and the building was completed in 1906, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the reign of King Carol I, with the function of a primary school for boys and girls. Orphans were taught crafts at this school. In 1948, the communist regime abolished religious foundations and private schools. Therefore, with the direct intervention of the future academician CS Nicolăescu-Plopșor and his colleague

⁸² Source: <https://discoverdolj.ro>





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from the school - Stefan Vojtek, then Minister of Education, the building was donated to the Oltenia Museum. Initially, the building was the State Archives and all museums in Craiova.

Oltenia Museum - Department of Natural Sciences. The museum was opened on December 2, 1923 under the name "Museum of Natural History in Craiova", by members of the Craiova Scientific Circle, led by Professor of Natural Sciences Marin Demetriscu. The museum became a section of the Regional Museum of Oltenia in 1928. Today there are permanent exhibitions in various sections of the natural sciences, as well as a Planetarium on the second floor of the building.

National Bank of Romania - Dolj Branch is housed in a historic architectural monument of local significance, located in the centre of Craiova. The building is located next to the house of Constantin Valimarescu and opposite the Evangelical Church. The building, dating from the late 19th century (1887-1888), was built to serve as the seat of the county branch of the National Bank of Romania, an institution established in 1880.

The enchanted castle of Craiova is located in the most famous and popular park in the city - Nicolae Romanescu Park. The fact that it is located in a less visible place, hidden among the trees, makes it less known to tourists until a few years ago. The enchanted castle was built in 1905 to mask the water tower in the park. It is built in a romantic style and is one of the meeting places of the people of Craiova. The castle is located near the Suspension Bridge, another popular attraction in the park. It divides two hills and is above the water.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (from the cult of Augustine) is housed in a historical architectural monument of local significance, located in the centre of Craiova. A famous architect Lindhorst built the current building in the second half of the 19th century (presumably around 1870-1872). In 1881, an evangelical confessional school was established behind the church, where the pastor of the evangelical community, accompanied by three teachers, took care of the education of 131 students. This institution operated until 1945, when it was closed by the communist regime. The building that houses the Evangelical Church, considered the oldest Protestant place of worship in Oltenia, belongs to the Neo-Renaissance style. The church currently houses both the evangelical Lutheran community, which includes 34 parishioners, and the Reformers. Services are held by pastors of the Evangelical County Consistory in Sibiu on the first Sunday of the month and on the occasion of royal holidays.



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Madonna Dudu Church or Mother Reverend⁸³, Craiova. The church bears this name because of the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, found in the 17th century in a mulberry tree (dud), which was located on the same place where the temple was later built. It was built between 1758-1760 on the site of an older wooden church (from 1700) by the first locksmith (responsible for the external guarding of the ruler's rooms - Constantine Fotescu and tanner Hadji Ion Gheorghe. The church owned many properties and shops, one of which was the first hospital in the region for the mentally retarded. As a result of the earthquake of 1838, the temple was completely destroyed and therefore in 1841 the remains were demolished and between 1842-1844, it was restored in the Baroque style by a Viennese architect, at the invitation of the boyar Yordake Otetelisanu. Because it was too small, the church was demolished in 1913, and the present one was built in its place, built in the neo-Byzantine style according to the plans of architects Ion Traianescu and Sterie Becu and consecrated in 1942. The temple is one of the remarkable religious sites of Craiova, with an important cultural and charitable role. Since 1992 it has been an episcopal cathedral.

Roman Catholic Church "All Saints" or "St. Anthony", Craiova. Construction of the church began in 1844. The church has 3 altars, a belfry, and was consecrated in 1844 by Bishop Molajoni, in honour of "All Saints". The old church tower was demolished, the Gothic clock tower was built, which existed until the earthquake in 1977. In 1884 a girls' school was opened in the church, which developed rapidly under the leadership of the superior Gisela Kolbay (with primary school and boarding house). The school ceased its activities in the summer of 1948 with the nationalization of the schools. In 1998-1999 the interior of the church was renovated, the icons and statues were also renovated. Between 1991-1994, with the support of the governments of the republics of Germany and Italy and under the leadership of Fr. Dean Rătan Ionel, in the yard of the parish was built a kindergarten called Saint Anthony, In 1992, the court ruled that the Catholic school should be restored, where the Roman Catholic Deanery is currently located and where the Roman Catholic Theological Postgraduate School "St. Joseph" operates, which trains students for the professional qualification of "a public health nurse".

The Church of the Holy Trinity⁸⁴ is perhaps among the most beautiful in Craiova, located in the city centre. It was built between 1765-1768 in the Brâncovenesc style. The temple was founded by the old mayor Dumitrana Stirbey. She was the daughter of the teacher Konstantin

⁸³ Source: <https://cdst.ro/bg/index.php/location/biserica-madona-dudu-sau-maica-precesta/>

⁸⁴ Source: <https://www.holysites.me/trip/1650/>





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Strumbianu and the widow of the great logothete Konstantin Stirbey, a former kaymakam of Craiova in 1741. The church is built of stone and brick and has a cruciform shape, with a slender bell tower rising above the central part and a narthex with a colonnade. In 1811, several two-storey buildings were erected in the churchyard, probably for the purpose of organizing a monastic dormitory. The temple was damaged during the revolution of 1821, as a result of which in 1823 the roof was repaired. An earthquake in 1838 caused new damage, and two years later the church was repaired by Catherine (Katinka) Bibescu and her son, the Great Logothete Barbu Stirbey. In 1890, an attempt was made to build a hospital with church funds, but this initiative was unsuccessful. Instead, a medical dispensary was built for the poor, a home for temporary accommodation in the churchyard. It is supported by its own revenues, the adjoining church estates and donations. At the end of the 19th century, the restoration of the temple began, which lasted until 1906. The sons of Barbu Stirbey Vod, Princes Alexandru and Dimitrie Stirbey took over the financial side. During this period the building was erected according to the plans of the French architect and restorer André Lecomte Du Noüy. Then the entrance tower was built, the interior was painted, a new gilded oak iconostasis was made, and the furniture was brought from France. In 1995 the frescoes were restored, and in the first years of the new century, at the request of the Municipality, the fence and the walls surrounding the church were demolished.

Church of St. Elijah, Craiova. The church was founded by Ilie Otetelisanu, built in the 18th century. Although the original inscription of the church has not been preserved, an inscription placed in 1890, still visible today, mentions 1751 as the year the church was built, as it is considered to be the oldest built in the century in Craiova. The church is small in size and has a tower, but was endowed by the founder with silver utensils, clothes and books, but also property, thus becoming one of the richest places of worship in Banye. The place where it was built is one of the busiest in the city, on the border between the permanent fair of Craiova and the so-called Outer Fair, which in time would be called the slum "St. Elijah". The Lazaro-Otetelişanu girls' school was supported with the proceeds from the church, and the first Central girls' school in Walachia was established with its funds.

Saint Nicholas Church (St. Nicolae)⁸⁵, the town of Calafat is an architectural monument and is one of the main places of worship in the town on the Danube River, next to the Church of the

⁸⁵ Source: <https://ziarullumina.ro/actualitate-religioasa/regionale/oltenia/biserica-sfantul-nicolae-din-calafat-111111.html>





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Assumption, the Church of the Healing Spring, and the Church of the Holy Martyr George, considered a monument. It is located in the central part of the town. The church was built between 1730-1740. In ancient times, due to the constant danger of Ottoman invasions from the Danube, the church originally functioned as a hut. Walls were built later. In 1905, the parish priest of St. Nicholas Church, the priest Petru Calafeteanu, began a valiant struggle for the "town of independence" to have a cathedral worthy of the role it had played in the country's history. In the same year, under the rule of Mayor I. S. Dragulescu, the timber market moved in front of the old church, and some small structures were demolished; in this way the space was enlarged, united with that of the Public Garden. In 1906, when the mayor of Calafat was Ion Ciupag, the holy structure itself collapsed. On the foundations of the old church, on March 20, 1906, the construction of the current monumental building began, designed by the architect Kafauniski, and the work was supervised by the architect Angelescu from the municipality of Plenița.

The church is designed in the shape of a cross, with a tower with a hemispherical dome, a narthex and two smaller towers, with a main apse and two sides, a narthex. The veranda is designed openly, supported by four columns at the end of a monumental staircase. The figurative painting and the supporting ornament of the dome are made in oil colours by the artist Kovachi. For the most part, the surface of the painting is covered with ornamental motifs, foreign to the Romanian traditional style, in an oil tempera emulsion. The iconostasis is made of carved lime, and the 49 icons are pyrographed and lightly painted in oil. The church was completed in 1910, when it was consecrated during the service of Bishop D. D. Gennady.

B) Cultural resources

Traian Demetrescu House of Culture⁸⁶. The House of Culture in Craiova was established in 1973. In 1991 it changed its name to Traian Demetrescu House of Culture. The institution was housed in the former house of Romanian poet Traian Demetrescu. The house, nationalized in 1950, was turned into a memorial house in 1966 and a cultural centre in 1973. The Traian Demetrescu House of Culture has mainly the following goals: organizing and carrying out cultural, artistic and educational activities; preservation and dissemination of the artistic and technical moral values among the local community; organizing or supporting amateur artistic groups at competitions and festivals; organizing or supporting the activity of documenting

⁸⁶ Source: www.tradem.ro



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temporary exhibitions, developing monographs and works of civic education and public information.

C) Parks and gardens in an urban environment

Nicolae Romanescu Park, Craiova. It is the largest nature park in Eastern Europe and one of the most representative monuments of landscape art in Romania. It has an area of approximately 90 ha, green plots, alleys and wooded plots, which gives it the status of the largest urban green area in Romania. It was opened in 1903 in the presence of King Carol I. Landscape architect Edouard Redont transferred the design of the future Romanescu Park to the International Exhibition in Paris (1900), and the project was awarded a gold medal. The park is built in a romantic style, a synthesis of landscape architecture and painting. In 1930 the park was named "NP NP Romanescu Park". Over the years, new components have been added: a portal entrance, a fence, an extended quay, lighting has been improved, a greenhouse of 1,050 square metres has been built, and all components of the original concept of the landscape architect Redont have been preserved. Within the arranged ensemble there are elements such as: long water currents over 1,970 m, alleys almost 27 km long, a monumental entrance, a monument to Romanescu, Bibescu house, an iron pavilion, a mediaeval castle, a lake and pier, an impressive suspension bridge, waterfalls, The Great Lake, the zoo, the hippodrome, the velodrome, the summer theatre and numerous statues, some of which belong to famous artists (Brâncuși or Jalea). In 1943, a bust of Nicolae Romanescu was erected at the main entrance in honour of the person who worked closely on the construction of the park.

Craiova Zoo⁸⁷. The Craiova Zoo, located in Nicolae Romanescu Park, was opened in 1906 and is one of the oldest in the country. At first it was just a zoo with a few animals from the local fauna: foxes, badgers, deer. There were only a few animal pens around the Foresters' House, and on the edge of the main alley by the lake there were a few more cages housing foxes and badgers.

The English Park, Craiova. The park occupies an area of 4,670 sq.m. and is located in the city centre. The Union Garden bears this name because the place is reminiscent of important events that took place in 1857 in Craiova and because the whole space is dominated by the impressive statue of the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza (sculptor Raffaello Romanelli). The garden had other names, but the most common is the English Park, because it resembles the London square. It

⁸⁷ Source: raadpflcraiova.ro





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includes ornamental trees and shrubs and a carpet of flower species that change periodically, depending on the blossoming period.

Botanical Garden, Craiova. The botanical garden is located in the southwestern part of Craiova, it covers an area of 17 hectares and is the fourth university botanical garden in the country, after Bucharest, Cluj and Iasi. It was designed by French landscape architect Edouard Redont in the early 20th century. The Botanical Garden Alexandru Buia, under the leadership of the University of Craiova, was established on the initiative and under the guidance of Prof. Alexandru Buia in 1952. The Botanical Garden is organized in the following sectors. The decorative sector starts from the entrance of visitors from Iancu Jianu Street. It provides throughout the growing season, in addition to a rich and varied collection of plants, a pleasant decoration at the entrance to the Botanical Garden. The sector of the floristic provinces of Romania is located in the northern, northeastern and eastern part of the Botanical Garden. In order to create conditions as close as possible to the ecological requirements of the species from different phytogeographical regions of Romania, micro- and macro-reliefs with heights between 1.5 m and 30 m in relation to the water gloss were arranged through large soil accumulations from the lakes.

The Plant Systematics sector is located in the central part of the Botanical Garden. It also includes the lake, which in addition to aquatic plants contains various species of birds. The floral provinces of the Globe sector are located in the southwestern part of the garden. It operates in the following provinces: Mediterranean, Caucasus, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and North America. The cultivated plants sector is located in the northwestern part of the botanical garden. It is divided into six sections: agro-phytotechnics, vegetable production, trees, shrubs and medicinal plants, vines and trees. The greenhouse sector is located near the administrative office and is structured in 4 compartments: a corridor, a greenhouse with succulent plants, a greenhouse with tropical and subtropical plants and a greenhouse with a multiplier. The rosary sector is located on an area of 0.2 ha between greenhouses and the administrative seat of the Garden. It collects many types of roses, very diverse in habitat and size, colours and aromas. The nursery is located in the western part of the garden. The propagating biological material used by the garden sectors to replace the damaged specimens is propagated in the nursery. The museum is located in the lobby of the administrative building and includes samples of seeds, fruits, plates, graphics, diplomas, collections of catalogs issued by the Botanical Garden since its inception.



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The herbarium sector is a component of great importance in any botanical garden. It begins with the herbarium purchased from the University of Craiova by the Borza family, consisting of about 10,000 leaves, edited by *Flora Romaniae Exsiccata* (FRE). Along with it is the herbarium of Prof. Alexandru Buia composed of about 20,000 leaves, collected from all provinces of Romania and defined in their majority by him. To these two herbariums are added numerous herbarium leaves from species collected from spontaneous flora and species grown in the garden sectors. The Botanical Garden annually publishes the catalog of seeds "Index Seminum", participates every year in the exhibition from June 1 and hosts various events on environmental issues and campaigns for environmental protection.

The Botanical Garden has been a member of the International Association of Botanical Gardens (IABG) since 1974 and of the Association of Botanical Gardens of Romania (AGBR) since 2001.

The Mihai Bravu Garden, Craiova, is located in front of the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Craiova and the District Court in Dolj (the former house of the boyar Glogoveanu). In front of the garden there is a statue of Tudor Vladimirescu, and inside - a bust of Nicolae Titulescu, a diplomat and politician of European importance. The garden consists of ornamental trees and shrubs planted also in other green areas of the city: pine, spruce, American maple, mountain elm, chestnut, ash, silver spruce, thuja, yew, dogwood hedges.

The Frații Buzești Garden of Roses, Craiova. It was originally called Baniei Garden because of its location in the old part of Craiova, where the Baniei House and St. Dumitru Cathedral are located. In 1978, an impressive monument was erected here in memory of the Buzesti brothers, captains in the army of Mihai Viteazul. The garden has many species of thuja, juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*), black pine, spruce, boxwood, yew bushes (*Taxus baccata*), silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), white mulberry (*Morus alba*) and others.

Doctor's Inn Park, Craiova. The park is located in the eastern part of the city, with access to the E576 road from Bucharest. In the 1980s, the river basin of the Valea Hanul Doctorului stream, 2.4 km long and 800 m long, was transformed into a beautiful park with pedestrian alleys, a hotel complex, a swimming pool and a campsite. The course of the stream is arranged in five small accumulations of water that form basins, and downstream, in three small accumulations behind some terrestrial dams. The structure of the entire park, in the form of steps, beautifully individualized by dams and water gorges, encompasses a wide variety of different types of trees and shrubs, harmonized in the grassy carpet.



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Mureș Park, Craiova. It is located in the southwestern part of the city, located on an area of 3.2 ha, planted with trees (oaks, lindens, chestnuts, plane trees, pines) and shrubs. In 1977, on the occasion of the Centennial of the Independence, the Monument to Independence, the work of sculptor Emil Mereanu, was erected here.

Debarkader Park, Calafat. The park is located near the Danube. It was renovated in 2014 and is arranged with benches, flowers, a lawn and more.

D) Nature tourism resources

The Maglavit avifauna protected area is located in Dolj County, in the Cetate, Maglavit and Calafat areas. The protected area covers 3562.6 ha. The hydrographic network includes the banks of the Danube, the lakes Basarabi, Golentsi, Maglavit, Hunia, Moreni and Fantana Banului, as well as several temporary lakes and swamps. The lakes are natural, developed in the lower sectors of the meadow, with a large surface and shallow in depth, used for irrigation and fish farming. Their connection with the Danube is still preserved, as the water supply comes directly from the river. The Maglavit Avifauna Protected Area partially overlaps with the Danube Protected Area in Gârla Mare-Maglavit, including the Pajiștea Cetate Nature Reserve. It has been declared a Special Area for the Protection of Birds by Government Decision No. 1284/2007 for the protection of 36 species of birds. The Maglavit Avifauna Special Protected Area is located on an important migration route that connects the Pannonian Plain and the Balkan Peninsula - Bulgaria - the Bosphorus, which explains the large number of species that can be seen in this area during the spring-autumn passages. The most important species are the bullfinch, the pygmy cormorant, the little egret and the night heron. Many species of ducks and shore birds can be observed.

The Balta Cilieni-Băilești Protected Area is part of the category of protected natural areas of national importance and corresponds to IUCN Category IV, declared by HCJ 26/1994 and thereafter by law No. 5/2000 for approval of the National Spatial Planning Plan - Section III - Protected Areas. It is not part of Natura 2000. The Balta Cilieni - Băilești protected area is currently managed by the Băilești City Hall under a trusteeship agreement No. 127/09.03.2010, concluded between the National Agency for Protected Natural Territories and the Local Council of Băilești Municipality, Dolj. The area covers 47 ha and falls into the category of public accessibility, according to Government Decision 1326/27.12.2001, published in the Official Gazette 17/15.01.2002. The protected natural area "Balta Cilieni - Băilești" is located in the central part of the Oltenia plain and in the Băilești plain. To the east, it stretches from the



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entrance of the Balasan River on the administrative territory of Băilești Municipality (outside the built-up area) to the dam of the airport. The flora and fauna of this protected area are characteristic for wetlands.

Preajba-Facai lake complex. The natural area is located in the central and eastern part of Dolj County, in the northern part of the village of Preajba, near the national road DN55, which connects Craiova with the port of Bechet. It was declared a protected area in 2000 and covers an area of 28 hectares. The natural area is a lake complex: lakes, swamps, streams, alluvial forests, sand dunes, arable land, meadows and there is a great variety of flora and fauna specific to wetlands. The complex consists of five lakes arranged on steps, which have a total area of 28 hectares, constantly fed by strong springs. The ecological feature of the region is that in a relatively limited geographical area a variety of continental aquatic ecosystems are grouped: springs, streams, rivers, lakes and swamps. Each of them brings characteristics specific to biocenoses and plant and animal populations. The flora and fauna of the reserve are specific to wetlands with fresh water, and their diversity and abundance are favoured by the abundance of water. Some of the species that can be observed in the Preajba-Facai area are - bird species: white heron, white stork, little egret, lychee, brown-headed duck, greater goose, nightingale; Mammals: the ermine, water rat, weasel, badger, woodpecker; Reptiles: water snake, steppe-runner lizard, lizard, turtle, water turtle; Flora: sedge, lake iris, yellow water lily and lentils.

The lake of Adunatii de Geormane. A protected area of national importance. Lake Adunatii de Geormane is located in a flat area in the Jiu River Basin, which extends over the territory of Bratovoesti and Teasc and is part of the wetland category. This protected area is characterized by the presence of lacustrine ecosystems, namely Lake Victoria and Marica Pond, in close proximity to wetlands. Lake Victoria is located on the upper left terrace of Jiu River, about 25 km south of Craiova, in the Oltenia plain on the Rojistea terrace. This lake forms an isolated biological unit connected to Jiu River through a drainage channel for excess water through Marica Pond. The shape of the lake is almost oval, with low sandy shores and few trees.

Ciurumela Forest is a forest reserve located in the municipality of Poiana Mare. It consists of a very old acacia forest, valuable for the quality of its wood and the size of the trees, unique in Europe. The forest reserve is located on the right side of the national road Calafat - Bechet - Cernavoda, about 5 km from the municipality of Poiana Mare. The acacia forest, which forms



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the forest reserve, is more than 90 years old and covers an area of 8 hectares. It was declared a protected natural area of local importance by Decision of the District Council No. 26/1994.

Reserve for wild peonies from Plenita. The wild peony nature reserve, Poiana Bujorului from the Plenița forest, is 59 km away from Craiova. The wild peony reserve, unique in the Romanian landscape, is located on an area of approximately 50 ha, and during the blossoming season it offers a splendid sight. The forest is home to a variety of wild peony called *Paeonia Peregrina*. Every year in May the traditional holiday of the peony is organized in Plenita.

E) Festivals and events

The Parade of the Calus Dance - on the day of Pentecost on Sunday. Participants: groups of nuns from Dolj and other areas performing a ritual dance. Incarnated by the authentic and pure origin of the popular genius, handed over and dressed in the pure garment of traditions, adorned with the additions of generations, Calusul has taken a lasting place in Romanian culture, becoming an emblem of Romanian cultural identity, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Alaiul Călușului Oltenesc, Craiova. Every year, on the Sunday of Pentecost, the ritual is performed accompanied by the ringing of bells, the participants in the festival distribute wormwood and geranium to the spectators on the streets of Craiova, and then on the alleys of Nicolae Romanescu.

Summer Traditions Festival - July, near St. Elijah's Day in Craiova. Participants: groups, ensembles, vocal and instrumental soloists. Each season has its own customs and traditions related to the activities in the world of Romanian villages; the most famous are those in winter, but also in summer there are some traditions related to Fairy Night (Sânzâiene or Drăgaica), the harvesting period, invoking rain during prolonged drought, Paparude, kneading dough from the new harvest, etc.

The Fair of Folk Craftsmen, Craiova - in October, during the church holiday of St. Dumitru. Participants: folk craftsmen from all over the country; folk ensembles from Dolj County; vocal and instrumental soloists, fanfare, traditional drums. Every year in Craiova during the week under the sign of St. Dumitru, the spiritual patron of the city of Craiova, major events are organized, including the Fair of Folk Craftsmen, to which craftsmen from Dolj, Oltenia and the whole country are invited.

They are organized in the open air, to which groups and folklore ensembles from Dolj cultural centers, vocal soloists and instrumentalists, traditional tapas, fanfares are invited.



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Ioana Radu National Music Festival - November. Participants: vocal and instrumental soloists, already established, from different musical genres. The Ioana Radu National Festival is named after the famous romantic singer, daughter of the city of Craiova. The first edition took place in 1998 in the Moorish Hall of the Minerva Palace in Craiova, where Ioana Radu made her debut in the performing arts. The national festival is held in two days: romance and folklore.

Pageant of traditions "From ancestors and from good folks", Craiova - December in the days before Christmas. Participants: groups, carol singers from Dolj and the country. Around the winter holidays for many years the Festival of Christmas songs and church music takes place in Craiova, which is attended by groups, ensembles of cultural centres in Dolj County, choirs of professional institutions in Craiova and the country. Since 2008, this festival has been transformed into a pageant of traditions "From ancestors and from good folks", coming down from the open-air stage, in the middle of the street, among the citizens. In addition to Christmas carols and sacred music, customs and traditions such as "Irozii" or "Vicleiul", "Pițărăii" or "Brezaia", "Sorcova", "Plugușorul", "Beaming", "Going to the Babe" or "Jordan" and other traditions in this area are presented.

Maria Tănase Festival - a competition show which is held once every 2 years. Participants: performers of Romanian folk song from the country and from the diaspora.

Craiova International Music Festival. Named after the great Romanian opera singer Elena Teodorini, born in Craiova, the festival has a biennial character.

F) Tourist routes and attractions

History and tradition of Dolj. In 2016, the municipal council of Dolj decided to upgrade the projects aimed at developing the tourist potential of the county and created the first tourist route in Dolj. Entitled "History and Tradition of Dolj", it includes five sites of cultural and tourist significance for the district: Museum of the village of Pielești, House Baniei, the Historical and Archaeological Department of the Museum Oltenia, as well as the two alleys in the municipalities of Brabova and Cernatești.

Unforgettable tourist attractions in Dolj County. The route includes: the Botanical Garden - Craiova Art Museum - Craiova Historical Centre - Frații Buzești Square - Mihai Viteazul Square - Oltenia Museum, Department of Natural Sciences - Oltenia Museum, History, Archaeological Department - Madonna Dudu Church - Saint Dumirtu Metropolitan Cathedral - Oltenia Museum,



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Ethnography Section - Nicolae Romanescu Park - Zoo - Marincu Palace - Calafat Museum of Art and Ethnography - Maglavit Monastery - Cetate Cultural Harbour - Plenita Wild Peony Reserve.

Sightseeing in Craiova. The route includes: University of Craiova, former Palace of Justice - Marin Sorescu National Theater - Craiova City Hall - Former Palace Hotel, today Craiova City Hall Administrative Pavilion - Museum of Art Craiova - Oltenia Museum, Department of Natural Sciences - National College "Carol I" Craiova - Museum Oltenia, History, Section Archaeology - Church of Madonna Dudu - Metropolitan Cathedral St. Dumitru - Casa Băniei - Minerva Hotel - the historic centre of Craiova.

Ecumenical road. The route includes: Metropolitan Cathedral St. Dumitru - Church of Madonna Dudu - Holy Trinity Church - Roman Catholic Church "All Saints" or Saint Anthony - Saint Nicholas Church - Amaradia - Evangelical Lutheran Church - Saint Elijah Church - The Church of the Assumption of the Theotokos and St. Pantaleon - Mantuleasa - Coșuna Monastery - Jitianu Monastery - Maglavit Monastery.

Banu Mărăcine Vineyard⁸⁸, Craiova. The imposing hills that guard the eastern and northeastern part of the Baniei fortress were formerly known as Plaiul Vulcăneștilor after volcanic activity from Pielești-Dolj, they turned into large areas of vineyards, Plaiul Viilor or Prisaca. In 1966, professors from the Faculty of Horticulture at the University of Craiova named these vineyards Banu Maracine. The didactic centre of Banu Mărăcine is located in the eponymous wine centre, valued for its famous red, white and aromatic wines, but also through the wonderful winery Roua plaiului, presented in 1996 at the Geneva International Exhibition of Inventions, where it was awarded a silver medal for finesse and refinement, but also for the authenticity of the technology through which it is obtained. In 1975, an experimental didactic centre of Craiova was established, in the form of an organization assimilated to the IAS (farms and sectors), focusing on the practical training of students, the development of research by teachers and the application of research results in the production of wine. Between 1984 and 1990, taking the land, the cellar was built, one of the largest in the country. The cellar is the place where wines ripen. The wine assortments are stored in oak barrels. The wine bar is located on the second floor of the building. The wine cellar has 20,000 bottles of both wine as well as liquor distilled from peaches and plums. In the didactic resort of Banu Mărăcine are located Mircea Villa and Remiza Villa, famous in the past as the Negrescu villas, as a former mayor of Craiova built a beautiful castle in the vineyards, in honour of his son Mircea. The construction is reminiscent

⁸⁸ Source: https://www.ucv.ro/campus/puncte_de_atractie/vila_mircea/prezentare.php



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of the famous Brancoveanu style. A wine cellar was built next to the castle. From the place visitors can admire the entire vineyard amphitheatre Banu Mărăcine, which bestows Craiova with a special beauty.

Municipal Sports Club Craiova and Hippodrome - Craiova. Craiova Hippodrome is located in Nicolae Romanescu Park and organizes sports training courses in the field of horse riding and leisure.

Tour of wineries and vineyards. The route includes: The Crown Domain of Segarcea - Vie Vin Segarcea - Domeniei Baniei - Crama V.inc - Galicea Mare Winery - Dinescu Wine - Galicea Mare Mansion - 7 ARTS - Banu Mărăcine Wine Centre.

Tour of museums and art galleries. The route includes: Craiova Museum of Art - Amman Gallery - Oltenia Museum, Department of Natural Sciences - Oltenia Museum, History, Archaeology Section - Oltenia Museum - Ethnography Section - Cromatic Art Gallery, Center for Popular creation Dolj - Traian Demetrescu House of Culture - ElectroPutere Gallery - "Grandmother's Room" - Folklore Centre for Kindergartens, Galicea Mare - Museum Câmpia Băileștiului from Băilești - Marincu Palace - Museum of Art and Ethnography in Calafat.

DEVELOPED CROSS-BORDER TOURIST ROUTES

[The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine transnational route](#)

[Pilgrimage route "Spiritual holy places between Veliko Tarnovo and Craiova"](#)

[Roman limes on the territory of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region](#)

[Route for youth tourism with an emphasis on local landmarks, outdoor activities and forms of cultural heritage](#)

["Protected natural heritage within the borders of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area](#)

[Programme for a three-day tourist package with routes for group tourism in Vidin-Calafat](#)

[Programme for a three-day tourist package with a route for family tourism in Vidin - Calafat](#)

[Integrated cross-border cultural tourist routes](#)

[Transnational route EuroVelo 6](#)

[Translational route EuroVelo 13](#)



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The outlined routes are not an exhaustive list of all developed routes, but are a prerequisite for directing efforts to integrate the developed integrated thematic tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) with elements of already developed tourist routes in the region and expanding the product range of the route with elements of wine tourism, religious tourism and cycling tourism.

The attractiveness of a destination is determined by the combination of elements that form its individuality and is perceived by tourists as a specific tourist product (Gorcheva, Bozhinova, 2011). By their nature, these elements represent the so-called destination mix, including tourist attractions and events, facilities, transport, infrastructure and hospitality. The sum of these elements defines the destination as attractive or less attractive. The area of the Extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" on both sides of the border has a common history and traditions, culture and art, which distinguish but also connect different communities and nations.

Cultural tourism is yet to develop its potential by combining art, culture and history with experiences.

Cultural tourism creates preconditions for combining with other types of tourist products, which increases its competitiveness. The European Commission's tourism model clarifies that cultural heritage is attested by the presence of two factors: an element of affiliation, a form of inheritance inextricably linked to a particular territory; an element of time in the sense of having links with the history or geography of the community, for at least one generation. The specific objects and phenomena in which these factors are found and are the object of cultural tourism are historical monuments, buildings, significant historical events, typical landforms, but also languages and language groups, literature, music, fine arts, local customs and crafts, a specific way of life, food and entertainment are already included. Based on this, it can be concluded that it is recommended to expand the product palette of an integrated tourism product including a joint thematic route "Art and Culture" with outdoor attractions and tourist attractions related to culinary and wine tourism.



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2.1.2.4 Tourist infrastructure: Superstructure

2.1.2.4.1 Places for accommodation

The data are presented at the level of districts (Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Vidin) in Bulgaria and the South West Oltenia Region (Romania) - the territories through which the joint integrated thematic routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) pass, for the period 2017 - 2020. The data are from the national statistical institutes in Romania and Bulgaria, as publicly available statistics were used for the purposes of the analysis. Regarding Romania, the analyzed data are at the country and region levels, as at the county level, the data are not publicly available.

Similar groups of indicators were used in the analysis: 1) number of accommodation places; 2) number of beds in the accommodation places and 3) number of beds - days. The last indicator reveals the volume of the real hotel supply within the reporting period (month or year).

The relative indicators of the supply are also calculated: 1) average number of bed places = number of beds/number of accommodation places. The indicator illustrates what is average number of beds available in one place for accommodation. 2) period of operation (in days) = number of beds-days/number of beds. It shows on average how many days a year the accommodation places function.

It should be borne in mind that the data of Bulgaria's National Statistical Institute refer to all categorized places of accommodation which operated during the reporting period with 10 or more beds. The survey includes categorized hotels, campsites and other places for short-term accommodation with more than 10 beds, operated in the period 2017-2020. The indicator also covers holiday and tourist villages, hostels, guest houses, bungalows, holiday homes, chalets, private rooms and apartments and other places for short-term accommodation in Bulgaria. Regarding the described data, statistics are kept in Romania on the types of accommodation and they are visualized in the analysis.

Bulgaria

For last year (2020) it is evident from the figure below that the number of accommodation places is decreasing in Pleven and Vidin districts, as for a certain period there is an increase in accommodation places in Veliko Tarnovo district. In Pleven district there is a decreasing trend in each year. The accommodation places in Vidin district have not undergone serious adjustments over the years, except for 2020.



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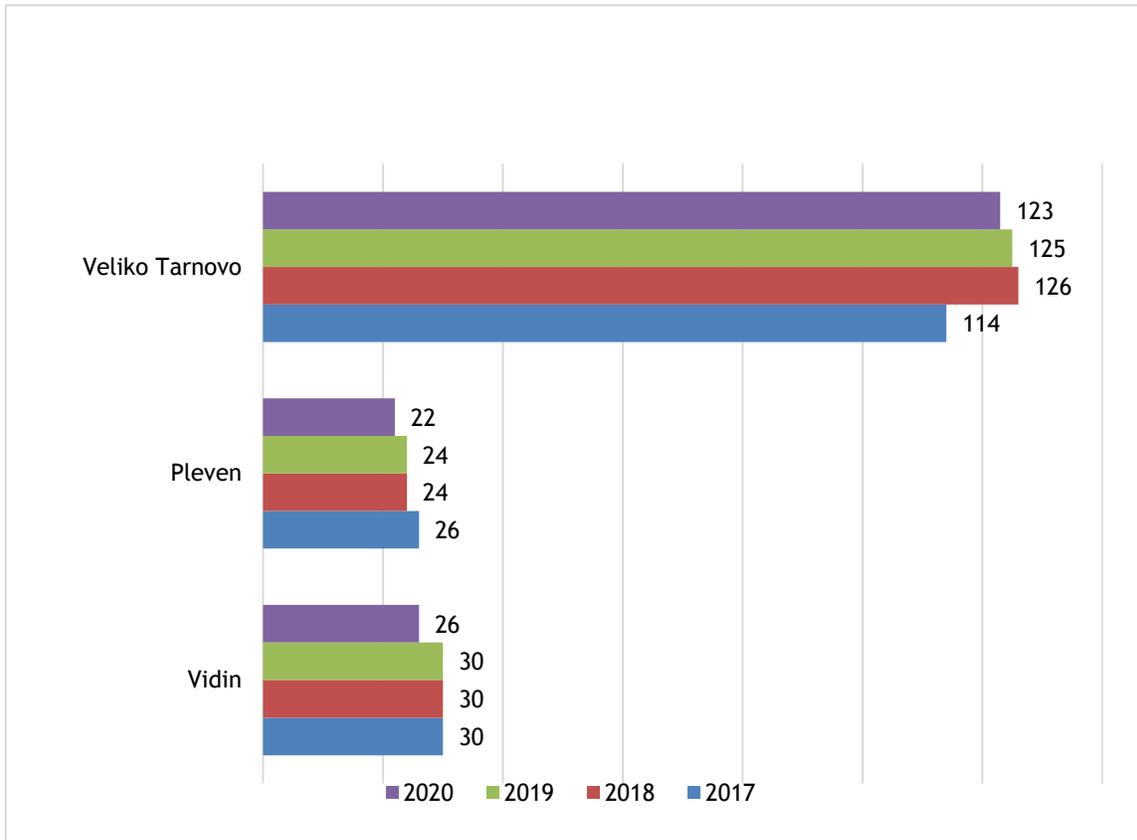


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Figure 1 Number of places for accommodation in the target districts Bulgaria (2017-2020)



Source: NSI - INFOSTAT⁸⁹

In the period 2017 - 2020, according to NSI data, there is a decrease in bed capacity. The number of beds in accommodation places in 2020 was approximately at the levels of 2018 (with a percentage change of 1.83% by 2020), with the largest increase observed in 2019. The total capacity of all places for accommodation, in the analyzed areas, by 2020 amounts to 7,594 beds (excluding those with a capacity of less than 10 beds).

⁸⁹ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=237



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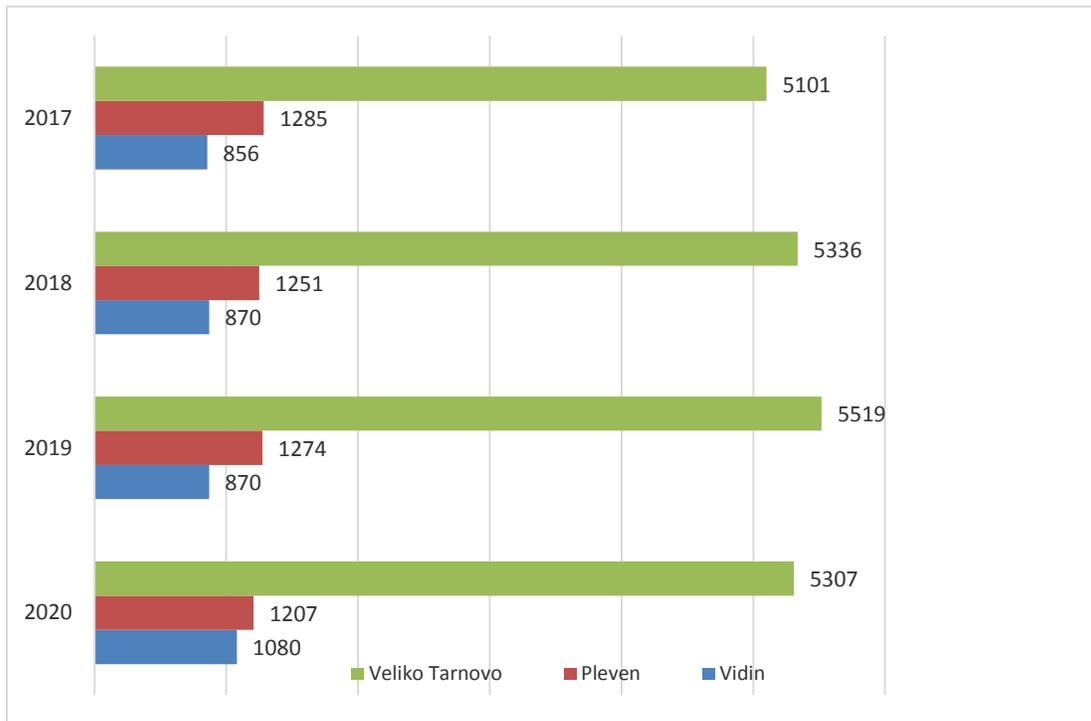


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Figure 2 Number of beds in target districts - Bulgaria 2017 - 2020



Source: NSI - INFOSTAT⁹⁰

Based on category

According to NSI data for 2020, in the target districts of the Strategy, the places for accommodation of low category (1-2 stars) are 72.51%, and the places of high category have an insignificant share - 6.43% (11 such places are reported). Due to the different size of the accommodation places, the ratios in the structure of the beds are different (Figure 4), but without significantly changing the overall picture - more than half of the beds (58%) have a category of 1-2 stars, 24.4% are with category 3 stars and 17.6% - with category 4 or 5 stars.

⁹⁰ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=12&lang=bg



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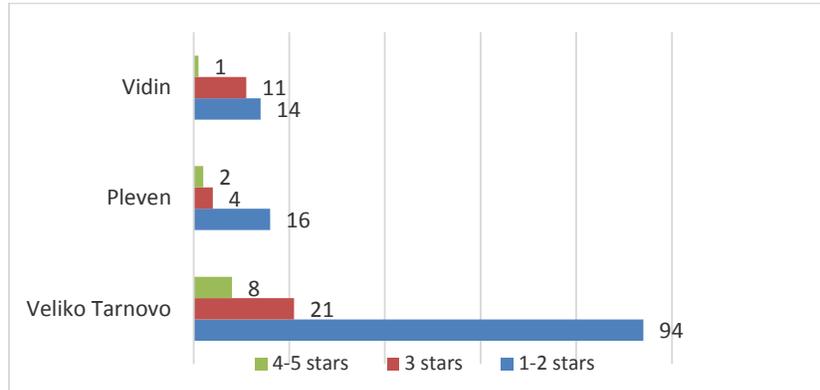


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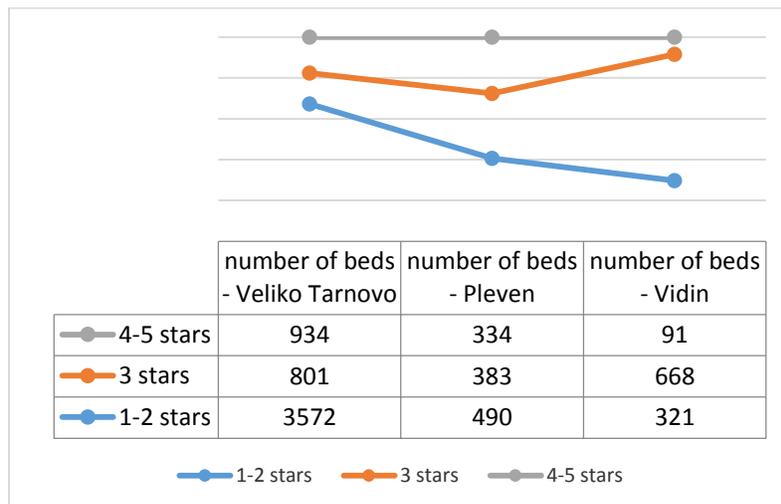
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Figure 3 Number of places for accommodation by category and target district - 2020



Source: NSI - INFOSTAT⁹¹

Figure 4 Number of beds based on category of the places of accommodation by target district Bulgaria - 2020



Source: NSI - INFOSTAT⁹²

⁹¹ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=12&lang=bg

⁹² https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=12&lang=bg



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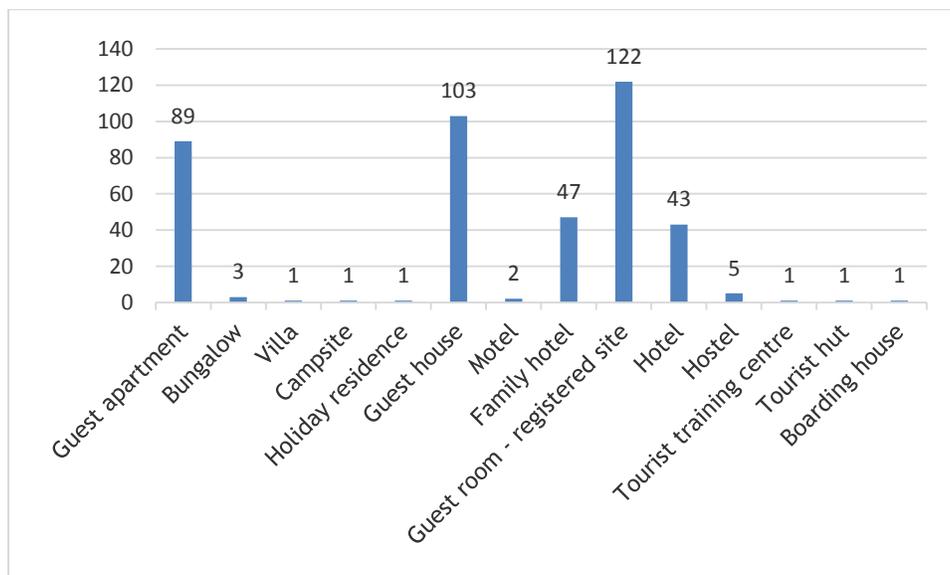
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In order to describe the types of accommodation, data from the National Tourist Register and in particular the Register of Places for Accommodation⁹³ are analyzed. The scope of the analysis includes the municipalities in which sites from the integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" are included, as follows: Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pleven, Knezha, Belogradchik and Vidin.

Largest is the number of guest rooms (registered sites - offering this service), which represent 25% of the accommodation offered, in the target municipalities on the integrated thematic routes in Bulgaria. Only 10% of the accommodation places offered are hotels, which, as mentioned above, are mainly in the category of 1, 2 and 3 stars. The main concentration of hotels is in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo and Vidin.

Figure 5 Types of places for accommodation along the integrated thematic tourist routes in Bulgaria 2021



Source: Register of Places for Accommodation at the Ministry of Tourism⁹⁴.

⁹³ <https://ntr.tourism.government.bg/CategoryzationяяAll.nsf/mn.xsp>

⁹⁴ <https://ntr.tourism.government.bg/CategoryzationAll.nsf/mn.xsp>

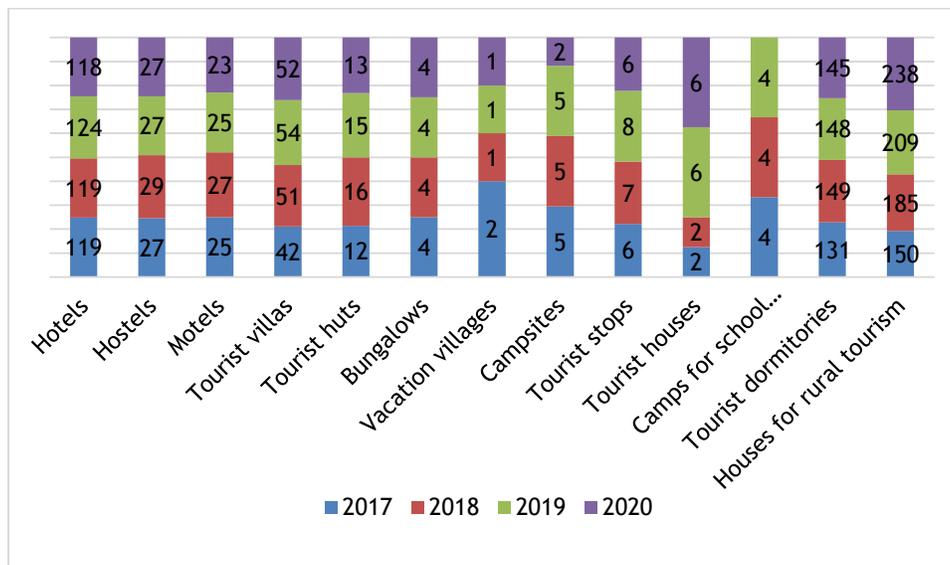


Romania

According to data from the Statistical Institute of Romania, the region of South West Oltenia in 2020 reported 635 accommodation places with 21,722 beds.

In the period 2017-2020 the number of accommodation places in South West Oltenia increased by 16.70%. By 2019, there was an increase in the number of beds (by 8.04%), and despite the drop in beds in 2020 by 5,54%, there is a visible increase of 3.32% compared to 2017.

Figure 6 Number of accommodation places by categories in the Region of Southwest Oltenia, Romania - 2017 - 2020



Source: NSI Romania⁹⁵

⁹⁵ <https://olt.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Turism-serii-de-date.pdf>



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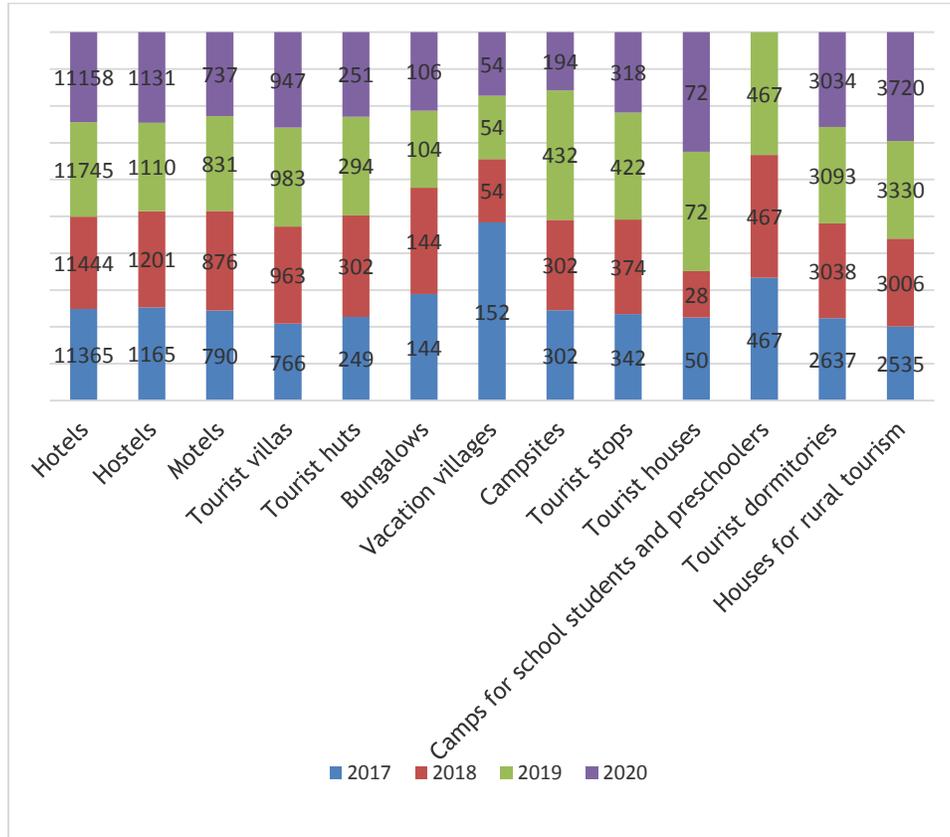


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Figure 7 Number of beds in the region of Southwest Oltenia, Romania - 2017-2020



Source: NSI Romania⁹⁶

By types of accommodation

According to data from NSI Romania for 2020, the accommodation units of the type "Houses for rural tourism" have the highest share - 37%, and the hotel-type places have a share of 19% (118 such are reported). More than half of the beds (51%) are in hotel type accommodation.

According to data of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, in particular the data specified in Tourist structures with classified accommodation functions

⁹⁶ Ibid.



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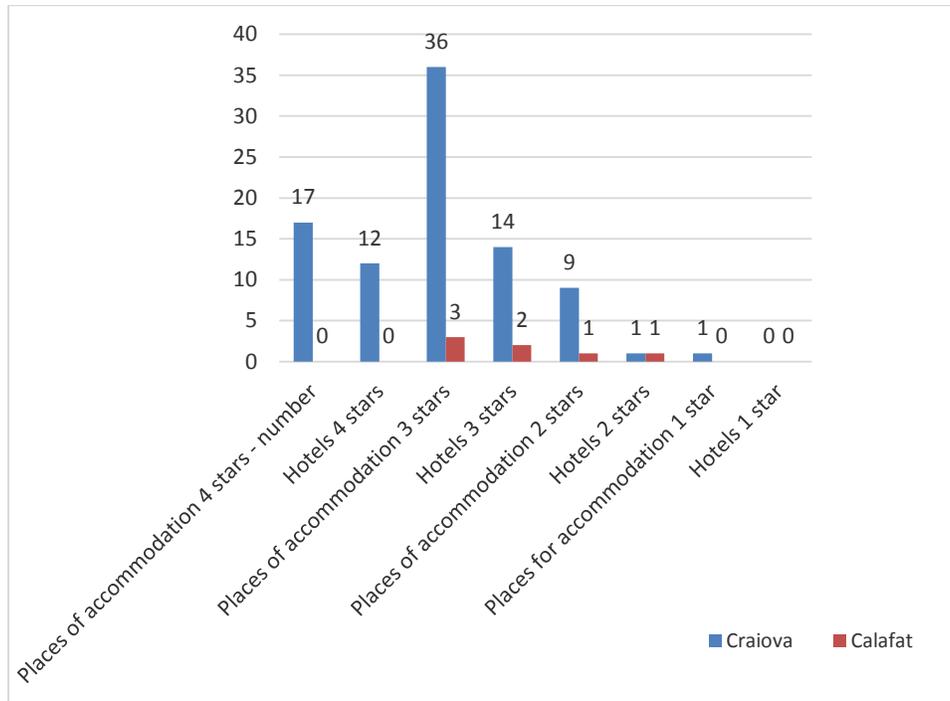
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- updated on 09.08.2021 (Structurile de primire turistice cu functiuni de cazare clasificate - actualizare 09.08.2021)⁹⁷, in the target municipalities of the Strategy ,Craiova and Calafat, the following categories of accommodation are registered.

Figure 8 Categories of accommodation places in Craiova and Calafat - Romania 2021



Source: Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment of Romania.

As in Bulgaria, the highest share is seen with accommodation in the category up of 3 stars, of which only 10% are in hotels. The accommodation of the highest category, 4 stars, has a share of 5.88%, of which 70% are in accommodation type "hotels".

Comparative analysis of accommodation places

⁹⁷ Source: <http://turism.gov.ro/web/autorizare-turism/>



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In summary, as can be seen from the table below, in 2020, in the territorial scope of the strategy (Districts of Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven and Vidin and Region of Southwestern Oltenia - Romania), 806 accommodation units are available. The places of accommodation are relatively small - the average capacity is 43.59 beds, and they operate virtually all year round, an average of 281 days a year.

Table 3 Main indicators for the capacity of places for accommodation⁹⁸

	2020					Change 2017-2020 in %				
	Number of places	Number of beds	Average capacity	Beds-days	Period of operation, days	Number of places	Number of beds	Average capacity	Beds-days	Period of operation, days
Veliko Tarnovo District	123	5307	43,15	1432213	270	7,90%	4,04	-4,30%	-19,45%	-24,07%
Pleven District	22	1207	55	415818	346	-18%	-6,46%	-14%	2,11	9,15%
Vidin District	26	1080	42	296731	275	-13,33	26,17%	-30,95%	9,52%	15%
South West Oltenia region	635	21722	34,20	5018212	231	16.70%	3.32%	- 16,08%	- 34,70%	- 39%
% of the route age (average value for all territories along the route)	806	29 316	43,59	6 7 88 974	281					
Veliko Tarnovo district, Bulgaria	15,26 %	18,10%	1%							
Pleven District, Bulgaria	2,73%	4,12%	1,36%							



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Vidin District, Bulgaria	3,66%	3,70%	0,96%							
South West Oltenia region	78,8%	70,10%	0,78%							

In the Bulgarian part of the route, the accommodation places are significantly less than those in South West Oltenia, as 78.8% of the accommodation places are in Romania. This difference is conditional due to the lack of publicly available statistics by counties in Romania and the analyzed data are at NUTS2 level. The differences are mitigated if we consider the average capacity of the accommodation places, as Pleven district has the highest capacity along the route, i.e. the average capacity of the accommodation places is 55 beds.

The long period of operation is 281 days on average for the region, and again in Pleven district it is the highest - 346 days.

The dynamics of the accommodation base is very different in the area of the route. In Veliko Tarnovo district there is a growth of 7.9% of accommodation places by 2020, and the growth in South West Oltenia is higher - 16.70%. Despite the decline in the growth of places for accommodation in Vidin District, the number of beds has increased significantly by 2020 - by 26.17%.

A positive feature of the places for accommodation in the area of the joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" is the long period of operation - practically almost all year round. This corresponds to the relatively weak seasonality of their use.

2.1.2.4.2 Transport system

The presence of a developed transport system is of key importance for the development of tourism. Therefore, the transport accessibility to the sites included in the joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" is crucial for the overall positioning of the product on the tourism market.

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region is accessible via the Danube River, part of the 7th Pan-European Transport Corridor, which connects the port of Constanta with the industrial centres of Western Europe and the port of Rotterdam via the Black Sea Canal. On the other



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hand, it is crossed by two TEN-T corridors connecting Central and Northern Europe with the south-eastern part of the continent and the Middle East.

For the purposes of the analysis, data from the District Strategies for Development of the Districts of Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven and Vidin for the period 2014 - 2020, the District Strategy for Economic and Social Development of Dolj for the period 2014-2020⁹⁹ and data from Bulgaria's National Statistical Institute have been used.

Table 4 Infrastructure for crossing the Bulgaria - Romania border on the territory of a joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture"

Connection	Type of transport
Vidin - Calafat	Bridge (automobile and railway)
Nikopol/Somovit - Turnu Magurele	Ferry

2.1.2.4.3. Road network

Land transport (road and rail) has the largest share in both countries, both in the cross-border region and at national level. The series of common indicators in terms of transport infrastructure reflects the fact that in both countries the development and modernization of the transport sector is a priority.

All sites are accessible by land due to their location in an urban environment.

In the Romania - Bulgaria cross-border region, on the territory of the developed joint integrated thematic route, the roads of the national road network are not sufficiently developed. There is no highway and high-speed roads with 4 lanes.

The road network on the territory of Vidin district is 612 km of republican roads by 2020¹⁰⁰. The roads of the national road network are 1st, 2nd and 3rd class.

On the territory of Vidin District the following border checkpoints are located: Vrashka Chuka border checkpoint, Bregovo border checkpoint, Vidin-River station border checkpoint and

⁹⁹ Source: https://www.cjdolj.ro/documente%202015/SDES_Dolj_2014-2020_rev_20_oct.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Source: NSI Bulgaria - https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/reports/query.jsf?x_2=36





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Danube Bridge border checkpoint near Vidin-Calafat, which serves the passenger flow and vehicles crossing the bridge.

Veliko Tarnovo District is served by two Pan-European transport corridors - Pan-European transport corridor VII (Danube River) and Pan-European transport corridor IX. No highways and expressways have been built on the territory of the district, but the route of the future Hemus Motorway (Sofia-Varna) passes through the area. The completion and modernization of the Danube coastal road from Vidin to Silistra, which is envisaged in the Danube Strategy of the European Union, is of high national importance. International roads pass through the territory of the district: the first-class road I-3 Ruse - Byala - Pleven - Sofia (E-83); The first class road I-4 Yablanitsa - Veliko Tarnovo - Shumen; The first-class road I-5 Ruse /Byala - Veliko Tarnovo - Stara Zagora - Kardzhali - Greek border (E-85) forming the direction of Pan-European transport corridor IX.

The road network in Veliko Tarnovo District is not connected to the road network of the Romanian part, but direct cross-border contacts are made via the ferry Svishtov-Zimnicea. On the territory of the district there is one border checkpoint - Svishtov.

Through the territory of Pleven District passes the Pan-European Transport Corridor VII (Danube River) with a length of 470 km on Bulgarian territory. The Danube River is also the only inland waterway in the country. The first-class road E-83 "Sofia-Pleven-Byala-Ruse" passes through the territory of the district, which is of great importance for the integration of the region into the national and European road network. The total length of the national road network in Pleven District is 791 km, 96 km of which are 1st class roads, 205 km are 2nd class roads, and the remaining 490 km are 3rd class roads. The following important roads of the 1st and 2nd class pass through the territory of the district: the 1st class road I-3 Ruse - Byala - Pleven - Sofia (E-83), which is the main road artery for Pleven District; the 2nd class road II-52 Nikopol-Svishtov-Byala (Ruse-Veliko Tarnovo) serves the northern, coastal territories of Pleven District and is part of the Danube panoramic road. To the west the road continues as road II-11 Nikopol-Vidin. The second class road II-34 Nikopol-Pleven is the connection of the regional city of Pleven with the port of Nikopol, as it is the second main road serving Pleven District. The 2nd class road II-35 Pleven-Lovech connects the regional centre of Pleven with the neighbouring regional centre of Lovech and the 2nd class road II-13 Montana - Dolni Dabnik connects the district with the neighbouring districts of Vratsa and Montana.



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In a national, regional and European context, Dolj County has a strategic position along some central (main) and global (comprehensive) TEN-T road, rail, air and river corridors. Some of these main transport routes:

- TEN-T central network: Bucharest-Craiova-Timisoara-Belgrade / Arad-Budapest and Craiova-Calafat-Vidin-Sofia;
- global network TEN -T: Filiași - Simeria;
- TEN-T central road network: Bucharest-Craiova-Calafat, Budapest-Arad-Timisoara-Calafat;
- TEN-T global road network: Craiova-Pitesti, Craiova - Filiași - Drobeta Turnu Severin / Deva.

At present, however, there is no high-speed road (motorway, expressway) to guarantee its connection to major urban centres in Romania or in the region. In these conditions, most of the traffic is carried out on national roads, some with the status of a European road and county roads.

The national/European roads in the county are:

DN 6 (E 70, E 79) Bucharest - Alexandria - Caracal - Craiova - Filiași - Drobeta Turnu Severin - Caransebeș - Timișoara - Cenad (border with Hungary) - in good condition, as it benefits from modernization activities under European funds (partly completed), but continues to benefit from only one lane in one direction, with the exception of the Craiova - Filiași section. It is part of the central (Bucharest - Craiova) and global (Craiova - Filiași) TEN-T network and connects Craiova with the border with Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria and with Bucharest;

DN 65 (E 574) Craiova - Pitești - part of the global TEN-T network, connects Craiova, Slatina and Pitești, as well as the A1 motorway.

DN 56 (E 79) Craiova - Calafat - part of the central TEN-T network, rehabilitated in 2015. The road provides the connection of the municipality of Craiova and the southwestern region with the new bridge from Calafat and the Balkans.

N 56A Drobeta Turnu Severin - Calafat - part of the central TEN -T network (branch of the former pan-European corridor IV). Rehabilitation of the road has led to a significant reduction in travel time from the west of the country to the Calafat Bridge and to the Balkans.



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DN 66 Filiași - Târgu Jiu-Petroșani - Deva - part of the global TEN-T network, provides the connection of the southwestern part of the country with that of Transylvania, the road is in good condition after rehabilitation.

DN 55 Craiova - Bechet - provides a connection from the municipality of Craiova and the settlements from the south of the district, as well as to the border crossing from Bechet.

DN 55A/DN 54A Calafat - Bechet - Dăbuleni - Corabia - provides the connection between the ports on the Danube River, parallel to the river, with prospects for a tourist function. The road is in good condition and is regularly maintained with temporary repairs.

DN 65C Craiova - Bălcești - Horezu - provides the connection of the municipality of Craiova with the settlements from the northern part of Dolj County, as well as from Vâlcea County.

DN 6B Craiova - Hurezani - connects the villages of the district with some rural areas in the northwestern part of Dolj County and part of Gorj County.

With regard to the district roads, they have a total length of 1,097 km.

2.1.2.4.4. Railway infrastructure

The total length of the railway lines of Vidin district, according to data of the National Statistical Institute as of 31 Dec 2020, is 108 km, of which 93 km are electrified and are part of the VII main railway line Sofia -Vidin. The railway lines in Vidin district are Brusartsi - Oreshets Station - Vidin and its extension Vidin - Koshava. The line Brusartsi - Vidin is connected to the Romanian railway infrastructure via the Vidin - Calafat ferry. It is expected that the construction of the Vidin - Calafat bridge will increase the importance of the line. In the section of the railway line Vidin - Sofia, passing through the territory of Vidin District, there are 13 railway stations, stops and separate posts.

The total length of the railway lines on the territory of Veliko Tarnovo district is 236 km, which make up 37.64% of the railway network of Bulgaria's North Central Region and 5.80% of the country's railway network. The total length of the doubled railway lines is 82 km, or 34.75% of all railway lines in the district. The length of electrified railways is 159 km - 67.37% and is above the EU average. The density of the railway network in the district is 48.64% and among the highest indicators for the country. Veliko Tarnovo District is served by: District Strategy for Development of Veliko Tarnovo for the period 2014 - 2020, Analysis II main line Sofia-Pleven-



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Gorna Oryahovitsa -Varna; IV main line Ruse - Stagra Zagora - Podkova - a constituent element of Pan-European Transport Corridor IX; railway branch Levski - Svishtov.

The total length of the railway lines on the territory of Pleven district is 206 km. The density of the railway network in the district is 44.28% and is among the highest indicators for the country. Of importance for the district is the II main line Sofia-Pleven-Gorna Oryahovitsa-Varna - the main line for Pleven District. Of regional importance for the development of the region are the railway lines of the second category: Cherven Bryag - Zlatna Panega, Troyan - Levski - Svishtov and Oresh - Belene. There is no railway connection with the railway network of Romania, cross-border contacts with railway transport are not carried out.

The city of Craiova is one of the most important railway junctions in Romania. It is located at the intersection of the central highway TEN-T 900 Bucharest-Craiova-Timișoara, with connections to Serbia (Moravica) and Hungary (Kurtiči) with line 912 Craiova-Calafat-Vidin, also part of the central network TEN-T (former pan-European Corridor IV) and with the secondary line Craiova-Pitesti. The second important railway centre of the county is Filiași, located at the intersection of Highway 900 with secondary lines 201 and 221 to Târgu Jiu-Petroșani-Simeria, which are part of the TEN-T global network.

There are about 30 railway stations in the county, some of which have been closed over the years due to the steady decline in rail traffic in favour of road traffic. The main reason for this decline is the poor condition of infrastructure, obsolete trains, which do not allow speeds higher than 40-50 km/h.

Approximately 55 trains pass daily through CF Craiova station to the following destinations: Arad-Kurtiči (3), Calafat (3), Targu Jiu (8), Royoori (3), Cluj-Napoca (1), Pitesti (1), Timisoara (4), Bucharest (14), Petrosani (3), Caracal (2), Sibiu (3), Drobeta Turnu Severin (2), Băilești (1), Golenți (1), Mangalia (3), Deva (1), Orșova (1). About 50 trains/day pass through CF Filiași station, similar to those passing through Craiova, and through Băilești, Segarcea and Calafat/Golenți only 7 trains, one of which travels along the bridge Vidin - Calafat.

2.1.2.4.5 Water transport

Port of Vidin - North is a port for public transport of national importance. The territory and water area of the port is located in the northern industrial zone of Vidin from km 792, 800 to km 793, 600 along the river mileage of the Danube and includes two port terminals: port terminal "Ferry complex Vidin" and port terminal "Vidin -north".



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Port terminal "Vidin - Centre" consists of two port terminals - port terminal Vidin Centre and port terminal Vidin South. The territory and the water area of the port are separated in the section from km 785 to km 791 of the Danube River. Along its quay wall with a length of 1,440 m, there are four pontoon facilities for mooring ships for performing entry-exit controls, for disembarking and embarking of passengers. Port Centre - Located in the central part of the city from km 789,900 to km 791,300 on an area of 17 decares. It has a quay wall with a length of 1,440 meters inclined type. In front of the quay four pontoons are installed for receiving and bunkering of Bulgarian and foreign ships for entry and exit controls. The existing river station building is situated with good functionality in the communication links between the three passenger transport sites in the city, namely: railway station, bus station and river station, creating short 121 roads for arriving and departing passengers, without the need for additional motorized transport.

Water transport along Pan-European Transport Corridor VII is served by the port of national importance - "Svishtov". It is located at the southernmost point of the Danube, and from here starts the shortest route from the river to the Stara Planina mountain passes, and from there to Turkey, Greece and the Middle East.

Important for navigation on the Danube are the river's technical parameters, which change in different sections of the river course. Water transport along transport corridor VII is served by the ports in the town of Nikopol, the village of Somovit, the village of Zagrazhden and the village of Baikal.

In Dolj County there are 3 ports on the Danube River.

Calafat port - part of the central TEN-T network. The port has access to the road and rail network. The main operators in the port are also in the field of cereals, modern silos are already operating here.

Bechet Port - part of the global TEN-T network. On the ferry line Bechet-Oryahovo it operates 10 two-way trips per day. The port also has a car park, a bar and a restaurant. Traffic in the area has decreased since the opening of the Calafat Bridge.

Cetate Port - the port is home to the Cultural Centre of the Mircea Dinescu Poetry Foundation, and the function of the port is mainly touristic and cultural.

Traffic through the ports in Dolj County is still low for a number of reasons: problems with the depth of the waterway, reduced trade flows with neighbouring countries, poor use of the



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region's tourism potential, competition in road transport, deteriorating port infrastructure, socio-economic decline of port cities, non-existent or physically and morally worn out intermodal infrastructure, etc.

2.1.2.4.6 Air transport

The region is served by 3 international airports: in Romania - Craiova (flights from London, Cologne/Bonn, Bergamo); in Bulgaria, the nearest airports are in Sofia and Varna, but a large part of the population in the Bulgarian border area often uses the airport in Bucharest on a regular basis.

Gorna Oryahovitsa Airport is the 5th international airport in Bulgaria. The airport specializes in cargo flights. The passenger terminal is in good condition, but is built and equipped to serve domestic flights. Currently, the airport in Gorna Oryahovitsa is used for charter business flights, for training activities of the Air Force and civil aviation.

2.1.2.4.7 Bicycle access

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region has a rich potential for the development of cycling tourism, which provides an alternative way to access the sites of the integrated thematic route. 2 euro-cycling routes pass through the territory of the region: 6 and 13.

EuroVelo is a trans-continental system of bicycle routes created for the development of a network for sustainable transport.

EuroVelo 6 is one of the most popular routes for cyclists, connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Black Sea. The route follows the course of the Loire, Rhine and Danube rivers. The overall construction of the infrastructure for the cycling route will increase the volume of tourists.¹⁰¹

EuroVelo 13 is the name of the route "Along the Iron Curtain". This European route is approximately 6,800 km long, providing connectivity from the Barents Sea to the north to the Black Sea to the south. It passes through the border regions of the Balkan countries: Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey.

There are other cycling routes in the region, developed mainly by non-governmental organizations, which are also an opportunity to access the sites along the route.

¹⁰¹ <https://pro.eurovelo.com/business-opportunities/advertisement?>





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Bicycle access is possible to all sites.

The sites included in the joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" have optimal transport accessibility. The territory is crossed by important transport corridors and tourist flows. The transport corridors predetermine the accessibility to the network of towns and villages and the sites from the route. Road and rail transport is developed. Of particular importance are the first-class road I-5, which is part of the international road E-85 and the first-class road I-4 (E 772), providing transport communication in the directions - North-South and West-East. The problems affecting the development of tourism in this region are typical for Bulgaria and Romania and the development of tourism in general. Two pan-European transport corridors - VII and IX - pass through and along the route area. Due to the active connectivity policy within the EU, the importance of the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) is growing, which at this stage are not sufficiently developed in the area.

In general, the quality of the roads is unsatisfactory, but there is also a significant imbalance in their condition in the different districts. The density of roads along the Danube is far below the national level. The secondary and tertiary network along the entire area is lagging behind and is poorly maintained, taking into account the high risk of accidents.

Another unfavourable fact for road transport are roads prone to floods - to a greater extent this applies to the roads on the Romanian side of the Danube. Many roads have insufficient capacity, which leads to congestion and, accordingly, increases travel time, vehicle operating costs, accidents and environmental damage. The poor condition of the road system and the increase in car traffic pose serious difficulties for tourist flows.

Despite the described deficits, the route is developed in a functioning transport infrastructure, in all districts and counties a set of domestic, inter-county, inter-district and international transport lines is organized.

The area of the route has optimal transport accessibility. The territory of the route is crossed by important transport corridors. The transport corridors predetermine the accessibility to the network of towns and villages and the tourist attractions. Road and rail transport is developed. Of particular importance are: the first-class road I-5, which is part of the international road E-85 and the first-class road I-4 (E 772), providing transport communication in the directions - North-South and West-East. The communication directions and nodes that ensure the free movement of people and goods inside and outside the EU are essential for the access to the



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developed integrated thematic product. Two pan-European transport corridors pass through and along the region - VII and IX. Due to the active connectivity policy within the EU, the importance of the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T), which are currently underdeveloped, is growing in the areas covered by the region. The developed tourism product is accessible by water and air, through the two points of crossing the Danube, the airport in Craiova, as well as the proximity to the starting point of the route (Veliko Tarnovo) to the airports in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas and Varna.

2.1.2.4.3 Other infrastructure

All sites along the route are located in the urbanized parts of: Vidin, Belogradchik, Knezha, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa in Bulgaria, and in Craiova and Calafat in Romania.

The location of the sites in and near the urban environment ("Pleven Epopee 1877" Panorama), characterizes them with well-developed additional infrastructure and access to additional services and attractions.

Parking lots: Near all sites on the route there is a well-developed infrastructure of parking spaces.

Retail outlets: availability of various retail outlets, including souvenir shops, close to all sites along the route.



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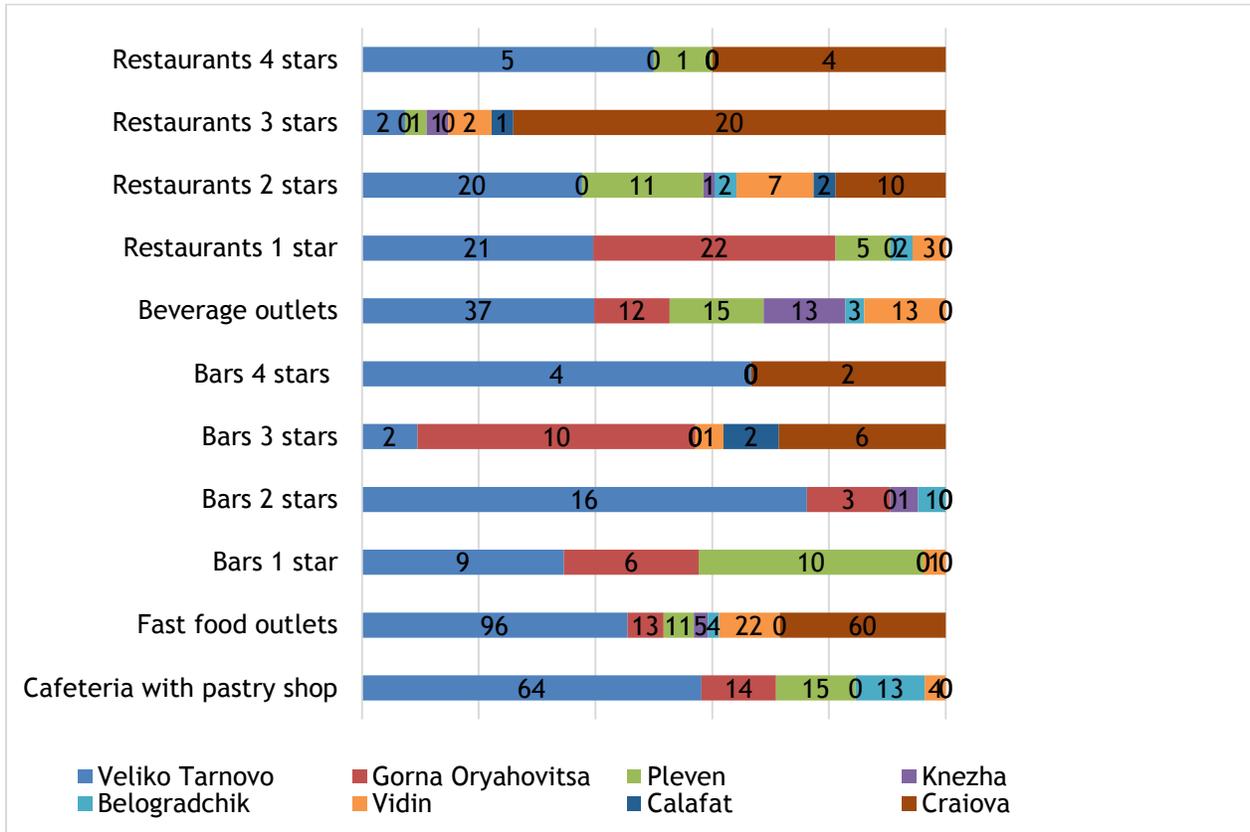
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Food and beverage service outlets: All sites along the route are provided with catering establishments of different categories, the figure below shows the available restaurants, fast food outlets and bars in the towns included in the route.

Figure 9 Food, beverage and entertainment outlets in the target towns (Bulgaria and Romania) by 30 Jul 2021



Source: National Tourist Register, Ministry of Tourism - Bulgaria¹⁰² and Tourism structures and structures with classified functions for public catering, Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment - Romania¹⁰³

¹⁰² <https://ntr.tourism.government.bg/>

¹⁰³ <http://turism.gov.ro/web/autorizare-turism/>



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Attractions (outdoor and indoor): Near the sites or on the sites themselves, various events of the cultural calendar of the municipalities are held, there is an opportunity for recreation and activities in a park environment. Outside the urbanized areas, in the areas adjacent to the towns along the route, there are attractions related to natural and cultural heritage, as well as such related to wine tourism.

Caravan campsite

According to data from [Camping.bg](https://camping.bg)¹⁰⁴, in the Bulgarian part of the route there are the following campsites:

“Old Pines” Camping, Sinagovtsi, Vidin. The camping area to the Old Pines hut is located in the recreation area Bozhuritsa - 18 km southwest of Vidin. Bozhuritsa offers unspoiled nature and conditions for hiking and excursions. The transport accessibility to the recreation area is very good - it is provided by regular bus lines from Vidin and the surrounding villages. There are good conditions for short-term and long-term recreation in the forest-park environment and water area for swimming, rowing and fishing. There are excellent opportunities for excursions and walks in the area.

Magura complex, village of Rabisha. The complex is located near the most famous cave in Bulgaria - the Magura Cave, as well as the only inland tectonic lake in Bulgaria without any outlets - Rabishko Lake. The complex also has: 20 rooms, five guest houses, an open-air and indoor hotel restaurant, an outdoor pool and a luxury wellness centre.

Han Madonna campsite, Falkovets neighbourhood, Belogradchik. The campsite is located on an area of 7 acres and offers accommodation with caravans, campers and tents. The places are supplied with electricity and water. At the guests' disposal are a restaurant, a children's playground, bicycle rental and other amenities. The campsite is combined with a massive building with single and double rooms and studios. It is located on a main road near the town of Belogradchik.

Campsite “Veliko Tarnovo” in the village of Dragizhevo is a modern campsite, located 14 km east of Veliko Tarnovo. It is set amidst beautiful nature and features modern and clean bathrooms with hot water, a washing machine, a family bathroom and a shared kitchen. There is also a restaurant and bar that offer a variety of Bulgarian and foreign dishes that can be

¹⁰⁴ <https://camping.bg/campings.html>





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delivered even to the camper, 16A electricity and water at each campsite, as well as drainage for wastewater. The campsite has a special place for cleaning chemical toilets and washing campers. The 20-metre pool is open from 1 June until 31 August and has a children's section. Free Wi-Fi throughout the campsite, tourist information, pets are allowed. You can rent a caravan on site or a luxury tent near the pool.

Kapinovski Monastery campsite, Veliko Tarnovo is located at the foot of the Elena section of the Stara Planina Mountain. It stretches along the banks of the Veselina River, next to the Kapinovo Monastery of Saint Nicholas the Miracle Worker. The complex is about 20 km south of Veliko Tarnovo and on the main road from Romania to Greece and Turkey. In the immediate vicinity is the captivating Kapinovo waterfall. It is among the leading campsites in the country.

The camping areas are designed to provide comfort to visitors and in line with all the requirements of the leading European associations for camping tourism. The campsite has about 40 places for campers and caravans. The camping plots have outlets for electrification (16A), water supply and dirty sewer. On the territory of the campsite there are two spacious and specially designated areas for tent tourism, with a total capacity of about 100-120 tents. Nearby, guests of the campsite have access to two buildings, modern bathrooms, a toilet for disabled people, an equipped tourist kitchen, refrigerated cases in each area, a washing machine, and wireless internet.

There are 5 forest houses in the campsite. Four of them have three rooms each (for up to 6 people) and one is a one-room (for 2 people). The total capacity of the five villas is 26 people. Each has a veranda and panoramic views of the complex. Additionally, Kapinovski Monastery Campsite offers fully equipped caravans for rent, divided into three categories, as well as a deluxe room for 3 people, located on the ground floor of the tavern.

The holiday complex offers its visitors a wonderful swimming pool of mini Olympic size and a modern heating system that maintains a pleasant water temperature even on not so hot days. For the little ones, there is a children's pool, a trampoline and a playground.

The renovated "Vodenitsata" tavern is a gem in the crown of the complex. The restaurant is a true architectural masterpiece, built of all-natural building materials - a combination of cut stone and oak beams collected from the region. The tavern can accommodate about 400 people, including three summer terraces revealing a unique view of the waterfall. Here visitors can



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enjoy delicious specialties from the Tarnovo-Elena region. The campsite has another active barbecue area, with outdoor tables and a summer pool bar.

The campsite is located next to the Kapinovo Monastery and is an excellent starting point for visiting other attractions in the area. It offers countless opportunities for walks in nature, cycling routes and a diverse arsenal of outdoor entertainment.

Campsite Craiova

Campsite Calafat

According to data in the CAMPING.INFO platform¹⁰⁵, there are no registered caravan campsites on the territory of Dolj County. The platform works with more than 23,000 campsites in 44 European countries, and is the most popular online camping guide in the German-speaking world.

2.1.2.5 Tourist flows

The analysis of the location of the tourist route from the point of view of the tourist flows and the review of the tourist flows by types of tourism within the cross-border region are based on the data from a survey among representatives of tour operators and travel agents, statistical data from the national statistical institutes of Bulgaria and Romania, research and expert evaluation. The directions of tourist flows have two main levels - international and domestic (residents and non-residents). The conclusions for them are made on two main indicators, which are observed from the national statistics: the number of nights spent in the places for accommodation; the average length of stay in the destination of tourists (average stay/occupancy of beds in days).

This section covers the period 2017-2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. From March 2020, countries introduced restrictive measures for non-essential travel. Borders were closed and cross-border quarantine requirements were introduced. A number of measures were also introduced at the national level with restrictions on travel between districts in Bulgaria, etc. In these conditions, tourism came to a standstill.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.camping.info/bg>





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Bulgaria

In the period 2017-2019, 4% of the overnight stays in the country were realized in the target areas. On the territory of Pleven and Vidin districts, a negative trend is registered in reducing the number of realized overnight stays. Veliko Tarnovo District reports an upward trend of increasing the number of overnight stays above the national average. A key feature of the studied areas is that the share of domestic tourism is higher than that of incoming tourism, while the average data for the country are in reverse. Of all the districts, Pleven, in the period 2017 - 2019, has the highest growth of overnight stays realized by foreign tourists, as the change is 51%. In total, for the period under review, Veliko Tarnovo maintains an almost unchanged share of overnight stays by foreign tourists, on average 32.66%.

Table 5 Number of overnight stays by target districts, 2017 - 2019, Bulgaria

District	2017			2018			2019			% change in total number of overnight stays 19/17
	Overnight stays in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Bulgarian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	Overnight stays in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Bulgarian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	Overnight stays in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Bulgarian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	
Total for the country	26054096	8948529	17105567	26845013	9096088	17748925	27154791	9674945	17479846	4,23%
Vidin	57283	41947	15336	55168	41909	13259	67568	53702	13866	-6,25%
Pleven	79728	62684	17044	79647	64181	15466	79673	56677	22996	-0,07%
Veliko Tarnovo	337706	259405	78301	357906	266124	91782	386596	290052	96544	14,50%

Source: NSJ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/reports/result.jsf?x_2=1258





Table 6 Number of overnight visitors by target district, 2017 - 2019, Bulgaria

Districts	2017			2018			2019			% change in total number of overnight stays 19/17
	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - total	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - Bulgarian citizens	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - foreign visitors	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - total	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - Bulgarian citizens	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - foreign visitors	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - total	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - Bulgarian citizens	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - foreign visitors	
Total for the country	7461646	3805816	3655830	7799680	3889521	3910159	8187634	4120284	4067350	9,73%
Vidin	37748	28836	8912	37663	28778	8885	43011	33339	9672	13,94%
Pleven	46291	38284	8007	47604	39253	8351	43546	33826	9720	-5,92%
Veliko Tarnovo	202349	147326	55023	215606	149794	65812	229065	159906	69159	13,20%

Source: NSI¹⁰⁷

Regarding the number of overnight visitors in the target areas, the situation does not differ from the number of overnight stays. The highest percentage of change is in Vidin district - 13.94%, followed by Veliko Tarnovo district - 13.20%, values above the national average. There is a negative change in Pleven district (-5.29%).

In absolute values, the area on whose territory tourists spent the longest stay in 2019 is Pleven - 1.60 nights per tourist, and this value is constant for the analyzed period. The shortest stay is in Vidin district (1.29 nights), and the duration of stay in Veliko Tarnovo district is almost constant for the period, with a slight decrease from 2017 to 2019. The duration of the tourist stay in all target districts is below the national average. The duration of the tourist stay is a significant factor with positive effects on the economic development of the respective territory and an important indicator of its tourist appeal.

¹⁰⁷ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/reports/result.jsf?x_2=1258



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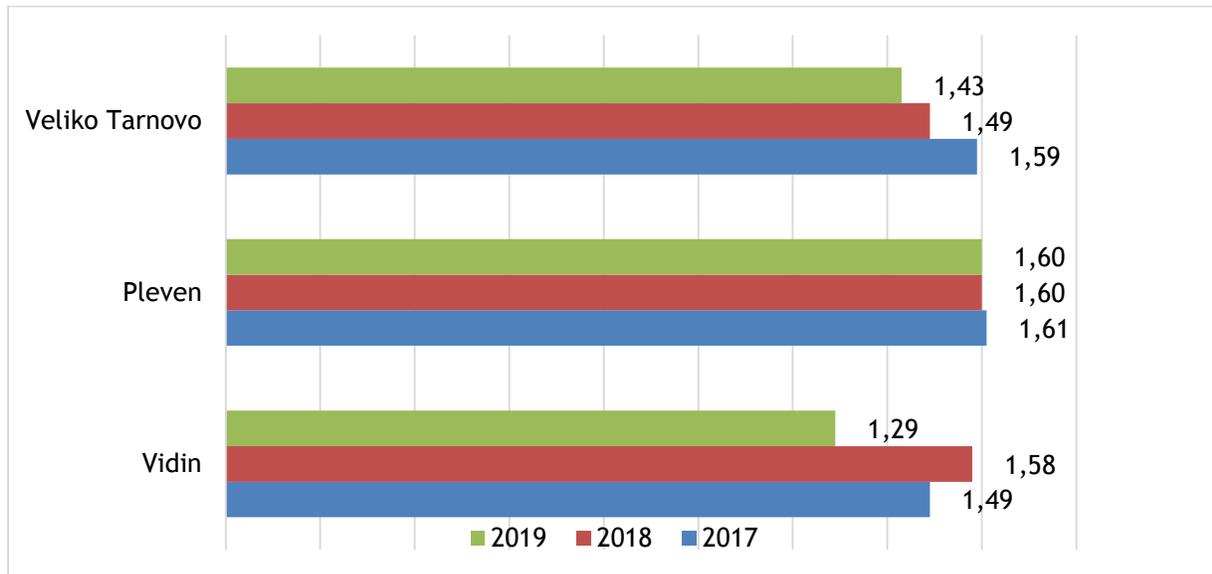


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Figure 10 Tourist stay in target districts, Bulgaria 2017 - 2019



Source: NSI

According to the Ministry of Tourism¹⁰⁸, there is an increase in visits by foreigners for rest and vacation - a total of 5,860,447 visits, which is an increase of 1%. Visits for the purpose of visiting friends and family are 625,355, and they decreased by -6.7%. Visits for business tourism are 1,761,190, an increase of 1.9%. Visits for other tourist purposes are 1,064,689. Visits for rest and vacation account for 62.9% of all tourist visits.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of tourism, statistical data on international tourism in bulgaria for 2019 - <https://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/statisticheski-danni/statisticheski-danni-2019>



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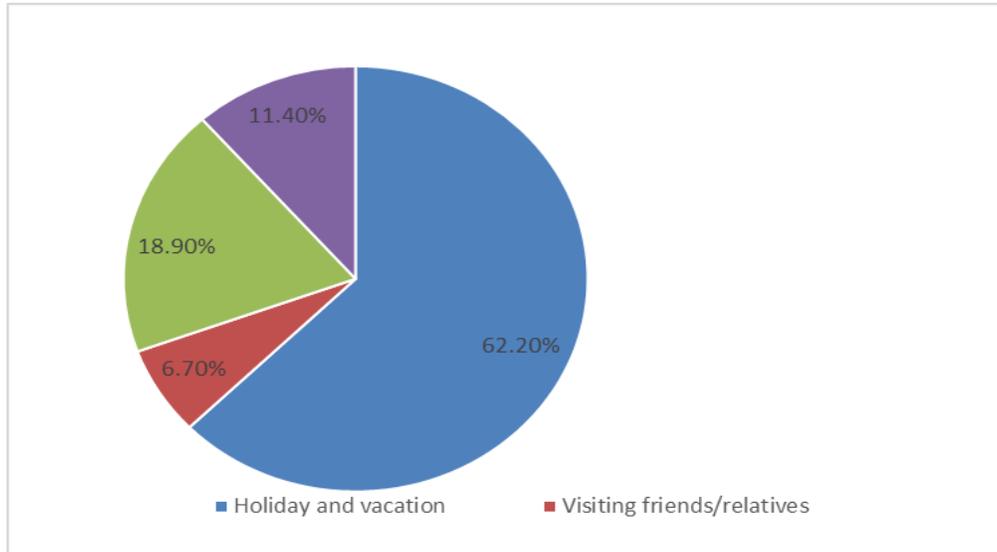


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Figure 11 Structure of the visits of foreign tourists based on reason for travel in 2019 in %.



Source: Ministry of Tourism

In the survey conducted for the purposes of the strategy, 73% of respondents, representatives of Bulgarian tour operators and travel agents, say that cultural events are largely a reason to attract tourists to the cross-border region Bulgaria - Romania. 80% of the respondents identify the segments of architecture and cultural and historical monuments in the region as leading factors for attracting tourists.

The following is an overview and analysis of the level of development of cultural tourism in Romania.

Romania

In the period 2018-2019, 16% of overnight stays in the country were in the target region South West Oltenia. The region reports an upward trend of increasing the number of overnight stays with values above the national average. As in the Bulgarian districts, the share of domestic tourism is higher than that of incoming tourism, as well as than the average data for Romania.



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Table 7 Number of overnight stays by target region, 2018 - 2019, Romania

	2018			2019			% change in total number of overnight stays 19/18
	Overnight stays in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Romanian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	Overnight stays in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Romanian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	
Total for the country	12905131	10108509	2796622	13374943	10691195	2683748	3, 64%
South West Oltenia region	2090181	1984857	105324	2249955	2156374	93581	7,64%

Source: NSI, Romania

Table 8 Number of overnight visitors by target region 2018 - 2019, Romania¹⁰⁹

	2018			2019			% change in total number of overnight visitors 19/18
	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - total	Overnight stays of Romanian citizens	Overnight stays of foreign visitors	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - total	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - Romanian citizens	Overnight visitors in accommodation places - foreign visitors	
South West Oltenia region	739486	691343	48143	791821	748697	11258	7,07%

Source: NSI, Romania

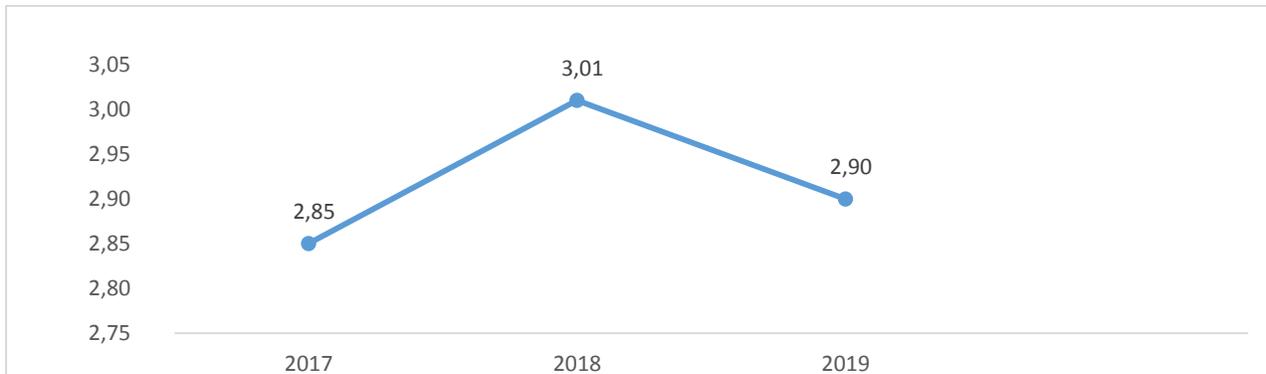
As in Bulgaria, in South West Oltenia, an increase of 7.07% of tourist visits was observed in 2019.

¹⁰⁹ No public data is available in NSI, Romania, on overnight visitors for 2018-2019



In absolute values, the stay of tourists in the region in 2019 is 2.90 nights per tourist, as this value is almost constant for the analyzed period. The duration of the tourist stay in Romania is longer than in Bulgaria.

Figure 12 Tourist stay in South West Oltenia region 2017-2019



Source: NSI - Regional statistics, Romania¹¹⁰

The choice of Romanian tourists for the implementation of specialized forms of tourism is illustrated in the table below.

Table 9 Number of Romanian tourists participating in local tourism activities, by form of tourism (2019 - 2020)

	2019	2020	2019	2020
	Individual trips		Organized trips	
Total number of tourists	231340	39464	1064115	521475
Seaside zone	173090	12841	643545	344003
River cruises	20	10	479	78
Sea cruises	174	-	334	20
Danube Delta	1099	762	14147	6949
Cultural tourism	551	212	10917	5249

¹¹⁰ <https://olt.inse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Turism-serii-de-date.pdf>



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Religious-pilgrimage tourism	111	55	29467	11341
Mountain region	7731	3641	92380	35653
Spa zone	13575	4211	152804	61840
Other zones	34989	17732	120042	56342

Source: NSI

Cultural tourism forms 1% of the total domestic tourism. The probable reason for this low share of cultural tourism is the fact that the most common combination is between cultural and other types of tourism. The typical combinations of cultural tourism are with culinary, mountain, sea tourism, rural, wine and eco tourism. This makes the joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" an attractive cultural route for integration with major tourist destinations in the Bulgaria - Romania cross-border region.

Romania's increasingly focused and target-oriented tourism policy for tourism development and the country's increasingly competitive tourism performance in CEE also generate positive effects on the development dynamics of key tourism indicators.

For the reviewed period of 3 years, in the illustrated Bulgarian districts and the Romanian region, different processes of tourism development are observed. In Romania there is an upward trend in the development of key tourism indicators, while in some districts in Bulgaria, growth ranges from volatile to negative. The key indicator for economic development, "number of overnight stays", marked a negative growth in Vidin and Pleven districts and a positive growth in Veliko Tarnovo district and South West Oltenia region.

2.1.2.6 Human resources

By 2020, there is a growth trend in the tourism industry, as the biggest challenge, with such a trend is the adequate parallel development of human resources, which are the basis for the development and development of the tourism product. The development of the specialized tourist infrastructure significantly outstrips the development and training of the staff working in tourism. Low pay in the industry, high staff turnover, lack of investment in staff training, lead to low qualification and motivation of staff and poor quality of service. Efforts are focused on increasing the number of tourists, such as the number of nights, at the expense of lower prices, which leads to low quality service.



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Bulgaria

Table 10 Employees by employment and official legal relationship by economic activities districts of Bulgaria (2017-2019)

	2017			2019			Percentage change 19/17	
	Total	Hotels and restaurants	Culture, sport and entertainment	Total	Hotels and restaurants	Culture, sport and entertainment	Hotels and restaurants	Culture, sport and entertainment
Total for the country	2308129	119137	36911	2322561	122458	36989	2,79%	0,21%
Vidin	16522	759	228	15673	726	235	-4,35%	3,70
Pleven	58430	1450	746	58567	1462	762	0,82%	2,14%
Veliko Tarnovo	67355	2802	1181	66087	2955	1100	5,50%	-6,90%

Source: NSI¹¹¹

As can be seen from the presented data, in Vidin Districts there is a negative percentage change in the number of employees in hotels and restaurants, respectively by 4.35%, while in Veliko Tarnovo District there is a positive change - 5.50. %, higher than the national average.

In 2019 in Bulgaria, directly in the field of tourism and culture (hotels, restaurants, cultural institutions) were employed a total of 159,447 people, which is 5% of the total employed in the country, of which only 1% are employed in hospitality and catering in the districts of Vidin and Pleven and 2% in the district of Veliko Tarnovo.

¹¹¹ https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=79



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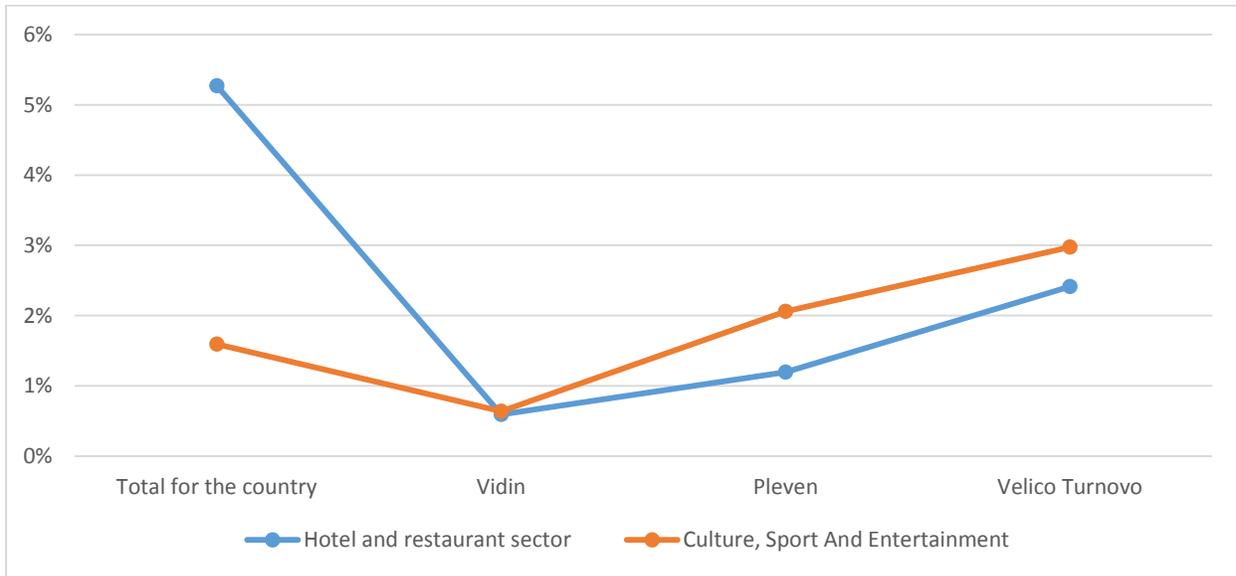


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Figure 13 % Employees in the hotel and restaurant sector by region, Bulgaria - 2019



Source: NSI

The development of human capital, economic growth and smart specialization, the realization of the labor market, social inclusion and the quality of life depend on the successful implementation of policies in education.

The number of students in the school year 2019/2020 (last published data) decreased by 3.05% compared to 2017/2018, which is a reflection of the demographic characteristics of the country - low birth rates and emigration. As can be seen from the table below, this trend is also observed in the target areas of the Strategy, where the percentage of reduction is above the national average, with the most drastic situation in Vidin district - a decrease of 11.06%. Based on these data at the national level, actions have been taken to improve the educational system in the country, introducing a new educational structure, which is expressed in the completion of the lower secondary stage of primary education in 7th grade, instead of 8th grade, as and the introduction of the possibility, at the local level, for schools to allow the completion of compulsory 10-year education, leads to a reorganization of the school network, in particular for small schools in rural areas. The emphasis is on combating school drop-out and providing quality education.



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Table 11 Students in the school years 2017-2020 - count

Region / District	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	Percentage change 19/17
Total for the country	730576	718186	708 258	-3, 05%
Vidin	8 665	8 343	7 706	-11,06%
Pleven	26 345	25 401	24 661	-6,39%
Veliko Tarnovo	22 964	21 790	21 462	-6,54

Source: NSI

Table 12 Number of schools based on type of school by districts, Bulgaria 2017 - 2019

School year	Region	General education schools	Art schools	Vocational high schools	Professional colleges
2017/2018	Vidin	29	-	4	-
	Pleven	80	1	22	-
	Veliko Turnovo	69	-	15	2
2018/2019	Vidin	28	-	4	-
	Pleven	80	1	22	-
	Veliko Turnovo	67	-	15	2
2019/2020	Vidin	28	-	4	-
	Pleven	80	1	22	-
	Veliko Turnovo	67	-	15	2

Source: NSI

From the presented data it is evident that despite the reduction of students, this has not led to a significant reduction in the number of schools in the target areas of the Strategy.

Vocational education and training in the 2019/2020 school year is carried out in 1 art schools, vocational high schools 41 and 2 vocational colleges with admission after secondary education.



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The total number of schools is 175, and the total number of students in them is 53 199. Compared to the 2017/2018 school year, the number of vocational schools remains the same. In the 2019/2020 school year, 11 886 students from the target areas studied in vocational high schools.

The quality of education in the vocational school system still does not meet the requirements of the labor market. Measures are needed to stimulate training in the sought-after professions. A positive fact in vocational education is the increase of students in vocational schools in programs for acquiring III degree of professional qualification. On-the-job training (dual training) is a new opportunity to reintegrate early school leavers. Interest in this form of education is growing.

The system of higher education is highly fragmented on the territory of the Bulgarian side of the route. The total number of universities is 4, 3 of which are concentrated in Veliko Tarnovo and 1 in Pleven. There are university branches in Vidin. The number of students studying at universities is declining due to demographic factors and the preference of young people to study abroad. Within 3 academic years (2017/2018 - 2019/2020) the number of students at the universities in Veliko Tarnovo students decreased by 16.04%, and in other areas increased.

Table 13 Number of students by district 2017 - 2019

District	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Vidin	203	326	426
Pleven	3050	3255	3645
Veliko Tarnovo	18622	16499	15634

Source: NSI

Romania

The employment rate at the national level in Romania in 2018 is 68.7%, an increase compared to 2017 by 2.08%. In SW Oltenia the employment rate is 64.6, and Dolj County has a similar employment rate - 61.8%, a level comparable to the employment rate in the country.



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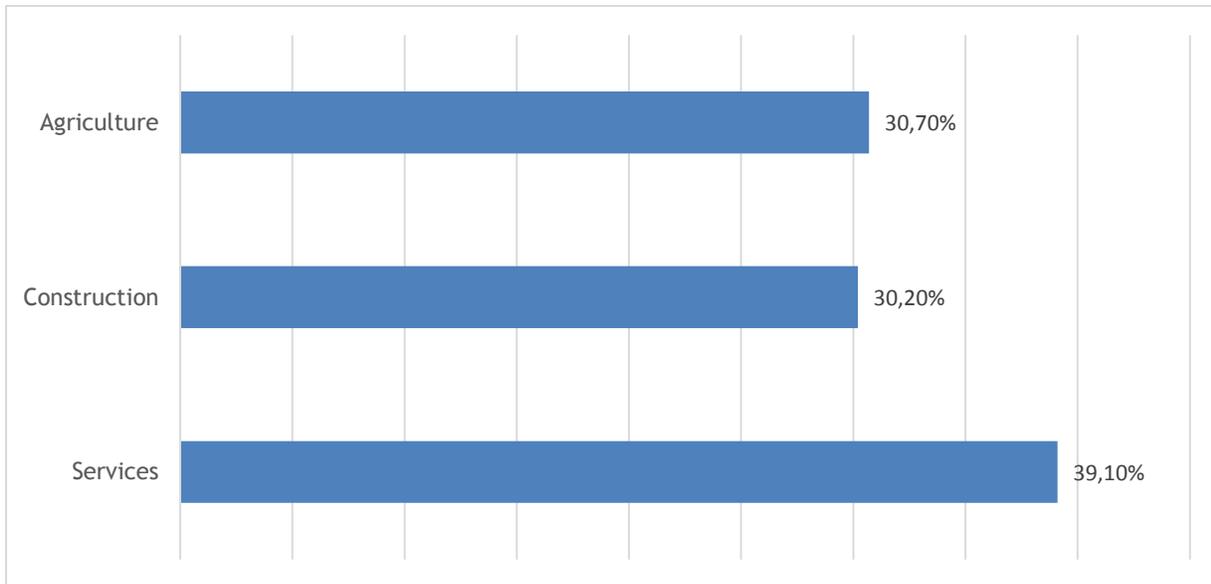
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In terms of participation in the main economic activities, the labor force in the South-West Oltenia region is employed in agriculture - 30.7%, 30.2% in industry and construction, and employment in services (including restaurants and hotels) is predominant - 39.1%.

Figure 14 Employed by industries in 2017 in SW Oltenia



Source: Regional Development Plan (RDP) of the Southwestern Region of Oltenia 2021-2027 (published for public discussion)

At the regional level, the number of students in SW Oltenia decreased by 122,939, with the largest decrease in students in primary education and secondary education - 63,573, followed by pre-school education - by 22,926 fewer students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year, compared to the academic year 2004/2005.¹¹²

According to the data provided by the regional authorities in the region, there is a drastic decrease in the number of students in vocational high schools and schools, due to the abolition of some schools/classes with a technical and vocational profile. In 2004/2005 the school population in this area was 27957, and in 2017/2018 the number of students was 8,035. In

¹¹²Source: Regional Development Plan (RDP) of the Southwestern Region of Oltenia 2021-2027. (published for public discussion) - <https://www.adroltenia.ro/planul-de-dezvoltare-regionala-2021-2027/>.



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response to the emerging needs, the Regional Action Plan in the field of education (PRAI) is being developed at the regional level. The document is the strategic framework for the development of vocational and technical education in the South-West Oltenia region. The plan is developed on the basis of an analysis of demographic factors, the labor market and trends in the development of the regional economy, as a basis for current and future demand for education and vocational training.¹¹³

In higher education, at the level of SW Oltenia, in the academic year 2017/2018, 22,141 students are enrolled in the 3 higher schools.

Table 14 Higher education in SW Oltenia academic 2017/2018

	Institutions of Higher Education	Enrolled students
Oltenia - total	3	22 141
Dolj	2	1 004
Gorj	1	2 698
Mehedinti	-	1 353
Olt	-	485
Vâlcea	-	601

The highest proportion of students is registered in Dolj County, over 75% of the number of students at the regional level, due to the existence of Craiova University, a university centre with traditions.

The demographic forecast¹¹⁴ developed by the NSI in all three variants shows the preservation of the tendencies of decrease and aging of the population. This puts the demographic problem among the most serious problems facing the country, which requires special policies and a long period of time to overcome. It will have an impact both on the demographic structure and in the distribution of the population, on the overall model of urban development of the country, on the economy and financial policy, on the services and infrastructure. In the peripheral and

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Socio-economic analysis of the regions in the Republic of Bulgaria, Third stage, part 2 - <https://www.eufunds.bg/bg/oprd/node/5747>.



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border areas, where depopulated settlements are located, there will be a small elderly population, with limited mobility and financial independence, highly vulnerable and in need of health and social services.

The whole of Romania¹¹⁵ is facing the same demographic problems and it must meet two major challenges in maintaining the European economic market: population decline caused by negative natural growth and, above all, population migration (and especially by a highly skilled workforce, and in the last years of the qualified). According to the analysis of statistical indicators, the Southwest Oltenia region ranks second nationally in terms of negative natural growth, large migration from the Oltenia region to other regions in the country and abroad.

In both countries there is an educational infrastructure and policies have been taken regarding the development of vocational education. The main shortage of staff is dictated by demographic changes and migration of the population, from the target areas of the Strategy, to other countries or regions in Bulgaria and Romania.

2.1.2.7 Information provision

The information infrastructure is well developed to all sites of the extended integrated thematic route "Art and Culture". A significant disadvantage of the existing information boards is that they are compromised (faded, covered with rust, broken), creating an unpleasant feeling for visitors.

Signs are also a serious deficit in the scope of the route - to a large extent they are not available at key places, such as intersections, public transport stops, etc.

Tourist information centers are the main starting point for most visitors. Some of them are included in the National Network of Tourist Information Centers at the Ministry of Tourism in Bulgaria and are located in the municipalities of Belogradchik, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin and Pleven. Tourist information centers in Knezha and Gorna Oryahovitsa also function successfully.

Tourist information centres have been built in Craiova and Calafat.

Near all sites on the route, there are various types of museums, galleries, cultural institutions, parks and attractions, which contribute not only to the overall development of tourism, but

¹¹⁵ Regional Development Plan (RDP) of South West Oltenia 2021-2027.





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also serve as an effective communication channel to raise awareness of nearby sites of extensions. integrated tourist route "Art and Culture".

The established tourist centres in the target cities along the route perform the function of the regional information nodes, providing first-hand information to the tourists.

An element of the tourist information infrastructure, typical only for Bulgaria, are the community centres (known as "chitalishte"), which represent a unique cultural institution for Europe. At 100% of the sites nearby there is a community cultural centre which preserves the intangible cultural heritage of the region.

Advertising materials (brochures, flyers, etc.) have been issued for those operating as tourist sites, and some of the sites are also included in advertising and information materials at the national level.

All sites included in the route have a developed website or Facebook profiles, and are also presented in the websites of the Tourist Information Centres. For the most part, the objects in the information arrays are presented in Bulgarian/Romanian and English.

Information about the sites in Bulgarian and Romanian can be found in developed information portals for tourism.

2.1.2.8 Advantages of the new tourist product

This section will discuss the main competitive advantages of a joint integrated route "Art and Culture" (main and extended) and tourist destinations, applying the criteria for a tourist product, ie the tourist trip is considered a complete tourist experience, regardless of the fact that routes represent one of the many components that make it up.

The applied criteria are in two categories: general for the tourist product and specific for the route.

Basic criteria for assessing competitive advantages

❖ **The tourist infrastructure** built for the development of a given territory and especially to provide access to it, as its connection with the other territories is realized through the common infrastructure.

○ According to this criterion, the main advantages of a joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" (main and extended) are:



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- developed transport network;
- accessibility and possibility for connections with different types of transport to the territories through which the route passed;
- opportunities for road and bus transport for the implementation of routes.

❖ **The tourist superstructure** - a set of accommodation facilities, restaurants, sports and entertainment facilities, retail network, public service workshops, transport stations, etc.

Unlike the previous criteria, there is an uneven distribution along the route of the tourist superstructure, concentrated mainly in the regional cities in Bulgaria and in the city of Craiova, Romania. According to this criterion, the competitive advantages of the route are available only in some of the destinations included in it:

- variety of accommodation possibilities - hotels, guest houses in the specific city or nearby, in beautiful nature or in a historic urban environment;
- developed gourmet culture encouraging tourists to enjoy a variety of culinary offerings;
- opportunities for sports, entertainment and shopping tourism;
- diversity and opportunities for personalization of the tourist experience.

❖ **Infrastructure** - access and communication to tourist sites, communications within the sites.

- Modern, contemporary and innovative experiences in the sites along the route (mainly in the regional cities);
- Access to culture and art;
- Developed communications and interactivity in the sites.

2.1.2.8.1. Detailed description of the sites included in the route as the presented texts are intended to promote the sites and the route as a whole

The joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" (main and extended) includes a total of 23 sites, as the main route includes 6 sites which are also part of the extended route.



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In the concept of this document we will present the basic tone of communication necessary for the development of promotional activities.

A) Content: voice and tone of communication

It is indisputable that the entire national value, such as cultural, political, commercial, tourist messages, investment potential and human assets, play a significant role in the identity and recognizability of the tourist route. All of them help potential tourists to identify and recognize opportunities and at the same time build a certain image for their tourist experience.

There are essential aspects that are often overlooked or neglected, these are the words written and spoken. Written words often need design in order to convey the effect of impact synergistically. The design, structure, arrangement and presentation make the words come to life on the screen, on advertising materials or elsewhere. People also give life to words, with the way they present them, the attitude they put in, the content they present. All this has a direct impact on perceptions, views, and attitudes towards the tourist product.

Here we pay attention to the importance and value for a single tone of marketing communication, regardless of the content and distribution channels.

Tone of communication, style of marketing-communication activities. The common voice, tone and style set the direction in which the content and presentation develop the communication processes.

It is essential for the overall investment experience of the individual stages that the communication is consistent. What this means - regardless of the communication channel, the user should see, read, hear and understand the information in the same way.

The voice and tone of the routes should present their main competitive advantages with a clear goal implemented. The presentation of the communication message is a starting point for creating a unified and consistent tone of communication.

These goals require consistency and repetition. If the messages and the way they are presented change often, it is more difficult for potential and current investors to understand exactly what it is about.

Figuratively speaking, the voice is the content, and the tone is the way this content is adapted to the recipient. As long as the voice remains constant, the tone may change according to the context of the messages.



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B) Detailed description of the sites included in the integrated routes “Art and Culture”:

Veliko Tarnovo

1. Art Gallery “Boris Denev”

One of the jewels of Veliko Tarnovo is the Boris Denev Art Gallery, which is housed in an authentic building located in Assenevtsi Park. The gallery offers its visitors a permanent exhibition of about 200 works of graphics, painting and sculpture. A special hall is dedicated to Boris Denev where visitors can see some of the artist's paintings. The permanent exhibition has undergone transformations over time, as the main concept "Veliko Tarnovo through the eyes of the artist" is preserved and only individual exhibits are being replaced so visitors can gradually and partially get acquainted with the rich collection of the gallery. The curious visitors can enjoy some of the most valuable exhibits of the gallery - The Uprising of Assen and Petar 1185 (1981) - painting by Alexander Terziev, "Portrait of Maria Popova" (1862) - painting by Nikolai Pavlovich, "Farewell to Patriarch Evtimii" (1969) - painting by Svetlin Rusev, "Vitosha" (1936) - painting by Boris Denev, "Crucifixion" - sculpture by Alyosha Kafedzhiyski, "Renaissance painter Ivan Obrazopisov" - engraving by Vasil Zahariev.

2. Multimedia visitor centre “Tsarevgrad Tarnov”

If you ever wondered what life was like in Tsarevgrad in the 12th and 13th centuries, the multimedia visitor centre "Tsarevgrad Tarnov" provides a unique opportunity to its visitors, namely to immerse themselves in the authentic life and culture of Tsarevgrad from the time of the Bulgarian tsars.

Here visitors can meet Tsar Ivan Asen II and his wife Irina Komnina, as well as Tsar Kaloyan. In the multimedia centre 29 sculptural figures of famous historical figures can be seen.

Coming to life in the visitor centre is also Baldwin of Flanders in the scene of his capture, noble boyars in their homes, patriarchs, craftsmen.

Visitors here are also able to meet Tsar Kaloyan during his coronation by the papal cardinal Leo, as well as at the battle of Adrianople in 1205. Visitors can encounter also other historical scenes and reconstructions of life from that time.

Through 5 touch screens with information about the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, as well as a multimedia hall for screenings of films related to the history of the famous Tarnovgrad, the experience becomes even more authentic.



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3. Samovodska Charshia

The Samovodska Charshia is a symbol of the authentic urban life of Tarnovo in the National Revival period. A place where one could find everything, a street that turned into the heart of the town on a market day.

Today the street has kept its romantic spirit of the bygone days, with preserved traditions of the Revival Period craftsmen bazaars. Its architectural appearance is shaped by the stone walls with large double gates, the old Tarnovo houses with hearths and verandas, and balconies above the Samovodski market, and the street with beautiful wrought iron railings, as well as ovens for simits, pita bread, bagels and peksimet (rusk).

Here are the Hadji David's and Hadji Veliko's inns, the inns of Atanas Yonoolu and Hadji Nikoli, grocers, blacksmiths, tsarvuli (opanci) makers, and other craftsmen's workshops and shops.

Now there are various craft workshops for pottery, weapons, coppersmithery, woodcarving confectionery, weaving, an icon-painting studio, photographer's atelier, cafe, workshop for making knafeh and a bakery on the Samovodska Charshia square as well as many souvenir shops and small art shops.

Anyone can join the work of one of the workshops and will receive a certificate that he or she has been an apprentice to the respective master craftsman, and the item they have crafted will be given to them as a gift.

Thus, the traditions of folk arts and crafts in one of the oldest Bulgarian town, Veliko Tarnovo, are being revived and perpetuated.

4. Hadji Nikoli Inn

While walking on the cobblestone streets of the Samovodska Charhisa, you cannot miss the unique Hadji Nikoli Inn which combines authenticity and modern comfort. It has established itself as a cultural center - a complex of exhibition halls with a museum and art gallery, restaurant and wine bar. Visitors can immerse themselves in the atmosphere of this architectural monument of culture of national importance.

To feel the completely unique atmosphere of this place, the restaurant of Hadji Nikoli Inn will offer you a delicious delight for the palate, combined with flawless service, European and Bulgarian traditional cuisine, and a gourmet menu.



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If you are a lover of good wine, then in the Hadji Nikoli Inn you will be able to try a rich selection covering all the variety, typicality and diversity of Bulgarian wine, as well as representatives of the world's most famous wine regions.

5. Music and Drama Theatre “Konstantin Kisimov”

Veliko Tarnovo offers a wide range of cultural experiences, a diverse program of events. Lovers of theatrical art can enjoy the playbill of the Konstantin Kisimov Drama and Music Theatre. Dramatic and musical productions, joint performances, concerts, shows are presented on the stage. The theatre’s program features many performances to satisfy even the most demanding taste, as not coincidentally the theatre has been awarded the "Golden Lyre" for contribution to the development of art and high professionalism!

Gorna Oryahovitsa

6. Art Gallery “Nedyalko Karaneshev”

The **first private art gallery** in the picturesque town of Gorna Oryahovitsa was opened in the early 20th century by **Nedyalko Karaneshev**. The famous Bulgarian artist created a gallery which is still developing today, offering its visitors a gallery fund which includes paintings, graphics and impressive sculptures. Among the most valuable exhibits are paintings by Prof. Vasil Stoilov, Kalina Taseva, Prof. Ivan Petrov, Lilyana Ruseva, Prof. Iliya Petrov, Assoc. Prof. Tsanko Petrov, Prof. Ivan Bochev; graphics by Prof. Nikola Hadjitanev, Prof. Hristo Tsatsinov; sculptures by Prof. Nenko Marov, Angel Angelov, Krassimir Yakov, Prof. Motko Bumov and others.

Pleven

7. Art Gallery Donation “Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev”

The building of the old baths of Pleven is interesting not only for its unusual architecture, which is strongly influenced by Arab architecture, with a facade formed of white and red rows with oriental and Moorish elements, but also as a home of the **Art Gallery Donation “Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev”**. The building of the old baths is an architectural monument of culture of national importance, which has been rebuilt for the needs of an art gallery. In the middle of the 1980s the famous artist Svetlin Rusev donated 322 works to his hometown Pleven - paintings and sculptures from his own collection.

Svetlin Rusev is a world-renowned artist, public figure, collector of works of art, academician of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Member of Parliament. A guardian for the



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development of Bulgarian culture and art, he continued his donations to the gallery over the years, including part of his personal collection of graphic works by contemporary Bulgarian masters of drawing and graphics and European masters from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The works are arranged personally by Svetlin Rusev in an order that presents and divides them chronologically and thematically.

In the gallery you can enjoy works by Vladimir Dimitrov - the Master, watercolours by Iliya Beshkov, works from the early and late period by Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, paintings by Dechko Uzunov, works by the donor of the gallery - Prof. Svetlin Rusev (only 3 in number). A small part of the gallery in the dome is dedicated to Eugene Delacroix, Francisco Goya, Jean-Francois Millet, Käthe Kollwitz, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali, Picasso, Auguste Rodin, Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

8. Regional Museum of History - Pleven

Pleven's Regional History is an attractive centre for history, culture and contemporary art. The museum, which goes beyond the traditional understanding, offers a variety of exhibitions and events to its visitors.

Pleven's Regional History Museum is located in a beautiful and impressive two-storey building built according to an Italian project in the period 1884-1888 for the needs of the army. The building is a cultural monument of national importance as 180,000 museum items can be seen there. The specialized library of the museum stores over 10,000 volumes of scientific literature and periodicals.

The museum also has a permanent exhibition - a hall dedicated to the great opera prima Ghenia Dimitrova. At the beginning of the exhibition photos are arranged representing parts of the life of the singer born in the village of Beglezh. In the main hall, built as a stage, photos of the biggest opera stages on which she sang are displayed - Arena di Verona and La Scala. The concert and opera costumes of the opera diva are put on display on the stage of the exposition. Among them is a replica of a costume in which she played the role of Turandot at the Metropolitan Opera in the United States.

9. Iliya Beshkov Art Gallery

In Pleven you can visit the Iliya Beshkov Art Gallery in whose funds there are over 6000 works of art, arranged in the categories "Painting", "Graphics", "Sculpture", "Icons", "Plein Air",



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impressive not only in volume , but also in terms of their significance for the history of Bulgarian art.

Today the gallery houses more than 1,200 works by the great Bulgarian artist Iliya Beshkov (1901-1958), which represent the largest collection in the National Art Museum and are of exceptional importance.

The curious visitors can see the main stages and trends in the development of Bulgarian fine arts from the late 19th century to the 1970s. Starting immediately after the post-liberation period, with the names of the pioneers Nikolay Pavlovich, Anton Mitov and Ivan Markvichka, the collection goes through some of the most famous masters of the brush such as Stefan Ivanov, Sirak Skitnik, Vladimir Dimitrov - the Master, Dechko Uzunov, Vasil Barakov, Bencho Obreshkov, Iliya Petrov, Nenko Balkanski, Stoyan Venev, Kiril Tsonev, Boris Ivanov, Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Kiril Petrov, Ruska Marinova, Vera Nedkova, Slavka Deneva, Ivan Nenov, Naiden Petkov and reaches prominent names in contemporary Bulgarian painting.

10. Panorama “Pleven Epopee 1877”

The Panorama “Pleven Epopee of 1877” was built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Liberation of Pleven from the Ottoman yoke. A unique monument, it was built in the area of Skobelev Park.

Respect for heroism and history is expressed through the overall architecture of the Panorama - the body of the Panorama is made to cause the sensation that it is raised on 4 bayonets, which embody the power of the weapon that brought freedom. The bayonets carry 4 horizontally located rings, 3 of which symbolize the 3 attacks against Pleven, and the 4th ring is a decorative-plastic frieze, symbolizing the siege of Pleven.

From the two viewing platforms on the roof of the museum visitors can observe the adjacent historical sites: the Dead Valley, the redoubts “Kovanlak” and “Issa aga”, the Ossuary in Skobelev Park, Radishevski and Grivishki hills.

11. Drama and Puppet Theatre “Ivan Radoev”

The Drama and Puppet Theatre “Ivan Radoev” is one of the oldest professional theatres in Bulgaria with an extremely rich and curious history.



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In its history and development, the Ivan Radoev Drama and Puppet Theatre has been the centre of dramatic art, with creative activity of high standards.

The repertoire includes traditional theatrical titles, experimental productions, search for various stage forms uniting different types of art. Special attention is paid to performances for children.

Knezha

12. Municipal History Museum in Knezha

Knezha's Municipal History Museum promotes the preserved history and culture; organizes holidays and visiting exhibitions; participates in municipal and international holidays and celebrations and theatrical reconstructions of Bulgarian traditions and customs.

In this picturesque town the historical museum is a kind of oasis that works with young people and students to enrich knowledge in various fields of science and art, development of individual qualities, teamwork, responsibility.

The museum also presents an ethnographic exposition which introduces visitors to the material and spiritual culture of the population of this region.

The art gallery presents icons, paintings and works of applied art by artists from Knezha.

Archaeological artefacts found in the territory of the municipality of Knezha and stored in the History Museum are a valuable and rich source of knowledge about the life of the people who inhabited these lands thousands of years before us. Historical and archaeological research shows that on the territory of today's municipality several ancient settlements were discovered dating from different eras.



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Belogradchik

13. Belogradchik Museum of History

The picturesque town of Belogradchik boasts not only remarkable nature, but also Revival Period architecture, as one of the emblematic examples of the era is the Panova House which houses the **Historical Museum** in the town of Belogradchik.

The exposition in the museum is dedicated to the Ottoman period and the Bulgarian National Revival and traces the development of crafts such as goldsmithery, woodcarving, tapestry, tailoring, mutafchiystvo (craft of making items out of goat fur), pottery, coppersmith's trade.

The exhibition focuses on the uprising against the Turkish enslavers from 1850, centered in the town of Belogradchik - one of the most massive uprisings in the Bulgarian lands. The events related to the liberation of Belogradchik from the Ottoman Rule and those related to the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885 are also marked.

The museum has a rich collection of coins and icons. The everyday life, folk costumes and household items are also displayed. Women's jewelry - earrings, bridal wreaths, rings and earrings are richly decorated with coloured glasses, mother of pearl and pendants. Ancient tombstones are exhibited in the yard of the museum.

Vidin

14. Art Gallery "Nikola Petrov"

In the Danube Park in Vidin, in the beautiful building of the former Military Club, is the **Nikola Petrov Art Gallery**. The gallery building has its own history - built on the foundations of one of the gates of the Vidin fortress "Kaletu". The building was established as a military club with military funds in 1892 and was declared a monument of culture.

The **Nikola Petrov Art Gallery** is one of the first art galleries in the country. The first works to become part of the gallery's collection are works of art purchased from the collections of Mikhail Kremen and Bogomil Raynov. Among the first works from the gallery's collection are about 80 canvases created in 1962 during a plein air in the city, where artists from all over the country painted, including Stoyan Venev, Panayot Panayotov, Ivan Hristov and others.

Today, the exposition of the Nikola Petrov Art Gallery consists of three departments - Painting, Graphics and Sculpture with about 1,400 works in total.



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The Painting department stores over 900 canvases, including original works of Ivan Markvichka, Boris Mitov, Nikola Petrov, Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master, Sirak Skitnik, Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Stoyan Venev, Vasil Stoilov, Zdravko Alexandrov, Ivan Tabakov and other great masters of fine art.

The graphic department of the art gallery in Vidin contains 45 original works by world-famous masters, including Rembrandt, Albrecht Dürer, Gustave Doré, Francisco Goya, Francois Millet, Delacroix, Theodore Rousseau.

The collection of the Sculpture department contains works by masters such as Ivan Funev, Dimitar Ostoich, Anastasia Gyukova, Aleksandar Apostolov, Prodan Prodanov, Lyubomir Dalchev and others.

15. Drama Theatre “Vida”

The **Drama Theatre “Vida”** is located metres from the Nikola Petrov Art Gallery in Vidin. Impressive is not only the program that is presented on the stage of the theatre, but also the fact that it is housed in the first building in Bulgaria constructed following the European model, especially for theatrical needs. Italian architects and builders were involved in building the theatre. The theatre’s building had a spacious hall, a ground floor, boxes and galleries, a large stage, an orchestra pit and a glazed roof. In the first half of 2020, the conservation, restoration and exhibition of the Vida Drama Theater will be completed, when its activities will resume.

The programme is multi-genre and reaches the audience through finesse and good taste. The theatrical season is rich in offers and guest theatres.

16. Sinfonietta Vidin

The **Vidin Sinfonietta** is the largest cultural institute in the Vidin region, which organizes and performs various musical performances in the city and the region; educational concerts and lectures for children.

The Sinfonietta has become an emblem and standard for musical creativity with a number of international guests and tours, **participation in International master classes in conducting.**

The musicians from the Vidin Sinfonietta have performed in famous European concert halls, such as Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Victoria Hall in Geneva, House of Music in Vienna, Beethoven Hall in Stuttgart, The Hall of Congresses in Zaragoza and many others.



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Many famous Bulgarian and foreign conductors and soloists have had the pleasure of working with the Vidin Sinfonietta.

17. State Puppet Theatre in Vidin

The art of puppet theatre introduces us to a different world, as does the State Puppet Theatre in Vidin. The **Vidin Puppet Theatre** maintains 10-12 titles in its playvill which each year includes 3-4 new productions. Its repertoire is aimed mainly at children, but there are also performances for adults.

During the year, about 200 performances are performed in the city and nearby places, as well as on appropriate stages in the country. The artistic pursuits of the troupe balance the means of expression of the puppet show with live stage performances. On the Vidin stage one can see productions of all stage genres, the artists work with different systems of puppets, showing a strong and lasting interest in the theatre of shadows. The Vidin Puppet Theatre is the only Bulgarian theatre that is a member of the European Association "Art for Children and Young People" based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Calafat

18. Marincu Palace Museum

We connect the palaces with past times and fairy tales - the **Marincu Palace in Calafat**, Romania, is an extremely beautiful building, an architectural monument of local interest, in the city centre. Today it is also a Museum of Arts and Ethnography.

The palace was built by local financier Stefan Marincu in memory of his daughter, Marioara Marincu, who died of tuberculosis at the age of 13 between 1904 and 1907. Before his death, Stefan Marincu donated the palace to the Calafat municipality, making it a mandatory condition in his will that the building should have a girls' school in memory of his daughter.

The architectural style of the palace belongs to the French neoclassicism with baroque and rococo elements and with influences of Romanian architecture from the early 20th century, and it stands out with its impressive size, but also with the finesse of the details.

The museum includes permanent exhibitions of works of art in the sections of painting, graphics and sculpture; ethnographic exposition; section with the history of Calafat; archaeology; contemporary Romanian art. The Museum of Arts and Ethnography has over 1,000 exhibits in its



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ethnographic section. The collection includes clothes, carpets, ceramics, tools, household items and more.

Craiova

19. Museum of Arts (Jean Mihail Palace)

The Jean Mihail Palace is the most beautiful building in Craiova, Dolj County, Romania. The building is an architectural monument of national interest. The palace was built between 1898 and 1907 to serve as the private residence of Constantine (Dinu) Mihail, a landowner and politician.

The palace has a rich interior and exterior decorative architecture. The exclusive interior is achieved by a Carrara marble staircase and Ionic columns, Murano chandeliers, Venetian chandeliers, gilded plasters, walls upholstered in Lyon silk, high-quality paneling and parquet, stylish furniture, Japanese dishes, sculptures and paintings. The Jean Mihail Palace belongs to French academicism including elements belonging to the late Baroque.

Today, the Jean Mihail Palace houses Craiova's Museum of Art. The permanent exhibition presents works divided into three groups: a collection of European art, a collection of Romanian art and Constantin Brâncuși. The collection of European art features works from the Dutch, Flemish, Italian and French schools. The collection of Romanian art includes icons, paintings, works by artists Constantin Lecca, Theodor Aman, Nicolae Grigorescu, Stefan Luchian, Nicolae Tonitza, Iosif Iser, Gheorghe Petrașcu, Theodor Pallady, Eustațiu Stoenescu, Ion Țuculescu, Corneliu Baba.

The main attraction of the museum is the gallery dedicated to Constantin Brâncuși, showing six of his early sculptures.

20. Casa Baniei

Casa Baniei is the oldest civil building in Craiova, restored in 1699 by the Wallachian ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu on the site of former boyar houses. Over the years, the building has undergone many renovations and it has housed the court of Craiova, some schools, the priest's seminary, the department of state archives. After restoration activities in 1934, the building was given to the Oltenia Regional Museum and was its headquarters until 1948.

Since 1967, the permanent exposition of the Ethnography Department at the Oltenia Museum has been housed in Casa Baniei. In the ethnographic museum, visitors can see expositions such



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as "Bread making" and "The Rhythm of Life", including Olt pottery, wedding traditions, religious objects, icons, carpets, rugs, and an exhibition of dolls. Workshops for children are organized in the museum.

21. Oltenia Philharmonic

The Oltenia Philharmonic, Craiova, is an authoritative institution in Romanian musical life. The current activity of the Philharmonic is performed by a Symphony Orchestra, a Chamber Orchestra, an Academic Choir, as well as many chamber ensembles.

The symphony orchestra is formed by about 80 professional musicians and its repertoire includes masterpieces of symphonic music, operas, requiems, arrangements of famous jazz pieces and more.

The chamber orchestra was founded in 1957 and specialized in performing pre-classical and classical music. Its repertoire today is more diverse and includes mainly contemporary music.

The academic choir is one of the most valuable ensembles in the country in this genre. The Oltenia Philharmonic organizes the Musical Craiova International Festival every year.

22. Marin Sorescu National Theatre

The Marin Sorescu National Theatre is another iconic cultural institution in the city of Craiova, named after the Romanian poet Marin Sorescu. The theatre is the first one based in a country from Central and Eastern Europe to become a member of the European Theatre Convention. The theatre building is an architectural symbol of the city.

The theatre, boasting a 170-year-long history, is one of the most important theatres in Romania. The Marin Sorescu National Theater has participated in numerous international festivals, earning many awards and distinctions. In 1996, the theatre company was invited to perform in Brussels at the Grand Theatres of Europe. Since 1994, it has been organizing the International Shakespeare Festival. In 2016, the theatre organized for the first time in Romania the prestigious theatre event "Europe Theatre Prize".

The Marin Sorescu National Theatre is the only one in the country to be awarded the Order of Merit in the field of culture with the rank of commander, in gratitude for its outstanding achievements.



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23. Colibri Theatre for Children and Youth

The **Colibri Theatre for Children and Youth** was founded in 1949 as a subsidiary for puppet theatre of the Marin Sorescu National Theatre and became an independent institution in 1956.

The Colibri Theatre has a repertoire of 20 permanent performances, organizes street performances, festivals such as "Puppets take the street", workshops and other cultural activities such as Puppet Therapy, Puppet Marathon and others. The theatre participates in the most important theatre festivals in the country, as well as international ones in Europe, Asia and Africa.

2.1.2.8.2 Comparative competitive advantages of the new tourist product

The advantages of the Joint Integrated Thematic Route "Art and Culture" (main and extended), which can be deduced as comparative competitive advantages, are:

- ✓ Innovation in the construction of tourist routes by incorporating different types of experiences related to the theme of art and culture;
- ✓ Development of the route in an entirely urban environment, but not restricting tourists on the options for consumption of different types of tourism;
- ✓ Diversity and cultural exchange, expansion of the general culture with specially selected for the routes objects and forms of presentation of culture and art in the cross-border region Bulgaria-Romania;
- ✓ The start and end point of a route is also one of the main advantages. Veliko Tarnovo as a destination strongly supports and develops the image of the routes as an exclusive form of cultural tourism.

The derived comparative competitive advantages are based on the prepared and presented in the transitional parts of the situational analysis and the main underlying product values of the routes.

The authenticity of the competitive advantages will be tested by making a survey among tourists who have made tourist trips along the route.



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2.1.2.8.3 Possibilities for additional number of tourist services as additions to the basic packages

Cultural tourism in recent years goes beyond the framework of tourist products intended for visitors with a stronger interest in the field of history and the past. The resources for the development of this type of tourism include, in addition to archeological and architectural monuments, also cult sites of different religions, ethnological sites, cultural institutions - museums, galleries, incl. for modern art, various events related to creativity, in which tourists themselves create culture, intangible heritage - songs, dances, customs, but also food and cuisine, lifestyle. Therefore, cultural tourism is already considered "thematic", divided into many specialized and targeted categories of tourist products, selected and linked to different activities for the respective different target groups.

The main goal is to visit sites related to the culture and cultural characteristics of an era or a group of people (nation, ethnic group, tribe, etc.). The objects of cultural tourism are various forms of art, presented in galleries or outdoors, places, buildings and objects of historical significance (archeology), museums and excavations, ethnographic reserves. Cultural tourism also includes attending various cultural events such as festivals, theater performances, performances of local folk traditions, customs, rituals and more. Subtypes of cultural tourism are not only cognitive-historical, but also religious, wine and culinary, as these elements are also part of the cultural heritage. It should be noted that tourists practicing cultural and cognitive tourism are more mobile and spend more money than ordinary tourists, which is an advantage, especially for rural areas.

Based on the trends for the development of cultural tourism and the results obtained, from the online survey among tour operators and travel agents in what form would offer the developed joint integrated tourist route, which shows that 50% of respondents would offer the route in combination with Hobby tourism - travel, photography, cooking and wine tourism. Below are presented proposals of the authors of the Strategy for expanding the product palette of the proposed tourist route.



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Sites in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Boris Denev Art Gallery. ➤ Multimedia visitor centre "Tsarevgrad Tarnov". ➤ Samovodska Charshia. ➤ Music and Drama Theater "Konstantin Kisimov". 	
Location:	Town of Veliko Tarnovo
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The interactive educational game "Mediaeval criminal mysteries - The secret of the 9 keys". ✓ Audio - visual show "Sound and Light" (Tsarevets Hill). ✓ The park with miniature models "Tarnovgrad - the spirit of millennial Bulgaria". ✓ The Boruna area. ✓ Protected area "Transfiguration Monastery". ✓ Yalovo Winery. ✓ National Fair at the Sts. Peter and Paul Monastery. ✓ International Ancient Roman Festival "Nike - The Game and the Victory".
Site in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Art Gallery "Nedyalko Karaneshev". 	
Location:	Town of Gorna Oryahovitsa
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fair at the Sts. Peter and Paul Monastery. ✓ Ethnographic Museum in Dolna Oryahovitsa. ✓ Alley for hiking. ✓ The protected area "Peony meadow". ✓ National holiday of Peony and flowers, May Days of Culture.
Site in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Municipal History Museum. 	
Location:	Town of Knezha



Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 12 mounds in the old vineyards and sumach vegetation. ✓ Late antique and early mediaeval settlement. ✓ Holy Trinity Church. ✓ Protected area for the habitats of the Iskar River. ✓ Knezha Rock Fest.
Sites in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Art Gallery Donation "Svetlin Rusev Collection". ➤ Regional Historical Museum - Pleven. ➤ Art Gallery "Ilya Beshkov". ➤ Panorama "Pleven Epopee 1877". ➤ Drama and Puppet Theatre "Ivan Radoev". 	
Location:	Town of Pleven
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Late antique fortress "Storgozia". ✓ Cave Museum of Wine. ✓ Complex of Revival Period hours - Bakardzhieva, Parvanova, Dacheva houses. ✓ Pleven Philharmonic. ✓ Art centre Pleven. ✓ Kaylaka Summer Theatre - Pleven. ✓ Kaylaka Park. ✓ The nature reserve in the Chernelka area. ✓ Natural complex "Persina - Nikopol plateau". ✓ International Marimba and Percussion Festival. ✓ International AUTUMN JAZZ FEST.
Site in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Belogradchik Historical Museum. 	
Location:	Town of Belogradchik



Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Magurata Wine Cellar. ✓ Borovitsa wine cellar. ✓ Belogradchik Fortress "Kale". ✓ Summer Theatre - Belogradchik. ✓ Magurata Cave. ✓ Summer Festival "Opera of the Peaks - Belogradchik Rocks".
Sites of an extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nikola Petrov Art Gallery. ➤ Vida Drama Theater. ➤ Sinfonietta - Vidin. ➤ State Puppet Theatre - Vidin. 	
Location:	City of Vidin
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Baba Vida Castle, Vidin. ✓ Cross Barracks Museum. ✓ Drama Theatre, Vidin. ✓ Danube City Garden, Vidin. ✓ Vidin Park Protected Area. ✓ Danube Waves Arts Festival. ✓ Summer Opera Festival Fortress of the Centuries - Baba Vida. ✓ Novoselska Gamza Winery. ✓ Bononia Estate Cellar.
Site of an extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marincu Palace-Museum. 	
Location:	City of Calafat
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maglavit Monastery.
Sites in the extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture"	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Museum of Art (Jean Mihail Palace). ✓ Casa Baniei. ✓ Oltenia Philharmonic. ✓ Marin Sorescu National Theatre. ✓ Colibri Theatre for Children and Youth. 	
Location:	City of Craiova
Additional tourist services and attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Nicolae Romanescu Park. ✓ English Park. ✓ Botanical Garden, Craiova. ✓ Summer Traditions Festival - July, near St. Elijah. ✓ Ioana Radu National Festival. ✓ Craiova International Music Festival. ✓ History and tradition of Dolj.

2.1.2.9 Selection of target markets

The purpose of this analysis is to assess the environment in which the developed route will be marketed and promoted as a tourist product in order to inform and facilitate the process of preparing the marketing strategy.

Regarding the objectives set, the scope of the issues addressed includes:

- (1) Analysis of the current, as of the beginning of 2020, state and prospects for development of tourism in Europe and globally (foreign market).
- (2) The current, as of the beginning of 2020, state and prospects for development of tourism in Bulgaria and Romania and the cross-border regions (internal market), in the scope of which the marketing of the route is planned;
- (3) A study of the market potential and identification of target markets;
- (4) A forecast and assessment of the potential for attracting various target groups of tourists;
- (5) The analysis considers, but does not deepen the study in 2020, due to the extraordinary nature of the undertaken restrictions, which have an impact, overall on the economic





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development of the countries, but also specifically on the tourism sector. Due to this extraordinary nature, the report considers that there are no grounds to draw general conclusions about the trends observed in 2020/2021.

A desk study was used in the development of the analysis.

In order to assess the environment, the indicators have been selected in order to ensure the widest possible scope of the analysis, timeliness and completeness of the data. The focus is on the advantages and disadvantages that would have an effect on the development and implementation of the marketing strategy of the cross-border tourism market. The analysis is focused on the guidelines for measurements and analyzes in tourism of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).¹¹⁶

The analysis includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative data that examine trends and observations in the development of tourism in the target region. Data from international and national statistics, as well as summaries and conclusions from general and sector-oriented national/European/world planning and strategic documents, analytical studies and research were used as sources.

2.1.2.9.1. Analysis of the current situation and prospects for the development of tourism in a global and european perspective (external market)

Tourism continues to be identified as one of the key sectors for the development of the world and European economy. According to the World Tourism Organization¹¹⁷ (UNWTO), in 2019 tourism will become the third most important sector (in 2017 it is in fourth place), after the chemical industry and fuels. As of July 2019 (the last pre-pandemic year in which such statistics are published), the same report states that international tourist travel has increased by 5% to reach \$ 1.4 billion - a series of continuous growth since 2014 year since. At the same time, tourism revenues rose to \$ 1.7 trillion (4.4% growth), growth rates above those of world GDP growth (growth of 3.5%). The strongest growth was registered in Africa (7%), Asia and the Pacific (7%). In Europe and the Middle East, the growth is 5%, but with a difference in the growth of revenues from travel and tourism - 5% for Europe and 4% for the Middle East. Europe also receives more than half (51%), while Asia and the Pacific accept 25% of the total tourist flow. At present, tourism provides 7% of total global exports and 29% of world exports of services and

¹¹⁶ <http://www.e-unwto.org/content/m62755/>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421152>



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remains an important element of export diversification for both emerging and developed markets.

Again, according to the UNWTO¹¹⁸, tourism in the EU marks the ninth consecutive year of growth (2010-2019), making Europe the most visited destination. This trend is led by the Mediterranean region of Europe, which recorded 8% growth in visits and 7% growth in revenue. By comparison, Central and Eastern Europe, the region examined in this analysis, saw a 5% increase in visits but a 9% increase in revenue. Visa facilitation has led to an increase in Chinese tourists in the region, and the holding of the World Cup in Russia has significantly increased the revenues reported in the report of the World Tourism Organization to the UN.

The table below summarizes data on inbound tourism by region, with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), whose data are decomposed by country. As can be seen from the table, Europe reports a market share of 50.7% with an average growth between 2010 and 2018 of 4.8%. These figures are different for the EU of 28 countries, representing 40.2% of the total market share of tourism, but reporting an average growth of 5% over the same period.

Table 15 Inbound tourism by selected regions, 2010-2018

<i>Inbound tourism by regions</i>				Market share	Change		Average annual growth
	2010	2017	2018	2018	17/16	18/17	"10" - "18"
	Number of foreign tourists (million)			%	%	%	%
Worldwide	952	1,3	1,4	100,0	7,0	5,4	5,0
Developed economies	515	730	762	54,4	6,3	4,3	5,0
Developing economies	437	598	639	45,6	7,9	6,8	4,9
Europe	486.4	673.3	710	50,7	8,6	5,5	4,8
EU-28	382.2	539.3	562.9	40,2	7,7	4,4	5,0
Northern Europe	57	78.4	78.9	5,6	6,0	0,5	4,1
Western Europe	154.4	192.7	200.4	14,3	6,1	4,0	3,3

¹¹⁸ Ibid.



<i>Inbound tourism by regions</i>				Market share	Change		Average annual growth
Central and Eastern Europe	98.1	134.6	141.4	10,1	5,6	5,0	4,7
	Number of foreign tourists (1000)						
Bulgaria	6.047	8.883	9.273	1,3	7,6	4,4	..
Czech Republic	8.629	13.665	..	..	6,7	..	..
Estonia	2.511	3.244	3.234	0,5	3,6	-0,3	..
Hungary	9.510	15.785	17.152	2,4	3,5	8,7	..
Latvia	1.373	1.950	1.946	0,3	8,7	-0,2	..
Lithuania	1.507	2.523	2.825	0,4	9,9	11,9	..
Poland	12.470	18.400	19.623	2,8	5,3	6,6	..
Romania	1.346	2.760	2.797	0.4	11,3	1,3	..
Slovakia	5.415	..	..	..	..	..	..
South Europe	176.881	267.486	289.352	40,8	12,9	8,2	..

Source: United Nations World Tourism Organization

With the exception of Hungary, Lithuania and Poland, which recorded higher growth in 2018 than in 2017, other countries in Central and Eastern Europe saw a decline in the growth rate of the number of foreign tourists. For Bulgaria, this means an increase of 4.4% (7.6 for 2017), and for Romania it is even more striking 1.3% for 2018 compared to 11.3% in 2017.

Although Western Europe continues to be the leader, it is noteworthy that Central and Eastern Europe are converging their differences, both in absolute terms and in growth rates. In 2018, Lithuania marked one of the highest growth rates of foreign tourists, while Poland and Hungary remained above the average growth rates in Europe.

An important criterion for assessing trends in the travel and tourism sector is the number of arrivals in the country, as well as the number of overnight stays. The following tables present these trends of change compared to 2017, in the CEE countries.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Source: EU Virtual Observatory on Tourism - <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/vto/country-fact-sheets>.



Figure 15 Number of nights spent in CEE countries 2018



Figure 16 Number of arrivals spent in CEE countries - 2018



As can be seen from Figures 14 and 15, there is a trend of growth in the region in the number of arrivals and the number of nights for 2018, compared to 2017. The highest in terms of both parameters is the growth in Lithuania and Latvia, and the lowest in Estonia. Romania recorded a relatively higher growth (5.7% in overnight stays and 6.30% in arrivals) compared to Bulgaria, which has a growth of 3.0% in overnight stays and 4.5% in the number of arrivals. An overall trend can be observed in terms of Romania catching up in the tourism sector over the last 10



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years. However, the structure of this increase is radically different. In Bulgaria, both in terms of overnight stays and in terms of arrivals, non-residents have a larger share. For overnight stays, non-residents number 17,748.9 thousand (growth of 3.80%), residents are 9,096.1 thousand people (growth of 1.70%), and for arrivals this ratio is less, but again with a predominance of non-residents - 3,910.2 thousand (growth of 7%) and 3,889.5 thousand (growth of 2.20%). In Romania, the difference in overnight stays of residents (23,154.7 thousand) and non-residents (5,306.5 thousand) is significant, although both segments increased by 7 percent. The difference in the structure of the arrivals is similar, of which 10,029.5 (growth by 7.80%) are residents and 2,786.5 thousand are non-residents (growth of 1.40%). This makes targeting different audiences, as well as focusing on the internal market, especially important when developing a common marketing strategy.

2.1.2.9.2 Analysis of the state and prospects for the development of tourism in bulgaria and romania the cross-border regions bulgaria and romania (foreign market)

An additional perspective for the comparison of Bulgaria and Romania and the CEE countries is the tool developed by the World Economic Forum - Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). In the annual report for 2019¹²⁰, Bulgaria is ranked 45th, which the country retains compared to 2017, but increases its competitiveness by 1.8%. Romania also increased its score compared to 2017 by 5.7% and climbed 12 places - to 56th position out of 140 countries. The lower a country is in the ranking, the higher its competitiveness in tourism. The evaluation is made on the basis of a series of criteria, which are evaluated on a scale from 1 (worst) to 7 (best result). Of the other countries, Slovenia is ranked 36th, the Czech Republic (38th), Poland (42nd), Estonia (46th), Hungary (48th), Latvia (53rd), Lithuania (59th), Slovakia (60th place).

The main conclusions of the report highlight the need for an integrated and systematic approach to the strategic development of tourism and its presentation in the global economy. Those economies that develop all the pillars measured by the index reach above the world average levels of competitiveness. At the same time, it is noted that the continued growth of the sector worldwide is accompanied by lagging development of the necessary infrastructure and slow implementation of practices related to sustainable resource management. The growth in the 4 years before 2019 is due to the development of air transport, digital connectivity and openness of the world economy, despite growing tensions and nationalism. The main trend is the lowering

¹²⁰ Available at <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-travel-tourism-competitiveness-report-2019>



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of travel prices and increasing travel security - the segment Price Competitiveness marked the strongest growth since 2017 in terms of percentage in this study.

Europe and Eurasia remain one of the most competitive regions in the sector. 6 of the top 10 economies are positioned in Europe. At the heart of this performance are cultural resources, modern infrastructure - especially in ground and port transport, and tourism services. The region is characterized by a high degree of "enabling" environment and prioritizing the development of the sector. For these reasons, Europe is the most developed region compared to 2017, thanks to improved price competitiveness, air transport infrastructure and a willingness to deploy information and communication technologies.

The report states that the Balkans and Eastern Europe sub-region has the lowest share of the sector in terms of GDP - 4%, but the countries here are most dependent on non-residents for travel and tourism revenues. Measures are needed to increase the competitiveness of this sector in order to realize its full potential. However, the region is experiencing one of the fastest rates of development of the competitiveness of tourism compared to other sub-regions in Europe. This change is especially visible in the segments of nature and cultural tourism, as a result of its improved positioning. Improvements in "sector prioritization", "tourism services" and "price competitiveness" (the best comparative advantage in the region) are also cited as general trends. However, the report states that the Balkans and Eastern Europe are below the average in six pillars of the index compared to world performance and in all pillars compared to Europe.

According to the index, the weakest (and therefore most vulnerable) elements of tourism in Romania are airport infrastructure, followed by ground and port infrastructure, the business environment, human resources and the labour market. In these segments, Romania has values around the regional average. Romania scores the worst result, compared to the region, in terms of prioritization of policies in the sector - in the bottom 40%. The country receives the highest marks for the segments - "health and hygiene", "safety and security", "price competitiveness", "ICT readiness", "natural resources", "environmental sustainability" and "cultural resources and business travel" - relatively low result (2,3), but in the upper 40%, compared to the region. The weaknesses of Bulgaria's tourism competitiveness are airport, ground and port infrastructure. Bulgaria is rated with relatively low results in the segments "natural resources" and "cultural resources and business travel", but as for Romania, they position it in the top 40%. The strengths are "health and hygiene", "tourism services and infrastructure" and "environmental sustainability".



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In the data presented in this way it is necessary to include those countries that can be considered as competitive, according to the offered tourist services. In the various strategic studies and documents in the field of tourism and specifically in the field of cultural tourism, there is a consensus regarding the main competitors of Bulgaria, and therefore regarding the integrated joint tourist route. According to the project for updating the main strategic document in the field - the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development, 2014 - 2030 (NSSDT)¹²¹, the main competitors of the target region are Greece, Turkey, Croatia, Italy and Spain, in the segment of maritime and holiday tourism, Austria (winter/ski tourism), Greece and Italy (cultural tourism) and again Greece and Turkey in terms of spa, balneo and wellness tourism. The main competitors are Greece, Turkey, Croatia and Austria. In the current strategy, these countries are examined according to their objective assessment based on the index of tourism competitiveness, summarizing their competitive advantages and disadvantages over Bulgaria and Romania.

In the index ranking, Austria ranks 11th, Greece 25th, Croatia 27th and Turkey 43rd.

Austria has the highest score in the “health and hygiene” pillar (7 with a world average of 5.1%). Its values for “safety and security”, “ICT readiness”, “sector prioritization”, “environmental sustainability”, “tourism services and infrastructure” and “ground and port infrastructure” are also above the regional average and in the top 20% of the world. The country lags behind in the pillars “business environment”, “air infrastructure” and “cultural resources and business travel”. Bulgaria is closest to Austria’s values in the health and hygiene and tourism services and infrastructure segments, and lags behind mostly in terms of “infrastructure” and “safety and security” as components. As can be seen from the results presented above, these conclusions are similar with regard to Romania.

As can be seen in the table below, compared to the other main competitors, Bulgaria and Romania have better or comparable values in the segments “health and hygiene”, “ICT readiness”, “price competitiveness”, as Bulgaria is ahead of most of them in the assessment of its “tourist infrastructure”. The lowest values for this group are in terms of “prioritization of Travel and Tourism”, “international openness”, “natural resources”, “cultural resources and business travel” and “air and ground infrastructure”.

¹²¹ <https://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/strategicheski-dokumenti/aktualizirana-nacionalna-strategiya-za-ustoychivo-razvitie-na>



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Table 16 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019 - pillars - part 1

	Position	Business environment	Safety and Security	Health and Hygiene	Human Resources and Labour Market	ICT readiness	Prioritization of the sector	International Openness
Austria	11	4,8	6,2	7	5,3	6,1	5,3	4
Greece	25	3,9	5,6	6,5	4,7	5,2	5,6	4,1
Croatia	27	3,8	5,9	6,3	4,1	5,2	4,9	4,2
Turkey	43	4,4	4,3	5,5	4,2	4,6	5,1	3,8
Bulgaria	45	4,4	5,2	6,7	4,6	5,2	4,7	3,9
Romania	56	4,4	6	6,1	4,5	5,2	4,1	3,9

Table 17 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019 - pillars - part 2

	Position	Price Competitiveness	Environmental Sustainability	Air infrastructure	Ground and port infrastructure	Infrastructure of tourist services	Natural resources	Cultural resources and business travel
Austria	11	4,7	5,7	4,2	5,2	6,7	4,1	3,2
Greece	25	4,9	4,5	4,8	3,8	5,8	3,5	3,3
Croatia	27	5	5,1	3,6	3,9	6,5	4,4	2,8
Turkey	43	5,6	3,7	4,7	3,6	5	2,8	3,8
Bulgaria	45	5,7	4,8	2,7	3,2	6	3,7	2,1
Romania	56	5,6	4,4	2,7	3,1	4,6	3,2	2,3

It can be clearly seen that Bulgaria and Romania retain the structure of their competitive shortcomings, lagging behind their competitors in these indicators. It is especially necessary to take action to improve the marketing and branding of the countries and the various tourism products, as well as to strengthen the prioritization of the sector, especially in view of the relatively high share it occupies in the economies of the two countries. Emphasis should be



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placed on the advantages of the two destinations, comparable to those of competitors - good communication and internet security, relatively good health services, high quality of services and their price competitiveness, as well as a relatively high level of safety and security.

As for the specifics of cultural tourism, again according to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism 2014-2030, Bulgaria is rated as the country with the weakest positions compared to its competitors in terms of available cultural and historical resources. According to the latest UNESCO data¹²², Turkey is ahead of Greece and is the country with the highest number of registered cultural sites on the UNESCO list - 17, Greece has 16 registered sites, Austria has 11 registered cultural sites, Croatia - 8, Bulgaria - 7 and Romania also 7. Croatia is also ahead of Bulgaria compared to 2017. This situation is reflected in the expectations and attitudes of different groups of tourists.

A tourist study¹²³ conducted among tourists (Bulgarians and foreigners) on the provided tourist services in the region and their motivation to visit this destination clearly shows the strong potential of cultural tourism (as an independent but mostly as an integrated product), but also the need for active communication and promotion of the destination.

2.1.2.9.3 Forecast and assessment of the potential for attracting various target groups of tourists

Answering the question "What is the purpose of your trip", 55.5% of respondents answered - family vacation and recreation. Second comes the response "cultural tourism" with 32.6%. This is valid for both foreign tourists and Bulgarians. Once they arrived in the region, the respondents mostly practiced cultural tourism - 50% of the respondents. For Bulgarians this is a much higher percentage - 54.4%, compared to 31.5% for foreigners. This reflects the general tendency for the internal market to dominate as forming the main tourist flow in the structure of the general sector. Local landmarks and cultural/historical sites are the most preferred activities during the holiday - 67.2%. In second place are the individual tours and walks (59.9%). 26.9% express preferences for tasting local delicacies and products. There are no serious differences in the expressed preferences of Bulgarians and foreigners on this issue.

The serious percentage of people who visit the destination more than once is impressive - for Bulgarians it is about 63%, and for foreigners about 43%. This, in addition to high product

¹²² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/&order=country>

¹²³ The data are taken from a study provided by Veliko Tarnovo Municipality



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satisfaction, shows the huge potential of the various tourist opportunities. Their integration into a joint product increases not only the potential of the region to establish itself as a traditional destination (traditionally visited), but also to expand its popularity among different target markets and groups. Proof in this direction is the fact that there is a significant jump - 30% in the attitude of foreign tourists to return to Bulgaria for a holiday - from 63.1% in 2009 to 93.3% in 2020. In addition, there is an increase in the percentage of tourists who think it is worth recommending Bulgaria as a tourist destination to their relatives, friends and acquaintances. "In 2009, 90.6% of Bulgarian tourists are of this opinion, and with foreign tourists it is 83.3%. Here, too, in 2020 there is an increase in these shares - almost all Bulgarians (97.9%) and foreigners (96%) would recommend the destination to their loved ones"¹²⁴.

Tourism segmentation in this case needs two criteria - types of tourists and tourist profiles. In the conditions of intensified competition for attention and attraction of tourists, a reduced tourist flow on a global scale and the growing trend for development of domestic tourism, attention should be paid to the detailed user profiles, needs and expectations of tourists.

Based on the study already cited, the following trends are emerging. "89.2% of Bulgarians in 2009 say they rely on themselves when it comes to organizing a vacation, and in 2020 this percentage rises to 94.5%. Foreigners are also becoming more independent from this point of view - in 2009 it is 68.7% of tourists who organized their own travel and 29.8% used the services of a travel agency, while in 2020 a total of 83.3% of tourists planned their vacation independently and only 12% - with the help of a travel agency". There is also a reduction in the time for organizing and preparing the trip: "foreigners in 2009, on the other hand, organize their vacation in advance - between 2 and 3 months before the trip (27.3%) so that they could take into account the reservation of airline tickets and available accommodation. In 2020, 58.7% of holidays are organized within a period of one to 14 days. This trend is even more visible for residents - in 2020, 90 percent of them organize their vacation between a couple of days and a month before departure - 74.7% in 2009.

Regarding the factors influencing the choice of tourists - for residents it is influenced mainly by the price-quality ratio, and that of foreigners - by price and destination. "In 2020, the leading factors are mostly intangible - these are cleanliness and nature"¹²⁵. Such accumulations indicate the need for targeted measures and communication to promote the destination in its

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.





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completeness and entirety (variety of opportunities and factors influencing the choice), as well as to manage the image of the destination according to the expectations of tourists.

Tourist types

Based on the expert assessment, as a result of documentary studies, studies of analyzes of the Ministry of Tourism - Bulgaria and analysis of the information, the segmentation of tourists into four categories (types of tourists) is proposed as follows:

1. Tourists from the country - this includes tourists from Bulgaria and Romania who have a cultural and cognitive interest in the route, tend to travel on one of the two routes depending on the season and expected costs.

2. They need accommodation, their transportation can be by personal transport or organized by specialized transport.

3. Predominant for the route will be - tourists from places up to 400 km away. Their journey is up to 3-5 hours, using their own or organized transport, the use of public transport along the route is not convenient and would complicate and spoil the tourist experience.

4. International tourists. For travel they use international transport, air transport, passenger ships (cruises), tourist buses, own cars. Their journey is from several hours to several days. They may need accommodation in the destination in hotels, rooms, boarding houses or not (for cruise tourists). Tourism segmentation by motivation, the study of profiles is based on the most basic motivators such as socialization / new people, new community groups / exchange, experiences / events, self-care (including a wide range of motivators). The information is presented in the form of a presentation of a tourist person - which includes several essential aspects such as - motivation and benefits; interests and activities; expectations; as well as the degree of influence gives a shattered profile of tourists potentially interested in the route.

Tourist persona, profile 1 - “Active families - discoverers”

Descriptively they are the so-called "Active families - discoverers". Their demographic profile is: married or partner couples with children (over 5 years old), the average age of parents can be 30 - 50 years, with higher education, established work habits, working with safe and stable incomes above the national average.



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Their travel habits are determined by two main factors - recreation and sightseeing tourism, which includes culture, history, art and nature, events and festivals. Also of interest to them are the opportunities to combine different types of tourism.

Motivators for them are the opportunities to develop themselves and their children intellectually, to get to know and to introduce them to different cultures, art forms, to be able to be involved in them, and not just to be observers. The main priority for this group of tourists are the opportunities to spend active time together with the family, to do different things together and to form memories together and to try new things.

Their travel style is determined by the children and their age, more often they travel independently with a personal vehicle, which helps them to be mobile and change their plan on the go. They prefer comfortable accommodation, which facilitates them and contributes to the overall experience.

They plan their trips according to the children's vacations and take into account their possibilities for absence from school, at the same time they take frequent small trips in accordance with the holidays and the possibilities for combining weekends with holidays. Their ability to fully experience the route is limited by seasonality and anticipated duration.

This profile of tourists would stay longer in a place, part of the route, if they can combine it with another type of tourism and additional off-route attractions, such as in Veliko Tarnovo, where they have a great opportunity for additional tourist experiences and accommodation and catering are at the best level compared to other cities along the route.

The main resources from which they collect information for structuring their trip are online information and from personal recommendations of acquaintances and friends, as they check the information on the Internet, they are critical of comments and choose places to stay and eat. They do their planning and obtain information online and rely on the timeliness and accuracy of online information.

They use printed materials with the expectation of detailed information, supported by illustrative material that can be used in the future and also be a nice and interesting memory of the trip. They would use printed maps, but rather as an accompanying and not a basic source of information about the route and would not keep them afterwards.



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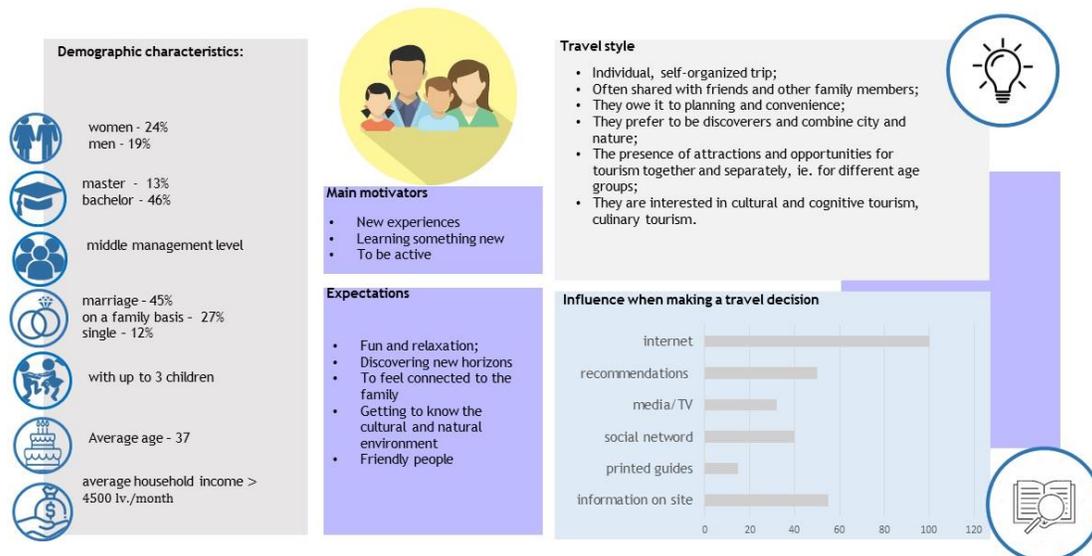
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They rely on the stories of the local people, as well as on the accounts of the representatives of the sites that are included in the route, for them these stories are valuable from the point of view of education for them and their children.

This type of tourists are fans of a sustainable lifestyle and would not use printed materials if they have no subsequent value for them.

Travelling for them is an integral part of their lives, for which they tend to spend money from the family budget, but without complicating the family budget, they observe financial discipline, but accommodation, meals, additional attractions and tickets for events and site visits are planned in the budget for their trip.

Figure 17 Tourist persona, profile "Active families - discoverers"



Tourist persona, profile 2 - Adventurers

These are people described as adventurers. They are interested in meeting different people, cultures and various art forms. They love to travel and enjoy life, choose diverse destinations and adore to combine different forms of tourism.



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The demographic profile includes mainly people up to 35 years of age with higher education and stable work and ambition to gain professional success. Their lifestyle is dynamic. They work actively but also want to actively travel and rest as well as to get to know the places where they travel. They often live with their partners and do not have children. They live in the big cities dynamically but they can also work remotely.

Their main motives for travelling are the search for diversity from the daily routine, with an added value - experience and discovery of new things. Running away from stress and the daily routine puts this type of tourists in the category of urban nomads who want to travel, learn and pamper themselves while not giving up the atmosphere of the city.

This provokes their necessity for travel and diversity, as well as their tendency to spend money on travelling. They are spontaneous when making a decision to travel, they are influenced by the opinion of acquaintances and friends, as well as by information on social media.

Their free time to travel is determined by their work and their social environment, they prefer to plan their own trips, but require and expect full information on the official online channels of hotels, restaurants, cultural sites, opportunities to attend events.

The choice of route depends on the amenities which are offered, the interesting event program, as well as the attractiveness of the cultural sites, their easy accessibility and information availability.

Sources of information that influence their decision to purchase are mainly social networks, specialized travel websites, they are easily influenced by the opinions of celebrities and opinion leaders, shared opinions and recommendations from relatives and acquaintances. In their decision-making model, the stage of gathering information and comparing alternatives has a great influence. They prefer to be informed, they prefer sources of information such as video and visual materials with less text, mainly essence. They do not rely on printed sources of information and prefer live storytelling on the spot or online.

Profile 2 tourists are strongly influenced by the views of their community groups and therefore marketing efforts should be targeted at communities with similar interests and should have a wider reach. The forms of cultural and event tourism excite and interest them, as their content is not insignificant, they tend to visit the same place or to experience the same route, as long as they change over time and are enriched as exhibitions, program of events and of course the different forms of festivals along the route. For them what matters is authenticity, the



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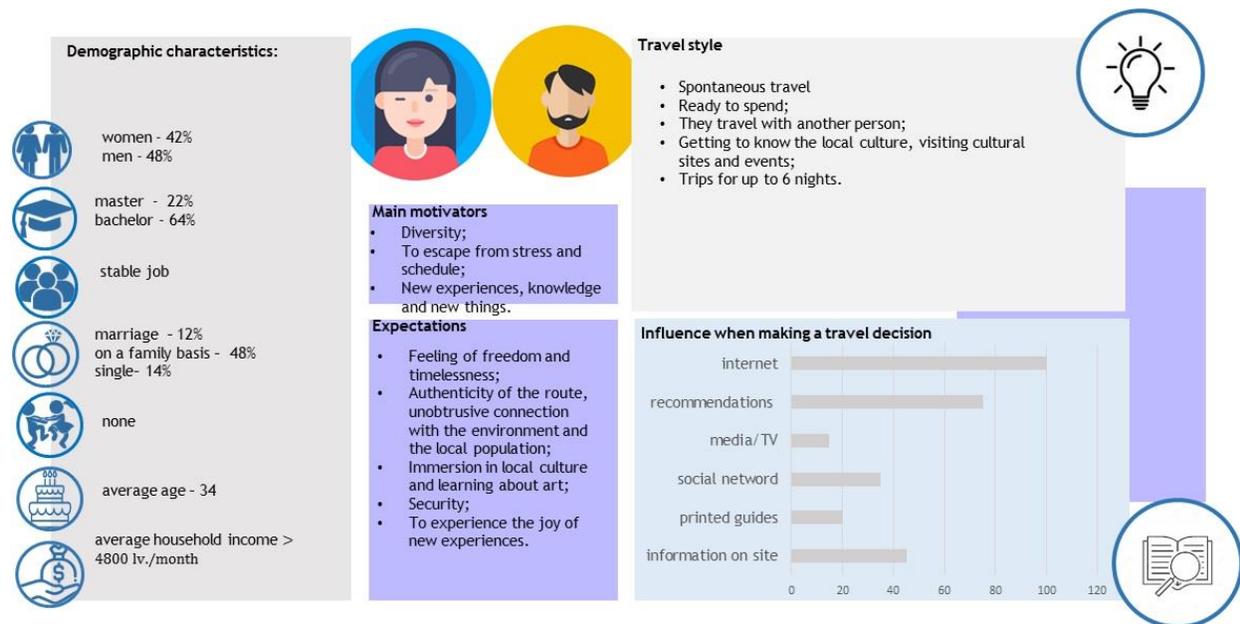
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opportunity to get to know the local culture and art, to meet new forms of art, to feel safe and secure in their journey. They are also active in social networks, in addition being consumers of online content, they are also active generators of such.

Figure 18 Tourist persona, profile "Adventurers - socialization"



Tourist persona, profile 3 "Romantic - sharing time"

This type of tourists do not differ radically from profile 2, but unlike them they prefer travelling in couples, keeping to the romantic side of things, travelling for them is a manifesto of connectivity and travel for them means keeping themselves busy and connected. They have a pronounced interest in cultural tourism and they like to discuss what they have seen and experienced, to enrich themselves intellectually and to expand their general knowledge of the world. They are impressed by the diverse forms of presentation of culture and art, they love experiments and highly value traditions.



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Their choice of trip depends on the amenities, they tend to travel both in an organized trip and independently. The convenience of having someone else do the organization is something they appreciate and would prefer in the form of travel. They turn to travel agencies to organize their trip, either individually or in groups.

Of key importance for them is to be able to combine cultural tourism with another type, they are fans of the so-called romantic getaways that can be combined with offers from culinary, wine and spa tourism.

The tourist types 2 and 3 share the same demographic profile, but in behavioral terms, they have different preferences that come from their main motivation, mainly the understanding of romance and the couple's journey. This implies a greater focus on pleasures, without neglecting cultural and artistic experiences.

They mainly use the Internet as a means of information, many are connected to social networks like Instagram, where they create and maintain active communication by generating content. The visual perception of the world of culture and art is leading for them. They pay significant attention to how the trip and the accompanying events can be presented by them on social networks and how this will present the couple in their community groups.

They are influenced by the opinion of opinion leaders and influencers, as well as how it fits into the understandings and opportunities for validation of their community groups - friends, family, professional and social.



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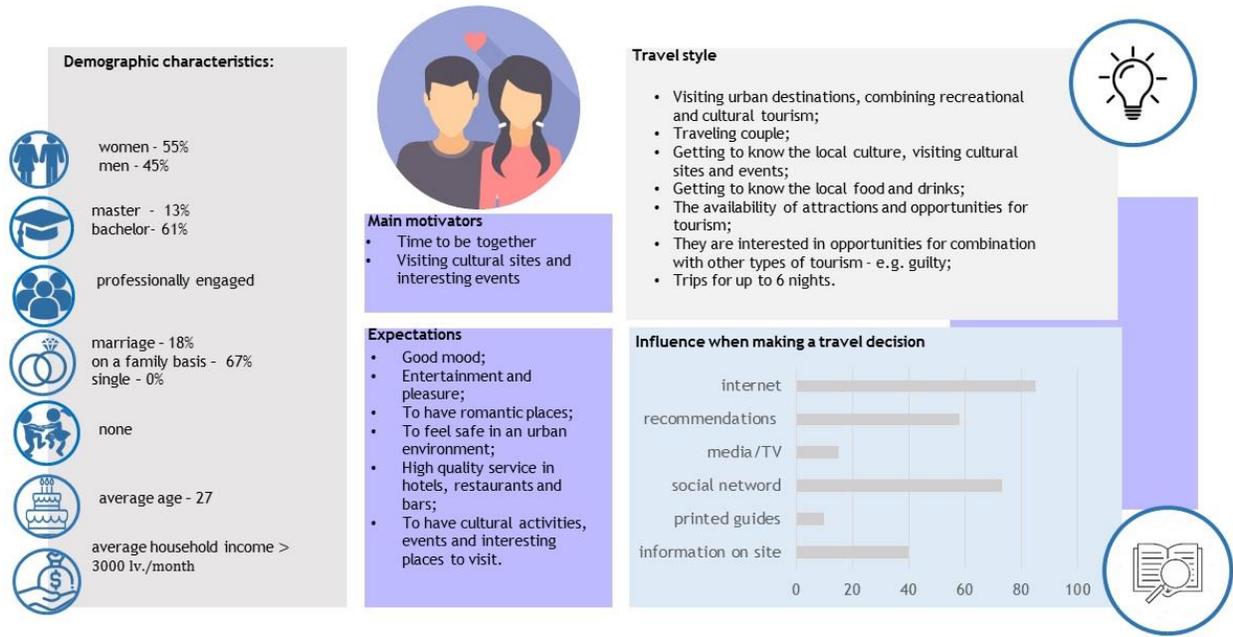


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Figure 19 Tourist persona, profile „Romantic - sharing time”



Tourist persona, profile 4 - “Golden age - taking care of oneself”

The representatives of this tourist type are people in retirement age, who most often still work or take care of their grandchildren, helping their children in this way. They are active, have an average income, not as much free time as is assumed for their respective age. The majority of them live in cohabitation, their activity encourages them to feel youthful, they like to travel, but not to organize their travels.

They prefer group trips, with a preliminary program that is not very busy. They prefer budget proposals that do not include additional travel costs. They have fixed funds that they tend to spend.

They are very interested in visits to cultural and historical sites, as well as visits to theatre, music and ballet productions, which are closer to classical art forms. They prefer the visits to galleries and museums to be combined with other tourist attractions and to be accompanied by



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a guide and/or a specialist who will present them with a story and information about what they saw. They like to have an overall view of what they see.

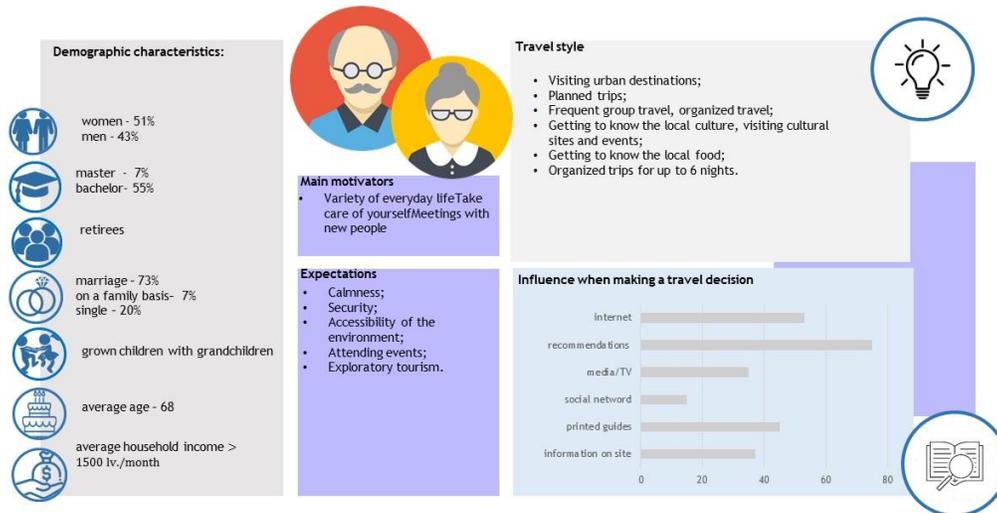
When planning a trip, they would prefer not to take care of accommodation and meals, which would be part of the overall package trip.

They travel mainly in pairs, whether with a partner or a friend, they are communicative and want to be paid attention to in a delicate way. The secondary goal of their trip is to make new contacts and socialize. They do not enjoy intense experiences.

They get informed mainly by the traditional media, but indirectly the Internet has a strong influence on their decisions, because they consult with their younger relatives, who often support them financially or pay this type of travel for them, such as the proposed routes. For them, the information received from relatives and acquaintances who share their gained experience is of high importance, they are not interested in social networks and use them mainly to connect with relatives and friends, as well as a place to share photos.

They use printed information sources, which they tend to keep as a form of memory and for this reason they highly value them. They ask questions and are active in acquiring information on the spot, as well as in supplementing the story about the place.

Figure 20 Tourist persona, profile „Golden age - taking care of oneself“



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2.1.2.9.4 Forecast for the attendance of the tourist route (product - object of marketing)

According to a UNWTO study, the cultural tourism market accounted for 39% of all international tourist visits, or 516 million international trips in 2017. According to the European Commission, cultural tourism represents 40% of all European tourism, with 4 out of 10 tourists choosing their destination based on the opportunities for cultural experience¹²⁶. Eurobarometer data show that 68% of Europeans agree that the presence of cultural heritage influences their choice of destination π ¹²⁷. The main criterion for determining the potential of the integrated joint tourism product "Art and Culture" is the attendance of cultural events or institutions. Again in a Eurobarometer survey¹²⁸, 68% of Europeans expressed a desire to learn more about Europe's cultural heritage. For Bulgaria this percentage is 74, and for Romania 70%. Data on visitors to various cultural events are presented below:

- Visitors to a historical monument or site are 51% for Bulgaria and 40% in Romania (61% for EU-28);
- 41% attended a traditional event (festival, carnival, puppet theatre, etc.) in Bulgaria and 37% in Romania (52% for the EU);
- 38% also watched a performance of traditional or classical art, 34% in Romania (43% for the EU-28);
- 38% have visited a museum or gallery in Bulgaria and 29% in Romania (50% for the EU-28);
- 22% visited a workplace with traditional crafts in Bulgaria, 22% in Romania (30% for the EU-28);
- In Bulgaria, 16% have been to the cinema or a film heritage festival to watch a European film made at least 10 years ago, for Romania - 18%.

¹²⁶ EC, Internal market, industry, entrepreneurship and SMEs
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural_en

¹²⁷ Eurobarometer, "Preferences of Europeans towards tourism" -
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2065>

¹²⁸ Special Eurobarometer 466: Cultural Heritage -
https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2150_88_1_466_eng?locale=en





It is necessary to specify that in terms of tourist characteristics and profiles of visitors there is an extremely strong lack of research and information. For this reason, it is difficult to formulate up-to-date and qualitative quantitative measurements of the interest in cultural tourism and specifically in the target regions.

The following tables present the publicly available data regarding the actual attendance of various cultural events for the period 2016-2019 in Bulgaria. The possibility of analysis is limited due to the lack of comparable data for all years, by districts in Bulgaria, by different cultural characteristics, as well as between the two countries (Bulgaria and Romania). Also, based on similar values of the data already considered from the Eurobarometer survey¹²⁹, it can be assumed that the trends in Bulgaria and Romania are relatively comparable.

Table 18 Attendance of live performances by age, 2016 - national level Bulgaria

	2016					
	Total	1-3 times in the past 12 months	4-6 times in the past 12 months	7-12 times in the past 12 months	More than 12 times in the past 12 months	No attendance in the past 12 months
	number	number	number	number	number	number
Total	3852978	1119292	297605	116989	52463	2266629

Source: NSI, Bulgaria

These data express the results of the study described above in real numbers. Attendance of recitals and concerts in 2017 and 2018 are presented in the table below:

Table 19 Attendance of concerts and recitals by age, 2016 - national level, Bulgaria

	2017		2018	
	Number	Visits	Number	Visits
Recitals	14	3350	29	3150
Concerts	1135	493898	1097	444028

Source: NSI, Bulgaria

¹²⁹ Special Eurobarometer 466: Cultural Heritage



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It can be seen that the trend of attendance is maintained during the studied two years, as it is strongly influenced by the number of events held when it comes to concerts. Reducing their number also leads to a decrease in visits. With recitals, even an increase in this number fails to maintain attendance. However, it is obvious that it is necessary to include attractive events and invest in their development as an engine of visitor interest. Joint (together with the stakeholders on the tourist product) development of cultural productions, their synchronization and marketing is a potential engine of the tourist interest and attendance of the route, as part of the tourist destination of the target regions.

At the district level, no data can be found on attendance of such events, but there is data on theatres and theatre stages. The tables below present the relevant data.

Table 20 Attendance of theatres in the target districts - Bulgaria, 2017-2019

Districts	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019 - 2017
	Visits	Visits	Visits	Visits
Vidin	37491	41631	35052	-7%
Pleven	38565	49843	61019	58%
Veliko Tarnovo	35701	33978	34005	-5%

Source: NSI, Bulgaria

The attendance of theatrical productions marks a relatively constant tendency of preservation or an increase (Pleven) in the target regions. Pleven recorded an exceptional growth for the period under review of 58%. The rest noted a slight decrease of 5 and 7%. In general, however, close values are maintained, which provides a starting point for assessing the cultural and theatrical calendar in the target region. It is extremely important to develop and integrate the existing cultural products in a joint communication and marketing strategy in order to increase the share of tourists (residents and non-residents) in the structure of the regional cultural activity/economy and to turn them into an engine of the tourism sector in the region.



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Cultural and historical landmarks remain a key element of such an effort. As with the described European trends in the target region, visits to cultural landmarks have the highest share. In general, the available data show that there is a significant interest in all forms of cultural tourism, and it is necessary to purposefully develop such a tourist product.

Table 21 Visits to cultural landmarks in 2016, national level - Bulgaria

	Total	1-3 times in the past 12 months	4-6 times in the past 12 months	7-12 times in the past 12 months	More than 12 times in the past 12 months	No visits in the past 12 months
	number	number	number	number	number	number
Total - Bulgaria	3829172	998225	233391	108102	52274	2437178

Source: NSI, Bulgaria

More than 3 million and 800 thousand people visited at least once a cultural landmark in 2016. Given that this is the most preferred form of cultural activity (51% for Bulgaria and 40% for Romania) it can be assumed that the trend will be maintained, with the potential for a significant increase after the end of the pandemic crisis. The data from the analysis of the attendance of museums at the district level can also contribute to a similar conclusion.

Table 22 Visits to museums in the target districts - Bulgaria, 2017-2019

District	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019 - 2017
	Visits	Visits	Visits	Visits
Total for the country	5109135	5084387	5354794	4,80%
Vidin	156146	183935	210864	13,50%
Pleven	199675	192885	201780	1,06%
Veliko Tarnovo	495110	507819	545491	10,18%

Source: NSI, Bulgaria



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In general, it can be summarized that Veliko Tarnovo is among the areas with the most intensive cultural life in 2019. According to the Institute for Market Economics (IME)¹³⁰, the reason for this is found in the high and growing attendance of local museums and libraries - 10.18 %. According to the IME, the number of visits to museums is three times higher than the national average, reaching 2,346 per 1,000 people (the national average is 770 per 1,000 people). The attendance of the libraries is almost four times higher than the average - 2,649 per 1,000 people in the district compared to 683 per 1,000 people in the country. Visits to local theatres and cinemas remain twice as low as average. In 2019, cinema attendance decreased to 319 per 1,000 people (compared to 659 per 1,000 people in the country), and theatres slightly increased to 146 per 1,000 people (compared to 362 per 1,000 people in the country).

The main reason for the good performance of Vidin district - growth of 13.50% in this category is the high attendance of museums in the district. In 2019, 2,546 visits per 1,000 people of the population are reported, or three times more than the national average. Although less in number, local theatres registered 423 visits per 1,000 people, and libraries 631 per 1,000 people (compared to 683 per 1,000 people in the country).

The cultural life in Pleven district had a relatively low intensity in 2019. The museums managed to achieve higher attendance than the national average - 854 visits per 1,000 people. However, interest in local libraries is much lower (almost twice lower) than the national average - visits are 310 per 1,000 people. The relative number of visits to cinemas and theatres is about one third lower.

Apart from the mentioned exceptions, there is a stable growth trend in the interest in cultural events and sites in the considered target regions. This is a clear indication of the potential for attracting tourist interest within the described values of the growth of visits. Active communication and work in this direction, the development of the integrated tourism product, would be a good starting point for maintaining a growth of between 4 and 10% attendance in the described areas.

It has already been stated that in recent years (2017 - 2019), cultural tourism has permanently formed nearly 40% of international tourist arrivals in the world (39 in 2019 worldwide and 40% in Europe). The analysis also shows data on attendance of the target region (see Table 6 Overnight stays by target districts, 2017 - 2019, Bulgaria, section 2.2.5 of this analysis). The number of overnight stays in the target regions changes as follows: in Vidin district the total number of overnight stays has increased compared to 2017 by 13.94%. The value of growth is

¹³⁰ Regional profiles maintained by the Institute for Market Economics - <https://www.regionalprofiles.bg/bg/>



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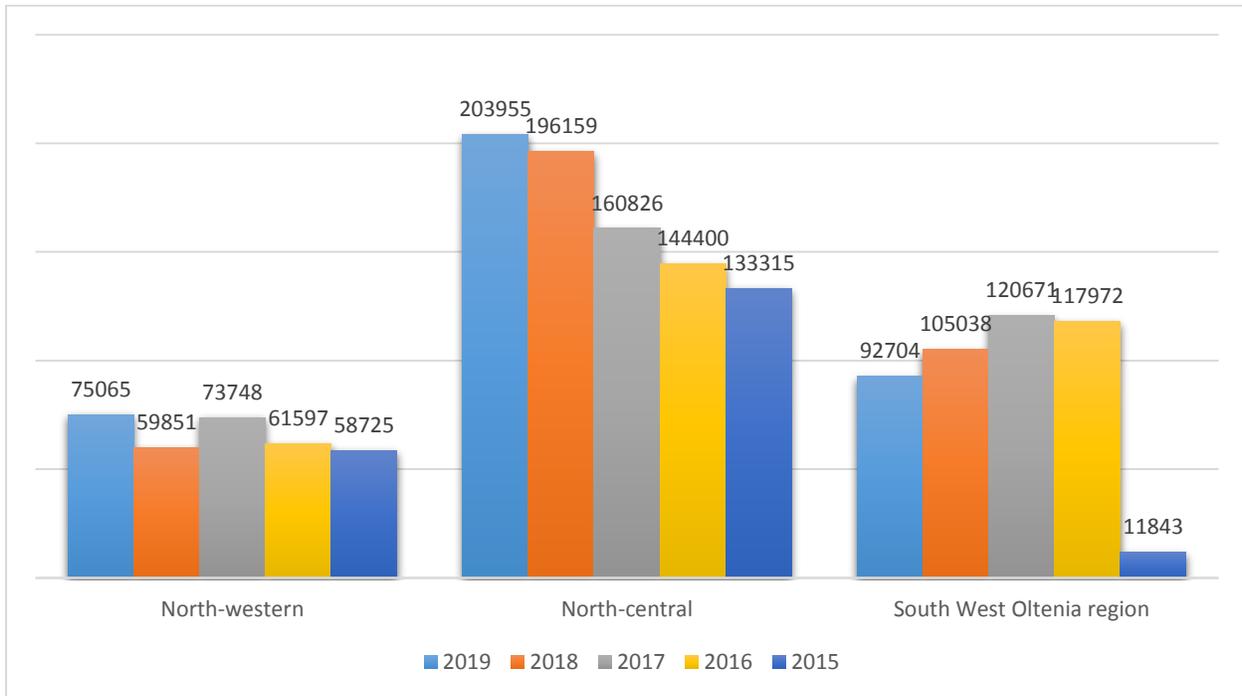
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similar in the region of Veliko Tarnovo - 13.20%. Pleven registered a drop by 5.92%, with an average growth of 9.73% for the whole country. Unfortunately, there is no such publicly available data for Dolj County, Romania. However, one can take into account the trend observed in the changes in the number of overnight stays at NUTS2 level - the following figure:

Figure 21 Overnight stays in places for accommodation by region - NUTS2 level



It can be clearly see that a growth trend prevails, which is commensurate with the observed trend in the number of overnight stays.

As a reference value of the described trends, one can consider the attendance of one of the sites included in the integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" - the art gallery "Boris Denev" in Veliko Tarnovo.



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Table 23 Attendance of Boris Denev Art Gallery - 2016-2020

Year	Number of sold tickets of 1 BGN	Number of sold tickets of 3 BGN	Total number of sold ticket	% change 2019-2017
2017	507	1852	2359,00	
2018	583	2016	2599,00	10%
2019	627	2200	2827,00	20%

Source: Data of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality

The attendance of the gallery reflects the trends described in the previous tables, as well as comes close to the values of changes concerning the sector in the considered districts. A hypothesis for recovery of pre-pandemic attendance levels and recovery of growth in the sector "travel and tourism" at the levels of 2019 in 2023 can be adopted as the main forecast for the tourist attendance.

Despite the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the tourism sector, which are detailed below, on the basis of the data reviewed so far it is possible to make a forecast for the restoration of tourist interest in general and cultural tourism in the target regions within a growth compared to 2019 between 4 and 10 %. The role of the integrated joint tourism product "Art and Culture" is key to achieving such a goal.

At the same time, it should be noted that in view of the described structure of the tourism market, a key focus for the recovery of the tourism sector (regardless of the market differences between Romania and Bulgaria) would be to place a clear focus on the internal market as well as on markets which are already traditional for the two countries. The next section examines the generating markets, highlighting the need to link the product to already developed and established tourism strategies, as well as a strategy related to the competitive advantages of the integrated product. In the short and long term, there are no resources to impose the route in new markets also in view of the consequences of the global pandemic and in view of the fact that the integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" are new and undeveloped products.



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2.1.2.9.5. Market potential - target markets

Target (generating) markets and market potential

According to the World Tourism and Travel Council¹³¹, in 2019 the share of tourism in the European economy is 9.5% of Europe's GDP and amounts to 2,191.2 billion dollars, providing 38.47 million jobs, which is 10.1% of the total employment in Europe. Non-residents (international tourists) spent \$ 639.5 billion (6.2% of the total exports of the European economy) and residents spent \$ 1.222.5 billion, accounting for 66% of total travel and tourism revenues. 80% of revenues - 1,484.7 billion, are formed from travel for pleasure and recreation, and 20% or 377.2 billion are related to business travel.

The pandemic is having a strong impact on the sector. The share of travel and tourism in the European economy decreased by 51.4%, falling to 4.9% of total GDP. Jobs fell by 9.3% to 34.87 million or 9.3% of total employment in the European economy. Revenues fell by 63.8% (-408.3 billion dollars) for non-residents and 48.4% (-591.6 billion dollars) for residents traveling in Europe, respectively. The revenue structure remains similar in terms of pleasure travel (73%) and work (18%). The share of income from residents increased by 7% - up to 73%, at the expense of those from non-residents, which fell to 27% of total income. Despite these major changes reflecting the Covid-19 pandemic, there is insufficient reason to believe that this situation will significantly change the positive trends, structure and characteristics of the pre-Covid tourism market. A sign in this direction is the relatively high percentage (90.7) of preserved jobs in the European market. The measures taken to compensate for the negative trends presuppose an opportunity to return to the trends from 2019. In comparison, globally the loss of jobs is 18.5%, although the decline in the share of travel and tourism revenues in the world's GDP is slightly lower - 49.1%.

According to the report, the situation is relatively similar for Bulgaria and Romania. In 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism amounted to 7.640 million dollars or 10.7% of Bulgaria's GDP. As a result of the pandemic, this contribution decreased by 57.4%, shrinking to 4.8% of GDP. The sector lost 45.5 thousand jobs (a decrease of 13.3%, higher than the European average), but retained relatively the same share of total jobs (9.5%) compared to 2019, during which it provided 341.6 thousand jobs, constituting 10.6% of the workforce.

¹³¹ Available at <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>





Unlike the European economy, the structure of travellers is reversed. In 2019, 80% of travel and tourism revenues are generated by non-residents (\$ 4.872 million - 10.6% of the country's exports) and 20% (1,210.9 million) by residents. In addition to the significant decline in total revenues, this structure marked a relatively slight change in 2020, with 73% or \$ 1,730.4 million (4.6% of the country's exports) coming from non-residents and 27% from 633.4 million coming from internal travel. With regard to non-residents, the decline in revenues decreased by 64.5% and revenues from internal travel decreased by 47.7%.

As in Europe, the bulk of revenue comes from pleasure travel - \$ 4,299.9 million, accounting for 71% of total revenue. Revenues for business purposes amount to \$ 1,783.1 million. In 2020, this remains relatively unchanged: 69% or 1,619.7 million is revenue from pleasure travel and 31% (744.1 million) is revenue from business travel. The relatively similar development trend of this sector is impressive, compared to the trends on the European market, which is again explained by the measures taken at European and national level and presupposes good prospects for recovery of pre-pandemic trends.

A certain change is noted in the analysis of the markets that are a source of import tourism in Bulgaria. The following tables present the data for 2019 and 2020 regarding the incoming and outgoing markets in the sector.

Table 24 Inbound and outbound in the sector (Bulgaria 2019 - 2020)

Inbound trips (%)			
Country	2019	Country	2020
Romania	11	Romania	24
Germany	10	Turkey	12
Turkey	9	Greece	8
Greece	7	Ukraine	7
Ukraine	6	Germany	6
Rest of the world	57	Rest of the world	43
Outbound trips			
Country	2019	Country	2020



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Greece	46	Turkey	43
Turkey	28	Greece	30
Hungary	5	Hungary	4
Great Britain	3	Great Britain	4
Romania	2	Germany	2
Rest of the world	16	Rest of the world	18

Source: Annual study of The World Travel and Tourism Council for 2021.

Noteworthy is not only the relatively high share of Romania in the structure of incoming travel, but also the increase in this share due to the crisis. Although this is mainly explained by trips related to holiday tourism, in regions beyond the scope of the route and travel restrictions in Greece, it is a good prerequisite for creating integrated products aimed at promoting and marketing the developed route. The preservation of numbers of Germany, Ukraine and Turkey, as well as the increase of trips from Greece to Bulgaria, also show a strong potential for development of these markets in view of the goals of the marketing strategy.

These trends are comparable for the sector in Romania. In 2019, the country recorded revenues from travel and tourism in the amount of 15,743.3 million dollars. This forms 6.1% of Romania's GDP this year, which is a relatively smaller share in the structure of the economy than in Bulgaria. The sector was a source of jobs for 575.8 thousand people or 6.8% of the total employment in Romania. The structure of revenues is quite different compared to Bulgaria. In the same year, the income from residents amounted to 4,942.6 (53%), which formed 4.2% of the state's exports, and from non-residents - 4,345.4 million dollars. As this ratio even increases in 2020. Despite the significant decrease in revenues - 79.9% (3.473 million) for non-residents and 46.2% (2.821.1 million) for residents, internal revenues already form 75% of total revenues in the sector. After the crisis, the share of tourism and travel in the country's exports fell to 1%. As in Bulgaria, most of the income is generated from vacations and recreation, not from business trips. In 2019, this ratio is 71 (6597.7 million) to 29 (2,690.4 million dollars) percent, and the trend intensifies in 2020 - from recreation come 3,183.2 million dollars (90%), and from business travel 394.8 million (10%). It is notable that in terms of job losses, Romania loses even less than the European average - 16.2 thousand or 2.8%.



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As far as the main markets are concerned, there is no significant change in their structure. The following tables present inbound and outbound trips based on source and destination.

Table 25 Inbound and outbound markets in the sector (Romania 2019 - 2020)

Inbound trips (%)			
Country	2019	Country	2020
Germany	11	Germany	15
Israel	9	Italy	9
Italy	8	Hungary	5
USA	6	Great Britain	5
Hungary	6	Poland	5
Rest of the world	60	Rest of the world	61
Outbound trips (%)			
Country	2019	Country	2020
Hungary	14	Bulgaria	20
Greece	12	Hungary	13
Italy	12	Italy	12
Bulgaria	10	Great Britain	8
Spain	8	Greece	7
Rest of the world	44	Rest of the world	40

Source: Annual study of The World Travel and Tourism Council for 2021

As in Bulgaria, the lack of serious changes due to pandemic restrictions indicates a high degree of traditionality/predictability in the markets and predictability in relation to the target groups. While in Bulgaria there is still a serious shift in the shares of travellers, in Romania the structure of incoming travel remains relatively unchanged. The general conclusion is the lack of serious structural changes following the pandemic in 2020. Despite the general reduction of travel for business and tourism, this fact creates preconditions for post-crisis recovery of the



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sector, but is also a good basis for sustainability of the goals and tools of the current marketing strategy.

Based on this analysis we can add the data from the Evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Tourism Marketing for the period 2012-2014, as quoted in Cultural Tourism - product analysis, the highest percentage of tourists who would be willing to practice cultural tourism is found in Poland (37%), France (47%), Ukraine (46%), Russia (51%). According to the same data, however, awareness of the availability of cultural tourism in Bulgaria is much lower: in France 17% of respondents know about this opportunity in Bulgaria, in Poland it is 28%, in Russia - 41%, Ukraine - 34% and in Germany 50%.

In view of the two criteria: the markets which are a source of inbound tourism in Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the attitude and awareness of tourists towards the possibility of cultural tourism in both countries, the following target markets can be identified for the purposes of the marketing strategy.

The internal market is particularly important for reinforcing the integrated tourism product, especially with regard to Romania. In Bulgaria, this market occupies a significantly smaller part of the structure of revenues from travel and tourism, but at the same time has the greatest potential, given that 64% of Bulgarians have indicated that they would practice such tourism. Also, the percentage of awareness about the available opportunities for cultural tourism is significantly higher.

Already developed markets - Germany, Ukraine, Poland, Great Britain. High percentage as a share of inbound tourism in Bulgaria and Romania and a high degree of recognizability of the destination or motivation to practice cultural tourism.

Undeveloped markets - France. Huge potential as a tendency to practice cultural tourism, but low awareness of Bulgaria and Romania as a tourist destination, specifically in the field of culture.

Summarized conclusions:

From the comparative review of the data on the development of tourism in the global, European and regional level, the following conclusions could be made:

❖ Despite the emergency situation in 2020, the general economic challenges and the strong effect that epidemiological constraints have on global and European tourism, the structure of



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tourism markets and their main characteristics remain comparable to the situation before the pandemic;

- ❖ Europe continues to be the world's leading destination for both inbound and outbound tourism;

- ❖ Thanks to the implementation of coordinated instruments, Europe, and in particular Bulgaria and Romania, manage to limit the pandemic effect on human resources in the sector, which is a prerequisite for sustainability and a good starting point for post-pandemic recovery of the sector.

- ❖ Bulgaria is significantly more dependent on incoming tourism than Romania. However, the two countries share a high degree of integration in their tourism markets. This is a good starting point for the marketing of joint and integrated tourism products.

- ❖ The Bulgarian internal market is completely underdeveloped. Targeted efforts are needed for its development and integration into the structure of the Bulgarian economy.

- ❖ Romania has a much higher growth in the development of the tourism sector than Bulgaria. However, both countries are below the European average, although the differences are close.

- ❖ Bulgaria and Romania maintain the structure of their markets in terms of inbound and outbound travel. The lack of major changes due to pandemic constraints indicates a high degree of traditionalism/predictability in the markets and predictability towards the target groups.

- ❖ The need for an integrated and systematic approach to the strategic development of tourism and its presentation in the global economy is visible. Romania has achieved extremely low results in terms of prioritizing policies in the sector, despite improvements in infrastructure.

- ❖ Bulgaria is also improving its infrastructure, but huge progress is needed in developing its "cultural" resources.

- ❖ Both countries need to invest in the competitiveness of the sector, measures are needed to increase the competitiveness of this sector in order to realize its full potential.

- ❖ The main competitors of Bulgaria and Romania from the region of Central and Eastern Europe are Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, and Austria. Also such are Turkey, Greece, and Croatia



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❖ Main and potential generating external markets are Germany, Ukraine, Poland, Great Britain, France, and Russia.

2.1.2.10 Identification of stakeholders

For the purposes of the marketing strategy, a list of parties that have interest in the process has been compiled, which includes the various institutions, organizations and groups that are part of:

- Representatives of the central government
- Representatives of local authorities in the target regions;
- Representatives of regional authorities from the 4 target regions;
- Business representatives: sole traders, tour operators, travel agents, cooperatives, representatives of commercial companies providing utilities in the target regions;
- Representatives of civil society (CSOs), including NGOs, tourism companies, industry organizations, chambers, etc.;
- Representatives of scientific organizations and educational institutions;
- Cultural institutions, including community centers, orchestras, galleries, representatives of regional and local museums, etc.

A specific list of stakeholders is provided in the table below:

GROUP	STAKEHOLDERS
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	<p>Bulgaria</p> <p>Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works Ministry of Tourism Ministry of Environment and Water Ministry of Education Ministry of Economy Ministry of Agriculture and Food</p> <p>Romania</p> <p>National Tourism Authority at the Ministry of Economy</p>



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GROUP	STAKEHOLDERS
REGIONAL AUTHORITIES	<p>Bulgaria</p> <p>Regional development councils Regional coordination councils District governors</p> <p>Romania</p> <p>Regional development agencies</p>
LOCAL AUTHORITIES	<p>Bulgaria</p> <p>Municipal administrations Municipal councils</p> <p>Romania</p> <p>District administrations City administrations</p>
BUSINESS	<p>Tour operators Travel agents Hoteliers Restaurateurs</p>
REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY NGOs	<p>Non-profit legal entities Public benefit associations Local action groups Branch business associations Employers' organizations Chambers of Commerce and Industry Travel companies Tourist association</p>
CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS	<p>Regional history museums Local museums Art galleries Theatres and opera houses Musical and cultural institutions</p>



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GROUP	STAKEHOLDERS
SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	Research organizations Universities Secondary schools Professional high schools

The analysis of interests is realized, as already mentioned, by the method of the Influence/Interests grid.

The analysis includes only those groups that have significant and mobilizable resources that could be used in the process of implementing the marketing strategy, in accordance with the objectives of the strategy and the interests of the groups.

For the purposes of the strategy an analysis has been made of:

- the interests of the identified parties that have interest involved in the implementation of the Strategy;
- the amount and types of resources that they can mobilize to influence its results.

These elements are described in the table below:

GROUP	INTEREST OF THE GROUP IN THE PROBLEM	RESOURCES	POTENTIAL TO MOBILIZE THE RESOURCES
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	Defines the political framework and formulates the national policies for regional and local development, as well as the relationship in the sector (cultural tourism) and in the economy as a whole.	Defines the financial framework. Determines the administrative security.	High potential - management of funds from the national budget; access, management and allocation of European financial resources.



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GROUP	INTEREST OF THE GROUP IN THE PROBLEM	RESOURCES	POTENTIAL TO MOBILIZE THE RESOURCES
REGIONAL AUTHORITIES	<p>They are responsible for strategic planning for integrated development at regional and district level.</p> <p>Implement / coordinate national policies at regional and district level.</p>	They do not have a mechanism for distributing resources.	No budget.
LOCAL AUTHORITIES	They are responsible for the formulation and implementation of local development policies	Management of funds from the municipal budget	Use of municipal budget (own revenues and national funding); Access and use of European resources
BUSINESS	<p>Interest in developing the business environment - options to reduce costs and access to financial instruments, incentive programs, improving administrative services.</p> <p>Interested in increasing employment and income</p>	<p>Lack of sustainable practice for reinvestment in business development.</p> <p>Access to limited funding</p> <p>Access to European funding</p>	<p>Depending on the availability of branch organizations;</p> <p>Depending on the organizational capacity.</p>



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GROUP	INTEREST OF THE GROUP IN THE PROBLEM	RESOURCES	POTENTIAL TO MOBILIZE THE RESOURCES
REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY (NGOs)	Interested in the existence of projects for development (infrastructure, education) and improvement of the living environment (specifically in the field of cultural development). Specific interest aimed at sustainable management and development of resources (eco, human, cultural).	Knowledge; social influence; specific resource management capacity; public networks.	Low in terms of financial resources; Medium to high in terms of human and expert resources; Medium to high in terms of public campaigns.
CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS	Interested in pursuing a policy of preserving the cultural and historical heritage, stimulating new and validating existing cultural projects and products, developing the tangible and intangible heritage and discovering new archaeological monuments.	Insufficient own resources and revenues. Insufficient external financing instruments.	They do not have the funds, but they have the expertise and administrative capacity.
SCIENTIFIC AND	Development of research and innovation.	Delegated budgets. Insufficient financial	They do not have the financial resources, but the



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GROUP	INTEREST OF THE GROUP IN THE PROBLEM	RESOURCES	POTENTIAL TO MOBILIZE THE RESOURCES
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	<p>They are involved in policy development and implementation.</p> <p>Development of educational programs related to the labor market and the requirements of the socio-economic environment.</p> <p>Qualification and retraining of human resources.</p>	resources. Expert potential, access to information.	opportunities to mobilize expertise and use European resources.

The following table applies the methodology described above to assess the main questions in the study:

- What strategies should be applied to different stakeholders? Specifically:
- Who should be involved in the consultation process regarding the goals and tools of the marketing strategy? Why?
- With which stakeholders should a lasting partnership be sought in the implementation of the strategy?
- What tools underlie such a partnership?



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Table 26 Assessment of key stakeholders and choice of strategy based on their role

Stakeholder	Evaluation criteria							Result	
	Interest	Power ¹³²	Influence	Overall assessment	Classification according to grouping	Need for inclusion	Definition		
							Definition	Evaluation	H	F	P
Central government	Development of policies and strategies for improving the image of Bulgaria, attracting investments, implementation of state policies in the field of economic development - tourism (in particular), cultural development, preservation of cultural and historical heritage, continuing education, environmental protection.	3 - The marketing strategy will contribute to the achievement of strategic goals at the level of state policy, regional development and positioning of Bulgaria as a tourist and cultural destination.	4	3	5	12	3/12	Group 1 - Players	Active involvement and partnership strategy
Local authorities	Responsible for developing strategic / integrated regional development plans. Carry out the state policy at regional level, coordinate the work of the executive bodies at regional level and their	2 - The marketing strategy, as well as the realization of a joint integrated tourism product is a key element	4	2	5	11	2/11	Group 1 - Players	Active involvement and partnership strategy

¹³² The power of the individual stakeholders relates to the amount of resources, as follows:

H - human

F - financial

P - political, the resources the stakeholders have available and their ability to mobilize these resources in support or against the implementation of the Strategy.

This column identifies the power of each stakeholder regarding the availability of H, F, and P resources. The power of each type of resources is defined on a scale of 1 to 5, as follows:

5 - very strong;

4 - strong;

3 - moderate;

2 - weak;

1 - very weak



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	interaction with the local government. Monitors compliance between national and local interests, interacts with local governments.	of the strategy for development of the target regions (at the level of planning regions), tourism and culture sectors, as well as the overall economic development at district and regional level.							
Local authorities	A major factor in the development and implementation of local development strategies. Implementation of local government policies. Particularly influential in creating sustainable strategies for the development of culture, tourism and the economy at the local level. They would have a clear attitude towards the opportunities to support local cultural and educational institutions and the creation of sustainable partnerships in the implementation of the strategy. For them there will be an indirect positive economic result, creating conditions for investment and development of the cultural environment, education and social environment.	3 - The marketing strategy would complement and support the measures set out in the plans for integrated development of municipalities - sectors of economy, tourism, culture and education.	4	2	5	11	3/11	Group 1 - Players	Active involvement and partnership strategy
Business	Direct relation to the development of the economic processes related to the tourist services and the indirect effects of the	3 - Direct interests in the target sectors and indirect interests for the	3	4	3	10	3/10	Group 1 - Players	Active involvement and partnership





	accompanying economic development. Improving the living environment (in particular cultural life)	others							strategy
Civil society structures (NGOs)	NGOs - participate in the formulation and development of policies and strategic documents, etc., specifically in the field of sustainable development of tourism and culture, management of movable and immovable cultural heritage, as well as in the field of vocational education and other areas related to the development and the implementation of the marketing strategy. Interested in the existence of projects for development (infrastructure, education) and improvement of the living environment (specifically in the field of cultural development). Specific interest aimed at sustainable management and development of resources (eco, human, cultural).	3	2	2	3	7	3/7	Group 3 "Sites" - strong interest, but weak / indirect influence	Group 3 - Consultations and partnership
Cultural institutions	Implement projects for cultural products and services. Interested in pursuing a policy of preserving the cultural and historical heritage, stimulating new and validating existing cultural projects and products, developing the tangible and intangible heritage and discovering new archaeological monuments.	3 - direct interest in the creation and implementation of a joint integrated tourism product, including cultural events and institutions. It is possible to identify internal groups (more or	3	2	2	7	3/7	Group 3 "Sites" - strong interest, but weak / indirect influence	Group 3 - Consultations and partnership





		less interest and influence)							
Scientific and educational institutions	Participation with expertise in the development of national and regional policies and strategic documents. In Development of educational programs related to the labor market and the requirements of the socio-economic environment. Qualification and retraining of human resources. Strengthening the science-education-sectoral development link.	2 - Direct interest (preservation of cultural and historical heritage) and indirect - link between vocational education and the labor market	4	2	2	8		Group 3 "Sites" - strong interest, but weak / indirect influence	Group 3 - Consultations and partnership

The marketing strategy for the implementation of a joint integrated tourism product "Art and Culture (main and extended)" is largely dependent on the ability to develop active involvement and sustainable partnership with representatives of the public sector (especially regional and local level), business and cultural institutions, as well as to create active channels for communication and coordination with the educational, scientific and non-governmental (NGO) sectors in the target regions.

Such a strategy of active management of communication and partnership with interested parties would create an environment in which to fully use community resources, in a mutually beneficial, long-term and institutionalized /formal and informal/ cooperation between the public sector, business, cultural, scientific and educational institutions and NGOs.

In order to achieve the goals of the marketing strategy it is necessary to build an environment of open, transparent and public communication, mutual trust and partnership. Stakeholder involvement can take various forms - meetings, surveys, interviews and / or focus groups, joint committee meetings and more.

This will increase the link between the results of the strategy and the real needs of the interested parties, as well as increase the social approval/legitimacy of the tools used and of the joint integrated tourist route itself.





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After identifying the stakeholders, the authors of the Strategy conducted a study to examine their vision in terms of: prerequisites for integrating the route with other tourism products, the main advantages, symbols and associations that connect the route with the tourist destination Bulgaria - Romania. turn into an attractive tourist product, the extended integrated tourist route "Art and Culture". For this purpose, an online survey was conducted among tour operators and travel agents and other interested parties.

The survey was anonymous to allow for more openness and honesty in formulating opinions. The developed questionnaire for the survey has a common part, intended for all respondents, after which specific questions are added in order to clarify and clarify the opinion of interested parties to the objectives of the analysis. As a result of our own research, a large database of primary data was provided, sufficient for the application of statistical methods of analysis. The database is in electronic format, which allows to make analyses necessary at the moment.

The questionnaires contained mainly closed questions and questions using scales, which allow a variety of statistical processing of the answers and the use of different data analyses.

The chosen survey method is a self-completion questionnaire (programmed in electronic form, which minimizes random errors and ensures that all questions will be answered).

An email with a link to an electronic questionnaire was sent to stakeholder representatives. The e-mail contains an explanation of the purpose of the research, the assignor of the research, as well as guaranteed anonymity of the individual opinion. For greater representation, the surveys were sent to all stakeholder representatives whose contacts were reached, with a minimum number of responses, which ensures the reliability of the results (small stochastic error). For the purposes of the analysis, letters of assistance were sent to branch organizations of hoteliers, restaurateurs and tour operators in Bulgaria and Romania, as well as letters were sent to local, regional and central authorities in both countries.

As a result of the actions taken by the authors of the Strategy, 187 surveys were distributed among representatives of stakeholders in Bulgaria and Romania, and 38 surveys among representatives of tour operators and travel agents from the target areas and counties in Bulgaria and Romania.

The online survey of Bulgarian and Romanian tour operators and travel agents specializing in cultural and historical tourism aimed to examine expert opinion on what characteristics the route should have in order to become an attractive tourist product.



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The total result achieved is: 24 completed questionnaires, of which 15 by tour operators and travel agents and 11 other interested parties.

Regarding the thematic connection of the route "art and culture" - 81% of the surveyed representatives of interested parties believe that the route is a prerequisite for attracting more tourists to the region. Over 60% of respondents from both groups are of the opinion that the route will be successful if offered year-round.

When asked about the reasons why tourists visit the Bulgaria-Romania cross-border region, 45% of the surveyed interested parties and 80% of tour operators and travel agents point out that the architecture and cultural and historical monuments in the region are the main reason for the visits. In second place (67%) indicated urban spaces. Another reason for 57% of the respondents are religious tourism, entertainment and cultural events and on average, from both groups, 46.1% indicated wine tourism.

According to 63% of interested parties, the main group of tourists visiting the route region are individually organized tourists, with 66.7% of tour operators and travel agents indicating that the main groups of tourists, in terms of age, are between 26 and 45 years old.

When asked about the competitive advantages of the route, 86.7% of respondents (tour operators and travel agents) point to a ***diverse natural and cultural heritage*** as its strongest point. Secondly (80%), the respondents set favourable conditions for integrating the route with other types of tourism. The potential of the route to be included in a larger international tourism product is given lower priority.

To the question "***Please prioritize the indicated restrictions of the route, with a view to its transformation into a tourist product, on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the lowest priority and 4 - the highest***", as the biggest obstacle the respondents (tour operators and travel agents) indicate a lack of qualified staff (60%), a lack of an integrated marketing policy to position the region as a tourist destination (46.7%) and a lack of perception of the region as a tourist destination (33.3%), as well as the poorly developed offer of the tourist destination by tour operators in the country and abroad (33.3%).

Evidence of the potential of the route to become a tourist product can be considered the answers of the surveyed tour operators and travel agents to the question:

"Do you think that the separate route "Art and Culture" with the included sites is, in itself, an attractive tourist product? "



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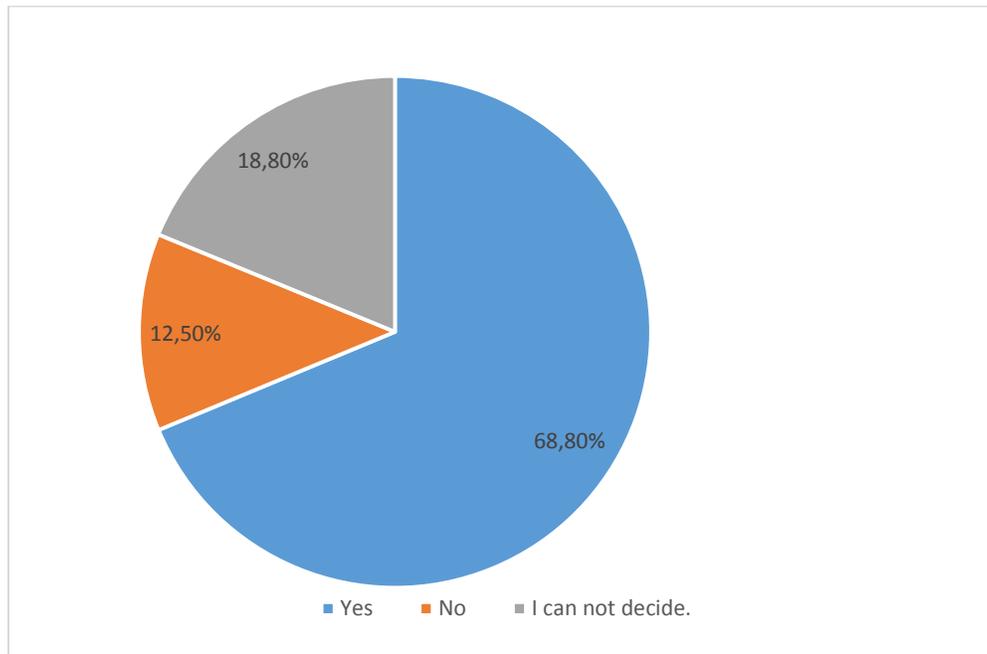


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Figure 22 Attractive tourist product "Art and Culture"



Source: Own survey

When tour operators and travel agents were asked whether they would offer the route as a stand-alone service or in combination with another travel service in the region, 50% of respondents said they would offer it in combination with Hobby tourism - travel, photography, cooking and wine tourism.



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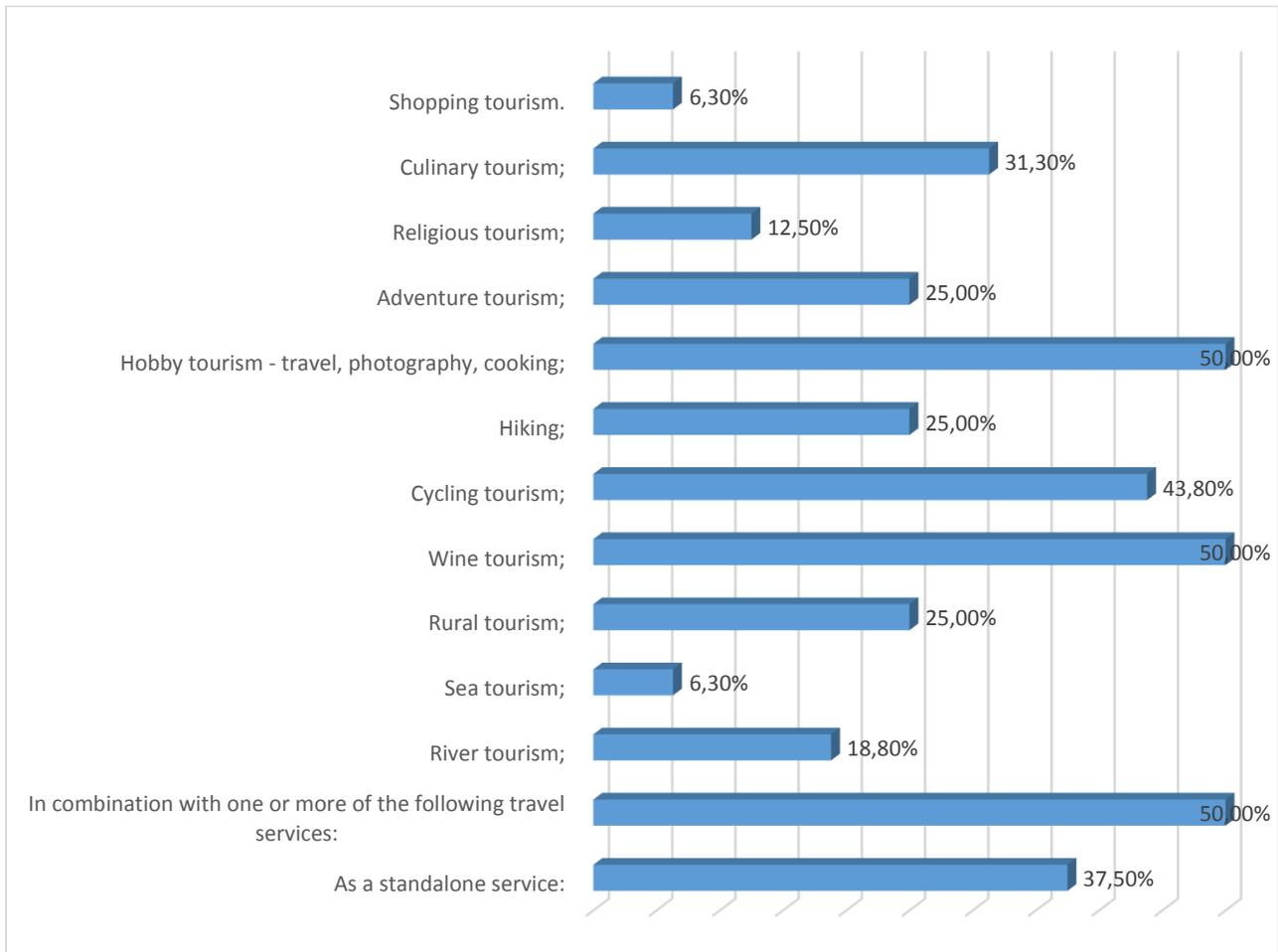


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Figure 23 Offering the tourist product "Art and Culture"



Source: Own survey

An optimistic perspective for the realization of the route are the answers of tour operators and travel agents to the question ***"Would you include the developed tourist route in your travel services?"***



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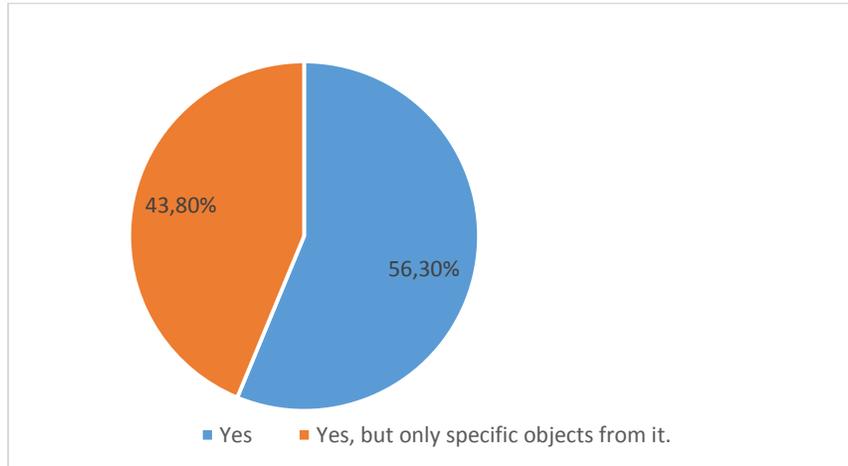


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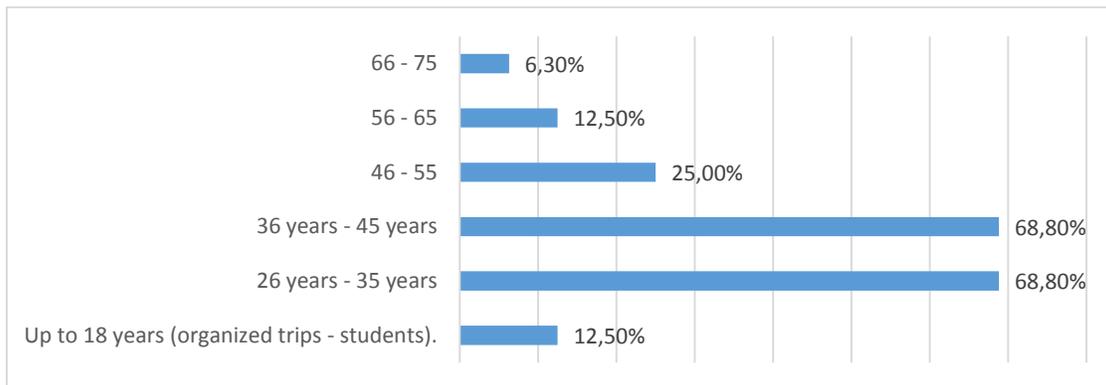
Figure 24 Inclusion of the developed tourist route in tourist services



Source: Own survey

With regard to the tourist flow, the tour operators and travel agents participating in the survey rank the type of groups of tourists for whom the developed route would be attractive.

Figure 25 Types of tourists for whom the developed tourist route is attractive (based on age)



Source: Own survey



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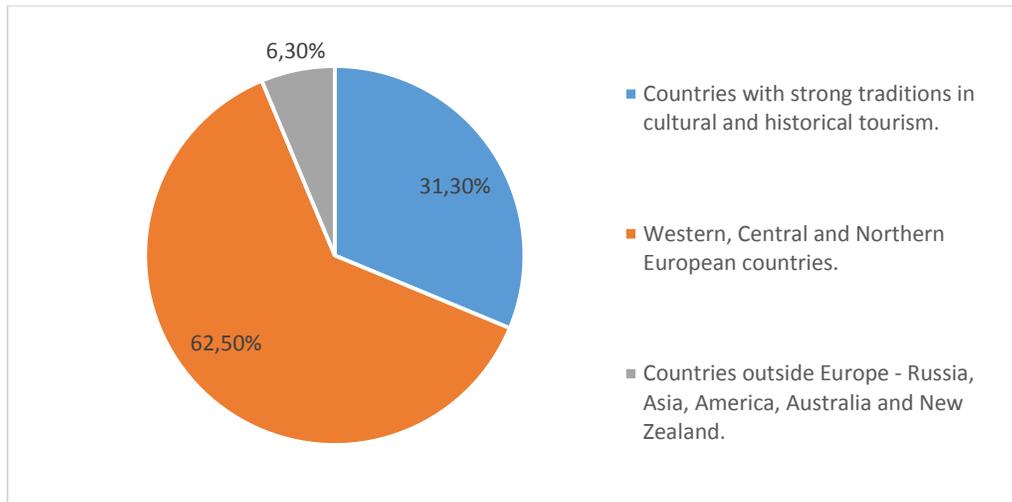


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This information is useful when planning marketing activities to promote the route.

When asked the question, *In your opinion and based on your experience, tourists from which regions, except Bulgaria and Romania, would be interested in the route?*, 62.50% of the surveyed tour operators and travel agents determine that a target region for more active marketing are western, central and northern European countries.

Figure 26 Tourists from regions with interest in the tourist product



Source: Own survey

2.1.2.11 SWOT analysis

The results of the socio-economic analysis show that all territories that fall within the scope of the integrated tourism product, including a joint thematic route "Art and Culture" have untapped tourism potential, which needs positioning in the tourism market, attractive marketing and effective management. The variety of sites implies fragmentation in the approaches to its management, which would violate the integrity of the route. Poor service and low prices of Bulgarian tourist products create a danger for building a lasting image of the country as a "cheap destination". The outdated system of vocational training in tourism and the lack of sufficient interest and incentives, as well as modern forms of education and qualification in the field of culture, do not contribute to the adequate tourist interpretation of cultural resources.



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In the process of preparing the SWOT analysis for the purposes of strategic planning for marketing the integrated tourist route, we have identified the following main conclusions:

(1) The most significant role for the marketing of the tourist product is its potential for integration in another established transnational cultural, cultural-historical and other tourist route from the Danube Cultural Corridor.

(2) The lack of attractive advertising of cultural tourism in the two countries, which in relation to Bulgaria leads to deepening of the negative image of the country as a "cheap destination". This image is also fuelled by the lag in the growth rate of the quality of the Bulgarian tourist product compared to that of the competing countries, incl. with Romania. The poor quality of most of the components of the Bulgarian tourist product is one of the biggest problems facing the industry today. At the same time, due to the lack of an effective marketing policy on the part of Bulgarian hoteliers, the high-quality product is sold at low prices;

(3) The current state of the tourist superstructure in the target region is unsatisfactory and non-competitive;

(4) With the introduction of ICT in the demand and supply of tourism, a tendency of increasing the share of cultural tourism in the world is imposed. This is due, on the one hand, to the increasingly accessible information on various cultural and historical topics, and, on the other hand, to the increase in short city and weekend vacations in order to attend cultural events. Contributing to the development of this type of tourism is the expansion of low-cost flights, which make destinations accessible to more and more tourists;

(5) As natural destinations, riparian areas, together with island and coastal ones, are the destinations most exposed to the changes of the environment, which may lead to transformation of the tourist choice and activities. It is necessary to apply a balanced approach based on the principles of mitigation (ie actions limiting the factors that contribute to climate change and thus mitigate its impact) and adaptation (ie taking the necessary steps to tackle the effects of climate change).

As a result of all that has been said so far, the following SWOT analysis has been prepared for innovative marketing of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" as a recognizable tourism product. The meaning of SWOT analysis, in addition to suggesting and justifying the development of a strategy, is that it sets the direction of interventions by striving to minimize the effects of weaknesses and maximize the benefits of strengths.



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Table 27 SWOT analysis for marketing a tourist product "Art and Culture"

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Favourable geographical location.</p> <p>The routes are located on Euro-Asian transport routes.</p> <p>A variety of tourist resources and developed different forms of tourism.</p> <p>Implementation of national policy in Bulgaria and Romania for development of cultural tourism.</p> <p>Well-developed and coordinated European strategic framework.</p> <p>An integrated product with a rich cultural calendar within the region.</p> <p>The Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo (leading partner in the project) has built capacity in the management and development of cultural sites and tourism policies. Candidate for "European Capital of Culture 2019".</p> <p>The involvement of institutional partners at the local level is a prerequisite for sustainability and implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>Off-season /year-round/ occupancy of the available beds - 281 days is the</p>	<p>Unevenly developed by categories tourist base. The most developed are the low categories of accommodation (up to 3 stars);</p> <p>Aging population and migration processes that affect the labour force and the consumption of tourist services.</p> <p>Problems with the professional qualification of the staff;</p> <p>Predominance of physically or morally worn-out infrastructure;</p> <p>Lack of effective marketing policy for positioning the region as a recognizable cultural destination;</p> <p>Relative poverty of the population in the target regions;</p> <p>Insufficient development of the highway infrastructure (lack of such) and highways. Poor condition of internal regional roads.</p>



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<p>average occupancy for the region.</p> <p>Developed integrated tourist products on the routes;</p> <p>The sites along the route are autonomous and functioning tourist sites.</p>	
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OPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Availability of opportunities for financing the development and marketing of European Structural Funds and national programs;</p> <p>Free movement of people and services;</p> <p>Increased demand for urban and cultural tourism globally, regionally and nationally;</p> <p>Increasing share of low-cost flights and increase in the number of airports serving such flights;</p> <p>The territory of the integrated tourist route falls within the scope of the EU Strategy for Development of the Danube Region;</p> <p>The territory of the integrated tourist route falls within the scope of the European Cultural Corridor Danube;</p> <p>Incorporation in the route of urban park</p>	<p>Continuation of the epidemiological situation and restriction of travel;</p> <p>Inefficient conservation and management of natural resources;</p> <p>Destruction of the ecological environment;</p> <p>Overtourism - devaluation of the cultural product due to its imposition as a commercial product.</p>



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spaces and a new type of event tourism.

III. Strategic framework

The presented strategy for promoting the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture” is based on the following principles:

- ✚ Perceiving the tourist offer as a holistic experience for tourists, which should be filled with content, convenience and positive experiences. This is not a definition of tourism or tourist offer, but a working position aimed at creating tourist products for people and their tourist experiences in their entirety;
- ✚ Integrity of tourist offers with potential for development, diversity, upgrading, sustainability and value of tourist experiences;
- ✚ Intertwining of the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture” in the overall tourist offer in the regions it crosses.

3.1. Vision

The vision is considered in the context of the development of all areas and tourist regions encompassed by the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture”, retaining its singularity and specificity aimed at its marketing positioning.

“Art and Culture”: an experience on both banks of the Eastern Danube!

Transformation of the integrated tourist routes “Art and Culture” (main and extended), into a recognizable and preferred tourist product “Art and Culture”.

3.2. Mission

The mission sets the general framework for action to achieve the above vision. The strategy highlights the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture” as a tourism product that can be a major incentive for travelling.

An integrated and sustainable tourism product “Art and Culture” contributing to the promotion of the cross-border region through its diversity.



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3.3. Marketing goals

The defined marketing goals are based on the key elements in the marketing mix in the field of tourism and present a synergistic view on the development of the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture”.

The main characteristics of the marketing mix in tourism are *interdependent variables* that are unique. The components of the marketing mix have to be planned jointly to ensure the success of any marketing strategy.

The use of these components contribute to the achievement of marketing goals such as visitor satisfaction, sales level, profit level, etc. The marketing mix is a very flexible tool that is developed in accordance with the current market situation.

In developing this strategy, we accept the extended format of the classic as elements of the marketing mix in tourism, i.e. tourism product, price offers, place and ways of offering, communication and promotional policy, physical environment, processes and people.

All these elements influence the way of offering the product as well as the goal setting.

Strategic goal 1: Development and improvement of integrated tourist routes “Art and Culture” (main and extended) as a cultural tourist destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.

Specific objective 1.1 Extending the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture” by enriching the product palette.

Specific objective 1.2 Development of the integrated tourism product in the direction of improving the experience of tourists in the destination.

Specific objective 1.3 Development of national, cross-border and international cooperation for improvement and maintenance of the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture”.



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Strategic goal 2: Improving the quality of existing services and introducing systems for shared innovative management of the integrated tourism product.

Specific objective 2.1 Strengthening the capacity for strategic and sustainable management of integrated tourist routes.

Specific objective 2.2 Strengthening the capacity to provide services in the tourist sites along the routes.

Specific objective 2.3 Creating favourable conditions for effective and sustainable management of the integrated tourism product.

Strategic goal 3: Promotion of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" as a sustainable destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region

Specific objective 3.1 Integration of the brand identity of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".

Specific objective 3.2: Creation and development of information availability about the route to support the informed choice of tourists.

Specific objective 3.3: Development of advertising and communication policy of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".

3.4. Marketing Mix

When developing this strategy, we started from the accepted marketing mix "7P" in tourism, showing the main elements of marketing related to the development of products and services in the field of tourism.



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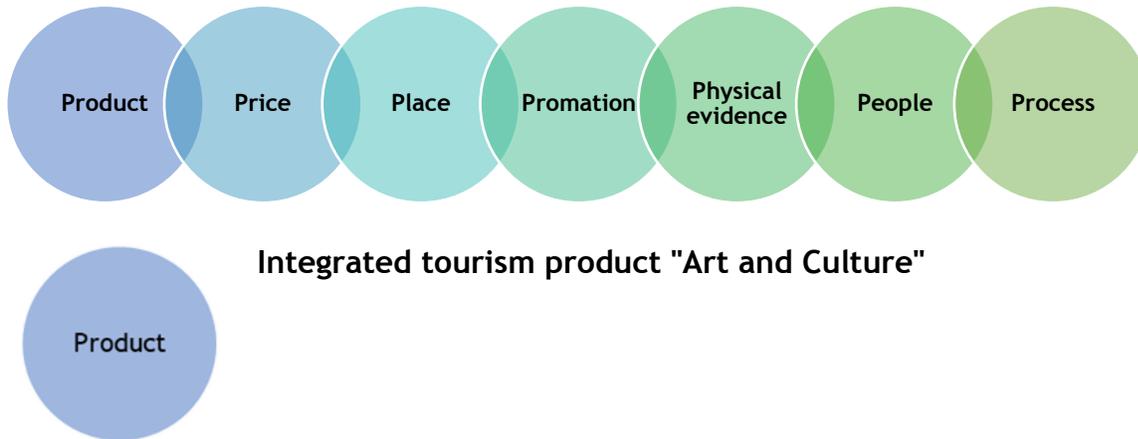


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Figure 27 Marketing mix elements in tourism



In general, a product is anything that can be offered on the market to gain the attention of tourists, to be acquired, used or consumed, or to satisfy a desire or need. It can also be defined as a physical product or service for a consumer and to get it the consumer is willing to pay.

The peculiarity of the tourism product is that it offers to the end users/tourists intangibility, i.e. services and experiences. This immaterial nature of the tourist offer implies significant efforts made in the area of service delivery and design of the experiences. There are a number of studies, claiming that innovative and well-coordinated tourism products are extremely important for tourist regions and tourist satisfaction.

The guidelines for the development of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" include the following activities:

- ✓ Unified launching of the tourism product;
- ✓ Standardised tourist experience;
- ✓ Enhanced coordination between the sites included in the routes of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture";
- ✓ Development of tourist proposals that diversify and complement the tourist experience along the route.



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Price is the amount of money that customers have to pay to get a product.

Price is perceived as the only element of the marketing mix generating revenue and the most important factor for customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The tourist offer includes many counterparties and the pricing depends on the seller of the product. For the needs of this strategy, the starting point is the key elements that form the price of the tourist trip, i.e. transportation, accommodation, meals, site entrance fees and additional costs. Pricing also depends on many uncontrollable factors like fuel prices, inflation, transport fees, health taxes, taxes, entrance fees for sites along the route, event tickets, etc.

External macro-factors of the environment (uncontrollable): supply and demand ratio; level and dynamics of competitive prices; state regulation of the economy and the tourism industry; political situation; stage of the economy, solvency of consumers, dynamics of their interests, habits and tastes.

Internal micro-factors and objectives (controllable): maintaining market share; maximising the profit from the tourist activity implementation; achieving leadership in the offered tourism products quality of; gaining and maintaining leadership in the travel services market; striving to increase market sales growth even at the expense of declining sales revenue; striving to build a favourable image.

The tourist experience price is also influenced by the factor whether the trip is group or individual and whether it is undertaken by foreign or local citizens.

The degree of novelty of the tourism product plays a significant role in pricing, as the price determining methodology of new tourism products is the most complex task. As regards new products, there is a limited ground for comparison between them and other similar products; in some cases the comparison is impossible due to lack of information on the demand for market analogues, which implies weaknesses in determining or forecasting the quantities of expected sales.

Pricing Methods in Tourism



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In view of the above factors, features and strategies related to pricing, the tourism marketing theory knows and uses in practice the following main pricing methods:

- competition-based pricing;
- market demand-based pricing;
- cost-based pricing (pricing based on the costs related to providing the services).

Due to the specific nature of the route offered, the cost-based pricing is the most suitable method:

Cost-based pricing (cost method) is based on the calculation of the total cost of the tourism product.

This method examines the minimum price threshold that can be offered to consumers, which is most appropriate for the routes included in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (main and extended).

The advantages of the cost-based method are the following:

- the pricing is significantly simplified and can relatively accurately determine the structure of the cost of tourism products;
- it is highly competitive with users who are sensitive to the price as a main factor;
- draws attention to changes in the demand for the tourism product.

Tourism product pricing is based on regulatory profit determined by the tourist company as a percentage of the value of the tourism products. Its size depends on the demand for the tourism product and may vary from 5% to 100% or up. In practice, most often the size of the regulatory profit percentage in travel companies is 20%.

The tourist services included in the pricing according to item 90 of the Additional Provisions of the Tourism Act are the following:

- transporting passengers by passenger transport, i.e. plane, train, bus, etc.;
- accommodation that is not an integral part of passenger transport and is not for residential purposes;
- renting cars or other motor vehicles and some motorcycles (*renting bicycles or boats does



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not fall into this category, but into the category of other tourist services);

- access to cultural sites, historical sites, concerts, sports events, etc. trips, theme parks, guided tours, ski passes, boat rentals, bicycle rentals and sports equipment rental like ski equipment or wellness treatments;

- The following are not considered tourist services:

- Accommodation for residential purposes, incl. long-term language courses;

- Financial services like travel insurance;

- Services that are an integral part of another tourist service, e.g. luggage transport when transporting passengers, small transport services, e.g. transportation of passengers as part of an organised guided tour or transfers to/from hotels, airports or train stations, hotel provision of food and beverages and cleaning at check-in, or on-site access to facilities, e.g. swimming pool, sauna, spa treatments or gym provided to all hotel guests;

- Accommodation that is an integral part of passenger transport by road, rail, water or air, the main component being transport and movement from point A to point B.

Pricing sample model:

As shown above, the most appropriate model would be the cost method for presenting the price to the consumer of the tourism product. It should be stated here that the model is illustrated by the necessary components that are to be included in the pricing.

It is divided into three main groups: small (transport by car), medium (up to 15 hours - transport by minibus), large (up to 50 hours transport by bus).

The pricing model is similar to the ones described above, though some of the items differ due to the use of specialised services.



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The total costs can be divided among the members of the group and thus form the basic price for a tourist trip on the routes included in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (basic and extended).

The price cannot be invariable due to the variability of the costs that make up the tourist trip as well as the peculiarities of the travellers' preferences, as described based on the tourist persona types in the Situation analysis.

The authors of the strategy have developed 8 price tourist packages, according to the number of tourists in a group and individual travel, as well as according to the category of accommodation, for the extended and main route. The prices of the packages are in compliance with the adopted ordinances at the municipal level and the price lists announced in the websites of the sites along the routes as of July 30, 2021.

The group packages include:

- Accommodation;
- Dinner;
- Transport;
- Road taxes;
- Insurance;
- Organized guide;



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- Fees for visiting sites along the routes.

The individual packages include:

- Accommodation;
- Road taxes;
- Insurance;
- Guides on site at the individual landmarks;
- Fees for visiting sites along the routes.

Packages: Main joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" - duration 5 days.

Accommodation in category of accommodation place	Price of package "individual trip"	Price of package "group of up to 10 people"	Price of package "group of up to 20 people"	Price of package "group of up to 30 people"
1-2 stars	224 euro/233 euro ¹³³	317 euro/326 euro ¹³⁴	223 euro/232 euro ¹³⁵	228 euro/237 euro ¹³⁶
3 stars	249 euro/266 euro	342 euro/359 euro	248 euro/265 euro	253 euro/270 euro
4-5 stars	305 euro/333 euro	398 euro/425 euro	304 euro/ 332 euro	309 euro/337 euro

¹³³ When accommodated in a single room

¹³⁴ When accommodated in a single room

¹³⁵ When accommodated in a single room

¹³⁶ When accommodated in a single room



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Note:

When visiting theatre performances, an additional 10 euros are calculated for the package.

When visiting festivals, concerts, events and additional attractions, the price of the packages is updated according to the current price of the respective event/attraction, when selling the packages.

For family trips (individual trips) the price is reduced by 5%.

Packages: Extended joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" - duration 7 days

Accommodation in category of accommodation place	Price of package "individual trip"	Price of package "group of up to 10 people"	Price of package "group of up to 20 people"	Price of package "group of up to 30 people"
1-2 stars	319 euro/328 euro	413 euro/422 euro	298 euro/307 euro	299 euro/308 euro
3 stars	331euro/348 euro	438 euro/455 euro	323 euro/340 euro	325 euro/341 euro
4-5 stars	387 euro/415 euro	495 euro/521 euro	379 euro/395 euro	380 euro/397 euro

When attending theatre performances, concerts, etc. (in the sites along the route) 40 euros are calculated per person in addition to the package.

When visiting festivals, concerts, events and additional attractions, the price of the packages is updated according to the current price of the respective event/attraction, when selling the packages.

For family trips (individual trips) the price is reduced by 5%.



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Places offering and selling the routes included in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (main and extended).

Contractors offering and selling the routes included in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (basic and extended) are of key importance for the marketing strategy implementation. No less important are seasonality and distances from different points in the routes, which provide ideas for alternative travel routes, selection of attractions and facilities to enrich the route.

The commercial offering of the routes included in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (main and extended) can be carried out in the following places:

➤ Tourist Information Centres:

- Tourist Information Centre in Veliko Tarnovo;
- Information Centre in Gorna Oryahovitsa;
- Tourist Information Centre in Pleven;
- Information Centre in Belogradchik;
- Tourist Information Centre, "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" in Vidin;
- Tourist Information and Training Centre and office of the Danube Bureau in Vidin (also provides information on Calafat);
- Tourist Information Centre in Craiova (Green School Education - Centru de Informare Turistică);
- Cultural Port Cetate.

➤ Local and foreign tour operators:

- Tour agency "RUAL TRAVEL" OOD, office in Veliko Tarnovo;



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- Tourist agency Usit Colours (USIT COLOURS BULGARIA OOD, office Veliko Tarnovo);
- Tourist agency “HIT HOLIDAY” EOOD, office Veliko Tarnovo;
- Tourist agency “INTERTOURS” OOD, office Veliko Tarnovo;
- Tourist agency “VIVA TOURS”, office Veliko Tarnovo;
- Tourist agency “FANCY HOLIDAYS” OOD, Vidin.

➤ Online via various platforms such as Webjet, Tripadvisor, Viator, Musement, GetYourGuide, etc.;

➤ Global Distribution Channels - GDCs (Global Distribution Channels); OTAs (Online Travel Agencies);

➤ Social media as an important source of information and advertising.

Facebook pages of:

- Veliko Tarnovo Municipality -

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D0%9E%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%92%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%20%D0%A2%D1%8A%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%20BE/603279179720458/>

- Tourist Information Centre - Veliko Tarnovo:

<https://www.facebook.com/velikoturnovo.info>

- Gorna Oryahovitsa Municipality:

<https://www.facebook.com/%D0%9E%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%93%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%9E%D1%80%D1%8F%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B0-185146531654929>

- Pleven Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/Pleven.municipality>
- Knezha Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009074784028>
- Belogradchik Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2844825978878640>
- Vidin Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/obshtinavidin>
- Calafat Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/calafat.dolj>
- Craiova Municipality: <https://www.facebook.com/Administratie.Craiova>

➤ The sites included in the joint integrated thematic route “Art and Culture” (main and extended).

- Boris Denev Art Gallery <https://www.facebook.com/vt.bdenevgallery/>
- Multimedia Visitor Centre “Tsarevgrad Tarnov”: <https://www.facebook.com/tsarevgrad>
- Samovodska Charshia



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- Hadji Nikoli Inn: <https://cutt.ly/dgeRAwb>
- Music and Drama Theatre “Konstantin Kisimov”:
<https://www.facebook.com/teatarvturnovo/>
- Nedyalko Karaneshev Art Gallery: <https://cutt.ly/6grzbtm>
- Art Gallery Donation “Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev”: <https://cutt.ly/svetlinrusev>
- Iliya Beshkov Art Gallery
- Regional History Museum - Pleven: <https://www.facebook.com/plevenmuseum>
- Panorama “Pleven Epopee 1877”:
<https://www.facebook.com/panorama.pleven.epopee/>
- Ivan Radoev Drama and Puppet Theatre: <https://www.facebook.com/TheatrePleven/>
- Municipal Museum of History in Knezha;
- History Museum in Belogradchik;
- Nikola Petrov Art Gallery: <https://www.facebook.com/Nikola-Petrov-Gallery-858796327546972>
- Vida Drama Theatre: <https://cutt.ly/teatyridin>
- Sinfonietta Vidin: <https://www.facebook.com/Simfonietta/>
- State Puppet Theatre in Vidin: <https://www.facebook.com/puppets.vidin/>
- Marincu Palace-Museum: <https://www.facebook.com/palatulmarincu>
- Museum of ART (Jean Mihail Palace)
- Casa Baniei
- Oltenia Philharmonic: <https://www.facebook.com/filarmonicaolteniacraiova/>
- Marin Sorescu National Theatre: <https://www.facebook.com/tncms.official/>
- Theatre for Children and Youth “Colibri”: <https://www.facebook.com/TeatrulColibri/>



Promotion and communication policy for imposing the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".

The purpose of the promotion policy is to emphasise the main advantages and present a unique offer for the sale of the included routes in the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (main and extended). The marketing communication mix (Promotion mix) consists of a specific combination of advertising, personal sales, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing tools that are used to pursue its advertising and marketing purpose. There is a direct



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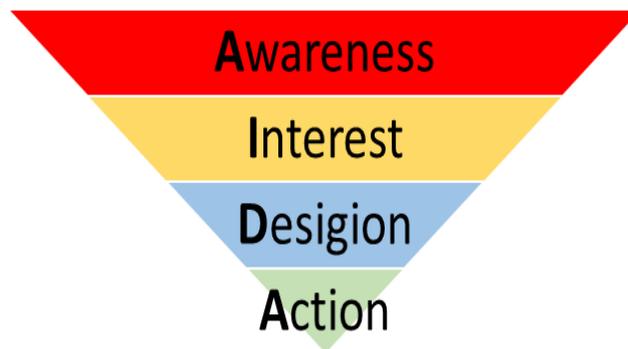
link between the impact of communications on the tourist experience and satisfaction.

The successful launching of tourist routes requires promoting to the audience not only what they include, but also what the places/destinations can offer to the visitors, what can be seen, their image and what makes consumers prefer these tourist routes to others.

The communication policy is mainly based on providing information, using various distribution channels, in accordance with the customers.

The promotion actions should be in line with the capacities for communication impact **AIDA: Awareness, Interest, Decision, Action**. In marketing, this funnel is also used as a representation of sales stages and processes, which is what makes it universal in creating deliberate efforts to influence tourists.

Figure 28 AIDA communication impact funnel



The Promotion mix is a communication policy that presents the main communication techniques, materials and channels used to synergistically present a Joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" (main and extended).

These techniques are consistent with the above model of impact on audiences.

Advertising	
Information materials	Advertising brochures presenting the routes (in Bulgarian, English, and Romanian);



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	<p>Advertising cultural calendars in English, Bulgarian and Romanian (containing information about events in the municipalities in whose territory there are sites from the main and extended routes). Prepared calendar “ART AND CULTURE”</p> <p>Additional tourist services - promotion of culinary, wine, adventure tourism in the destinations;</p> <p>A map for collecting stickers from the visited sites.</p>
Online Advertising	<p>Setting up partnerships with various online media and partner sites for broadcasting advertising banners and/or materials about the routes (main and extended) such as https://museumvt.com/bg/, http://www.velikoturnovo.info/, https://discoverdolj.ro/, etc.</p> <p>Google Ads: to promote the platform (a website with the included routes), part of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture";</p> <p>YouTube: a promotional video;</p> <p>Advertising on specialised websites such as https://www.peika.bg/, https://oilaripi.com/, etc</p>
Advertising in traditional media	<p>Broadcasting a radio clip to highlight particular events linked to the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" or development of the sites included in the routes (main and extended) in popular radio stations - Radio Energy, etc.;</p> <p>A joint TV advertisement with partners offering the routes of the integrated tourism product, destinations along the routes such as TV channel Balkanika Music Television and others.</p>
Advertising at/of the sites included in the routes (main and extended) of the integrated tourism product	<p>Advertising stickers indicating to be part of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" (main and extended) which can be collected in a tourist map with the sites along the routes.</p>



"Art and Culture"	<p>Mobile GIS for Android and IOs connected with the destination and sites/elements of the route.</p> <p>Advertising leaflets in English, Bulgarian and Romanian, offering information about events in Veliko Tarnovo and Calafat</p> <p>Advertising posters in English, Bulgarian and Romanian offering information about events in Veliko Tarnovo and Calafat.</p>
Advertising materials for partners	<p>Creating models for launching the routes as tourist packages for sale based on the above-described pricing method</p> <p>Brochures for presenting the integrated tourism product - in English, Bulgarian and Romanian (featuring the main and extended routes)</p> <p><i>Advertising calendars of the routes (in Bulgarian, English, and Romanian). CALENDAR "ART AND CULTURE"</i></p>
Public Relations and Social Responsibility	
Partners Media Partnerships	<p>Creating a network of partnerships with:</p> <p>Tourist organisations;</p> <p>Media;</p> <p>NGOs;</p> <p>Educational institutions;</p> <p>Maintaining active two-tier communication with partners;</p> <p>Information support;</p> <p>Carrying out joint initiatives.</p>
Media and Partners Information	<p>Proactive media campaign with information provided on current news and events of public importance;</p> <p>Promotion of the route.</p>
Route presentation at various event forums	<p>Development of specialised information materials, presentations, videos, vinyls, etc. to present the two routes at</p>





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	various event forums.
Setting up educational programs	Creating joint programmes and events with educational institutions and sites included in the routes.
Promoting volunteering	Setting up a volunteer programmes to promote the various benefits of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" to expand the user groups and their awareness. It will encourage the promotion of the product by word of mouth.
Route ambassadors	Selection of opinion leaders to present the routes to a non-specialised audience - tourist.
Online communication	
Website of the routes	Development of the platform/website by constantly adding information and positioning it as the main source of information; Route proposal with simplified planning; Additional information for partners and opportunities for individual and organised travel.
Social networks and media	Opening and maintenance of accounts of the main and extended Joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture" on Facebook; Development of a detailed campaign for sustainable development and maintenance of two-tier communication with the public on social networks and media.
Content marketing	Compiling a story using links, interesting facts and imagery of sites and destinations on both routes, i.e. storytelling. This is an essential part and a must in creating the brand history, i.e. brand mythology; Materials describing the route and helping tourists to better organise their travels like maps, mini guides, contact with partners, recommendations for experiences and accompanying interesting forms of tourism.



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Partners' online platforms	Opening accounts in international tourist platforms and applications where the routes part of the integrated tourist product are present using the created information materials.
Events	
Special event initiation	Information events held by the sites included in the route in order to attract a diverse audience and enhance the image.
Compiling a cultural integrated calendar	<p>Creating a cultural (event) calendar will improve the channel of informing stakeholders and target groups about upcoming events related to the tourist route.</p> <p>The calendar of events should include the following information: name and topic of the event; date and place; programme of events; type of event (e.g. reconstructions, festivals, expositions, etc.); organisers and contact persons. It is necessary to update regularly the digital cultural calendar on the website and to position it in online channels.</p> <p>The calendar should be distributed to tour operators and partners so that they can plan their travel programmes more than a year before holding the events.</p>
Specialised tourist fairs and exhibitions	<p>Participation in specialised events like:</p> <p>International Tourist Exchange HOLIDAY & SPA EXPO;</p> <p><i>Cultural Tourism</i> International Tourist Exhibition, Veliko Tarnovo;</p> <p><i>Your Vacation</i> Tourist Fair, Burgas;</p> <p><i>Weekend Tourism</i> Exhibition, Ruse;</p> <p>Black Sea Tourism Forum, dedicated to specialised types of tourism, Varna;</p> <p>Romanian Travel and Tourism Industry Trade Fair;</p> <p>Romanian Tourism Fair 2021.</p> <p>International tourism exhibitions at which Bulgaria is</p>



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represented¹³⁷



Physical Evidence

In tourism, physical evidence mainly depends on the experience of the tourists based on their travel, accommodation and comfort. As the tourism product is highly intangible, the place, environment, people and all the rest are the main focus of the tourist experience. Of fundamental importance for the tourist experience of the routes is the connectedness of the sites included in them. Since the contracting authority has no control over the management of the sites included in the route and the communication policy, the creation of an integrated tourist experience remains the strongest tool of influence.

The physical evidence are the sites along the routes in which the tourist are offered an experience. The condition of the sites and the elements of the cultural heritage exhibited in them, the offered attractions, performances and events are the material environment or a measurable component, which has a direct influence and supports the communication with the tourist. Physical factors (physical environment) are the material part of an otherwise intangible service - the tourist service. The physical factors include the following elements: premises, appearance of employees, behaviour of employees, furniture, advertising materials and all elements of the identity of the integrated tourism product. Essential for the tourist experience on the routes is the connection between the sites included in the routes, in terms of their management and communication policy, elements that are a prerequisite for product identity. Sharing a common identity of the sites and the offered experience is one of the strongest tools for impact.

¹³⁷ International tourism exhibitions at which Bulgaria is represented:
https://www.tourism.government.bg/sites/tourism.government.bg/files/uploads/MRIT/ministry_of_tourism_mejd_unarodni_izlojeniya_2020_2_0.pdf



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The development of stickers denoting the integrated tourist product "Art and Culture" (main and extended) and a map for collecting stickers from the sites when visited by tourists are elements that mark the product and at the same time are a souvenir of the tourist experience.



People in the routes

People

The focus in tourism is people's behaviour, quality control and personal sales. People are the key stakeholders, end customers, stakeholders, partners and staff who are actively involved in the purchase and sale of a tourism product. The attitude, skills and appearance of the staff are important to ensure overall satisfaction.

Coordinating presentation means, increasing the capacity of the employees offering and presenting the integrated tourism product is a key element of its promotion. A key element is drawing a single standard for presenting the sites which are part of the routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended).



Processes

Process

The processes in tourism include the following:

- ✓ travel planning and anticipation;
- ✓ travel to the site/area;
- ✓ memory;



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- ✓ travelling;
- ✓ planning packages.

Well-designed processes make the services convenient for tourists. This greatly increases the confidence and satisfaction of tourists.

Facilitating travel in the modern world is not only closely linked to 'tourism development', but it can also be key to boosting demand and economic growth.

The management of the supply processes, communication, building up expectations and their satisfaction is of paramount importance for the positioning of the integrated tourism product.

The main and extended Joint integrated tourism route "Art and Culture" offers an experience, however, tourist realisation of the route should be provided with professional service, so that tourists can make their choice of the offered attractions/sights, services/facilities, attractiveness/accessibility. These distinctive features determine its competitiveness as a tourism product.

The aspects that build the brand identity of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" in order to achieve competitive advantages are the following:

Brand value	<p>Art and culture in different manifestations.</p> <p>Unique heritage.</p> <p>Variety of the offered forms of art and culture.</p> <p>Beautiful and diverse natural resources along the route.</p> <p>Attractive, warm and friendly people at the sites included in the routes.</p> <p>Events and attractions outside the sites included in the routes.</p>
Brand attributes <i>(attractions, basic services, supporting primary and secondary production, export products)</i>	<p>Main attractions - all sites included in both routes.</p> <p>Accompanying services related to transport, accommodation, catering along the routes, emphasising on the culinary traditions of the destinations along the routes.</p> <p>Key symbols from the destinations included in the route, which can be complementary to the tourist experience.</p>



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<p>Communication techniques</p>	<p>Emphasis on setting up partnerships.</p> <p>Content Marketing.</p> <p>Communications in social networks and online environment;</p> <p>Drawing information and promotional materials on various media, in digital and analog format, including information about possible travel design and tourist experience;</p> <p>Advertising;</p> <p>Publicity;</p> <p>Public responsibility;</p> <p>Events and collaborations with various institutions and setting up joint communication campaigns.</p>
<p>Marketing identity (main characteristics of economic, social and cultural activities)</p>	<p>Expansion of the offer in order to encourage tourists to spend more in destinations;</p> <p>Collaboration between the offer and accompanying activities, deliberately created events and/or development of a souvenir product line for the route;</p> <p>Presentation of authentic local culture in the various destinations.</p>
<p>Trends based on products, services and actions</p>	<p>Expanding the thematic route (incl. accompanying tourism products and services) by expanding the partner network.</p>
<p>Essence and core values (people, beliefs, history, innovation, knowledge and skills)</p>	<p>The sites included in the routes;</p> <p>The expertise of the people presenting the sites on site;</p> <p>Cultural diversity intertwined with the tourist experience through various forms of art and culture;</p> <p>Cultural heritage and authenticity of the presentation.</p>
<p>A unique collection of attractions</p>	<p>Veliko Tarnovo</p> <p>1. Art Gallery “Boris Denev”</p>



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2. Multimedia visitor centre “Tsarevgrad Tarnov”

3. Samovodska Charshia

4. Hadji Nikoli Inn

5. Music and Drama Theatre “Konstantin Kisimov”

Gorna Oryahovitsa

6. Art Gallery “Nedyalko Karaneshev”

Pleven

7. Art Gallery Donation “Kolektsiya Svetlin Rusev”

8. Regional Historical Museum, Pleven

9. Art Gallery “Iliya Beshkov”

10. Panorama “Pleven Epopee1877”

11. Drama and Puppet Theatre “Ivan Radoev”

Knezha

12. Municipal History Museum

Belogradchik

13. Belogradchik Historical Museum

Vidin

14. Art Gallery “Nikola Petrov”

15. Drama Theatre “Vida”

16. Sinfonietta

17. State Puppet Theatre

Calafat

18. The Marincu Palace-Museum

Craiova

19. Art Museum (The Palace of Jean Mihail)



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	<p>20. Casa Baniei</p> <p>21. Oltenia Philharmonic</p> <p>22. "Marin Sorescu" National Theatre</p> <p>23. Theatre for Children and Youth "Colibri"</p> <p>Six sites (marked in colour) are included in the main Joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture".</p> <p>Twenty-three sites are included in the extended Joint integrated tourist route "Art and Culture".</p>
Brand Personalisation	Art and culture of the Eastern Danube: a visualisation of the brand personalisation is presented.
Brand Identity Essence	<p>Green tourism</p> <p>The adventure to discover</p> <p>Inspired by art</p> <p>Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Danube: the cradle of culture</p> <p>Culture: discover and dream</p>

Like any brand, the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" is made up of intangible elements, but also of some truly tangible ones like logos, messages and symbols.

Whether it is the tangible or intangible elements that make it up, they should work together and in sync. The logo, messages and symbols should correspond and communicate directly with the promises and expectations built up by the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture", with the perceptions it forms and with the overall personification it creates.

The brand concept of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" should be transparent and should send messages of reliability and trust in tourists as end users, as well as in those providing tourism services, i.e. the staff of cultural organisations and the partners building the tourism product.

Prior to being clearly defined and living its own life, any brand that is to be built has to undergo





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some research.

The unifying core of the integrated tourism product is the elements presented in its name "Art and Culture" as the main and first element of the brand identity of the product.

The chosen name embodies a symbiosis between the motives for the development of cultural tourism, supply and essence of the included sites in the two tourist routes of the integrated tourism product.

Visual identity, brand visual identity

Based on the already chosen name, attention should be paid to the semiotic side and the symbolic meaning not only of the selected words, but also the sites described in detail in "Development of a Joint integrated thematic route "Art and Culture" REPORT №4 Project ROBG -576 "Arts and Culture - common cross-border assets in support of sustainable tourism development". The presented sites illustrate the diversity of opportunities for tourist trips on the theme of art and culture of the cross-border region.

This diversity is an advantage, however, at the same time, it can lead to the intertwining of symbols, interconnection and imbalance of tourists' perceptions. In this regard, active and purposeful actions are needed to create a unified visual identity of the integrated tourism product. To this end, attention should be paid to the key cross-border region symbols and messages to be incorporated into the graphic identity.

The first choice should be consistent with the colours, thus, the following three variants of harmonised colour palettes, using three colours, with the blue colour in common, reminding of the colour of the Danube, however, not necessarily having a river symbol in the logo.

Figure 29 Colour selection palettes for building a visual identity



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The first two palettes include the purple colour, part of the visual identity of Veliko Tarnovo, the first and last point of the tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended). The city is also the most recognisable tourist destination with five sites on its territory are along the route, a huge supply of additional tourism products and services as well as a very well-developed event calendar.

The three suggestions contain a warm balancing colour: yellow and orange (two shades); these colours add balance to the graphic image and are associated with warmth, sun; in the heraldry of colours, orange is associated with bringing into existence and creativity.

The **logo** as part of the brand is the main, key element of the brand, visualising the name depicted in a certain way, or a relatively independent graphic element suggesting the meaning of the brand. Its shape, colour and overall vision are a description of the philosophy of the integrated tourism product.

The main symbols to be included in the logo of the integrated tourism product and the included tourist routes are envisaged to be considered as separate tourism products belonging to a brand. They are to be linked to the name of the route and the unifying part of the route, namely art, culture, creative industries. This involves weaving diversity into a single symbol without being cluttered with symbols. The logo is to contain highlights from the integrated tourism product and a special typography; a mandatory element is the territorial positioning of the product.

It is important for the logo to be easy to remember, not to be loaded with too many details, so as not to create confusion and mixed feelings in the users. The logo should be like the name, to speak on behalf of the brand, to be its face, its voice and create a feeling of it.

The brand is not just a logo, fonts, colours - it is a process of establishing the brand, and this



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is made easier through positive experiences and emotions with quality products in order to build an emotional connection. This is achieved through the means of marketing communications, described in detail above in the presentation of the marketing mix.

The symbolic meaning can be found in the connection of the brand name with the brand personality and the emotions it seeks to evoke in consumers. It is at this point that one of the key roles of the brand name in the process of brand communication positioning can be emphasised, where the name is associated with emotions (the feelings it evokes), personality (the distinctive features that the brand is associated with), personal and social values.

Generating experiences, sharing messages and creating emotions are important goals of tourism events. Among the variety of cultural tourism products, cultural events provide valuable strategic advantage. The fact is that the local community benefits from the creation and promotion of cultural sites and events.

Based on the above, the authors of the Strategy offer three options for the brand of the integrated tourism product.

Brand proposal of the concept “Art and Culture along the Eastern Danube”



Brand proposal of the concept “Eastern Danube Cultural Corridor”

Variant 1:



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Eastern Danube Cultural Corridor

Variante 2:



Eastern Danube Cultural Corridor

Brand proposal of the concept “Cultural Heritage of the Eastern Danube“



3.5. Marketing activities for strategy implementation

In developing the current *Marketing Strategy of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture"*, the choice of objectives, measures and activities is based on the understanding that the developed tourism product has the potential for sustainable development and positioning in internal and external tourism markets.



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Through the identified specific activities the implementation of the strategic goals of the Strategy is achieved. The activities are grouped according to the envisaged specific goals, which contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals. Each activity is clearly and precisely defined in terms of the time schedule and required resources. This logical approach guarantees the implementation of the Strategy.



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Table 28 The specific activities are presented in the following table

Strategic goal	Specific objective	Activities
<p style="text-align: center;">Strategic goal 1: Development and improvement of the integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) as a cultural tourist destination in the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria.</p>	<p>Specific objective 1.1 Deployment of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" by enriching the product palette.</p>	<p>Activity 1.1.1: Setting up of a joint working group with representatives of the stakeholders for development of criteria for expansion of the routes with sites, attractions, natural resources, activities, etc. Activity 1.1.2: Development of local tourist routes (sub-routes), integrated with other forms of tourism. Activity 1.1.3: Adding the route to existing, thematically similar routes related to art and culture on the territory of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region. Activity 1.1.4: Expansion and updating of the cultural (event) calendar of the integrated tourist product.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 1.2 Development of the integrated tourist product in the direction of improving the experience of tourists in the destination.</p>	<p>Activity 1.2.1: Establishment of partnerships with representatives of stakeholders (representatives of the tourism sector: hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents; chambers of craftsmen; professional organizations of tourist guides; managers of cultural institutions; organizers of festivals and management attractions, cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc.). Activity 1.2.2: Development of specialized tourist packages (eg. thematic packages - Art and culture along the road of wine, etc.) in partnership with stakeholders, building on the developed integrated tourist routes "Art and culture" (main and extended). Activity 1.2.3: Development of an event program for conducting of events in the sites of the main and extended integrated tourist routes and its implementation. Activity 1.2.4: Development of tourist packages for combining the integrated tourist product with festival events in the destination, a key element for intercultural exchange and the intensity of social contacts.</p>



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Strategic goal	Specific objective	Activities
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Strategic goal 2: Improving the quality of existing services and introduction of systems for shared innovative management of the integrated tourism product.</p>	<p>Specific objective 1.3 Development of national, cross-border and international cooperation for improvement and maintenance of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".</p>	<p>Activity 1.3.1: Strengthening the interaction between the participants in the management and development of the integrated tourist product "Art and Culture". Promoting inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation to ensure the development of the route.</p> <p>Activity 1.3.2: Development of partnerships with European and world tour operators for inclusion of the integrated tourism product or its sites in routes developed by and operating with them.</p> <p>Activity 1.3.3: Development of partnerships with international and national online platforms for tourism for inclusion of the routes in the respective platforms.</p> <p>Activity 1.3.4: Establishing contacts with organizers of tourism fairs and exhibitions for the inclusion of the integrated tourism product in their programs.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 2.1: Strengthening the capacity for strategic and sustainable management of the integrated tourist routes.</p>	<p>Activity 2.1.1: Analysis of the training needs of the managers of the marketing strategy and the management of the destination. Development of training programs (based on analysis) to improve knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Activity 2.1.2: Conducting trainings for improvement of the administrative capacity for development and management of a tourist destination, and development of thematic tourist routes.</p> <p>Activity 2.1.3: Conducting trainings for improvement of the administrative capacity for management of the implementation and evaluation of the marketing strategy.</p> <p>Activity 2.1.4: Participation in training visits to organizations responsible for the management of tourist destinations.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 2.2: Strengthening the capacity to provide services at the tourist sites along the routes.</p>	<p>Activity 2.2.1: Development of programs for continuing interactive training in the field of tourism and the specifics of marketing and offering thematic tourist routes.</p> <p>Activity 2.2.2: Conducting trainings for improvement of the knowledge and skills of the providers of tourist services in the marketing and offering of thematic tourist routes.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 2.3: Creating favourable conditions for effective</p>	<p>Activity 2.3.1: Development of a mechanism for sharing information between all partners and sites included in the integrated tourism product in order to avoid information vacuum and untimely informing of tourists.</p>





Strategic goal	Specific objective	Activities
	and sustainable management of the integrated tourism product.	<p>Activity 2.3.2: Carrying out of and participation in periodic events with the stakeholders, in connection with information presentation of the integrated tourist product and the communication connection with the different audiences.</p> <p>Activity 2.3.3: Conducting annual surveys on the attendance of the sites of the joint tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) and the transformation of the results into action measures.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Strategic goal 3: Promotion of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" as a sustainable destination in the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria.</p>	<p>Specific objective 3.1 Integration of the brand identity of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".</p>	<p>Activity 3.1.1: Development of brand mythology related to all sites along the joint tourist routes.</p> <p>Activity 3.1.2: Development of a Visual Identity Guide and its implementation by all participants in the management and sales of the integrated tourism product.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 3.2: Creation and development of information availability along the route to support the informed choice of tourists.</p>	<p>Activity 3.2.1: Development and distribution of advertising materials (online and on analogue media), presenting a good price-quality-experience ratio and their connection.</p> <p>Activity 3.2.2: Development and distribution in the sites of the integrated tourist routes of stickers of the route and a map for collecting stickers from the visitors (a souvenir from the integrated product).</p> <p>Activity 3.2.3: Participation of the integrated product in advertising campaigns at local, regional and national level.</p> <p>Activity 3.2.4: Promotion of the developed platform and mobile application in the online environment (social networks), development of advertising banners.</p> <p>Activity 3.2.5: Creating a model and a system for quick response "in the routes platform" when there are questions by tourists, other audiences, media, etc., to provide relevant information.</p>





Strategic goal	Specific objective	Activities
		<p>Activity 3.2.6: Construction of a section in the online platform for individual planning of visits to the sites of the route (tourist calculator).</p> <p>Activity 3.2.7: Creation of a section on the website of the integrated tourist product, in which to present the partnering travel agencies that offer the route.</p>
	<p>Specific objective 3.3: Development of advertising and communication policy of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".</p>	<p>Activity 3.3.1: Development of an action plan in the direction of managing the reputation of the sites and the overall presentation of the integrated product "Art and Culture", in accordance with the communication objectives and the established brand.</p> <p>Activity 3.3.2: Strengthening the work with local tourist information centres.</p> <p>Activity 3.3.3: Participation and presentation of the integrated product in national and international tourism fairs/exhibitions.</p> <p>Activity 3.3.4: Development of digital channels to reach different tourist groups.</p> <p>Activity 3.3.5: Conducting workshops/seminars for representatives of the tourism industry, in connection with the offering of the tourist product and the tourist experience.</p>

3.6. Expected results.

In accordance with the goals set and marketing action of the integrated tourist route "Art and Culture", the holistic approach to positioning the tourism product is relied on, emphasizing sustainable and effective actions for its development, based on the tourist offer and tourist experience. The specificity is that an interactive tourism product is offered, which is part of the tourism experience, and the expected results are focused on two priorities:

Communication positioning and creating demand ;

Establishing and maintaining effective and sustainable relationships with a community of





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partners related to the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".

The expected results from the accomplishments of the goals, measures and activities set in the marketing strategy are the following:

Result 1: Improved tourist product - cultural tourist destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.

Result 2: Integrated destination management, achieved supply diversification and increased service satisfaction.

Result 3: Promotion of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" and increased visibility as a sustainable destination in domestic and foreign markets.

The achievement of the described results leads to the achievement of the strategic goals set in the strategy.



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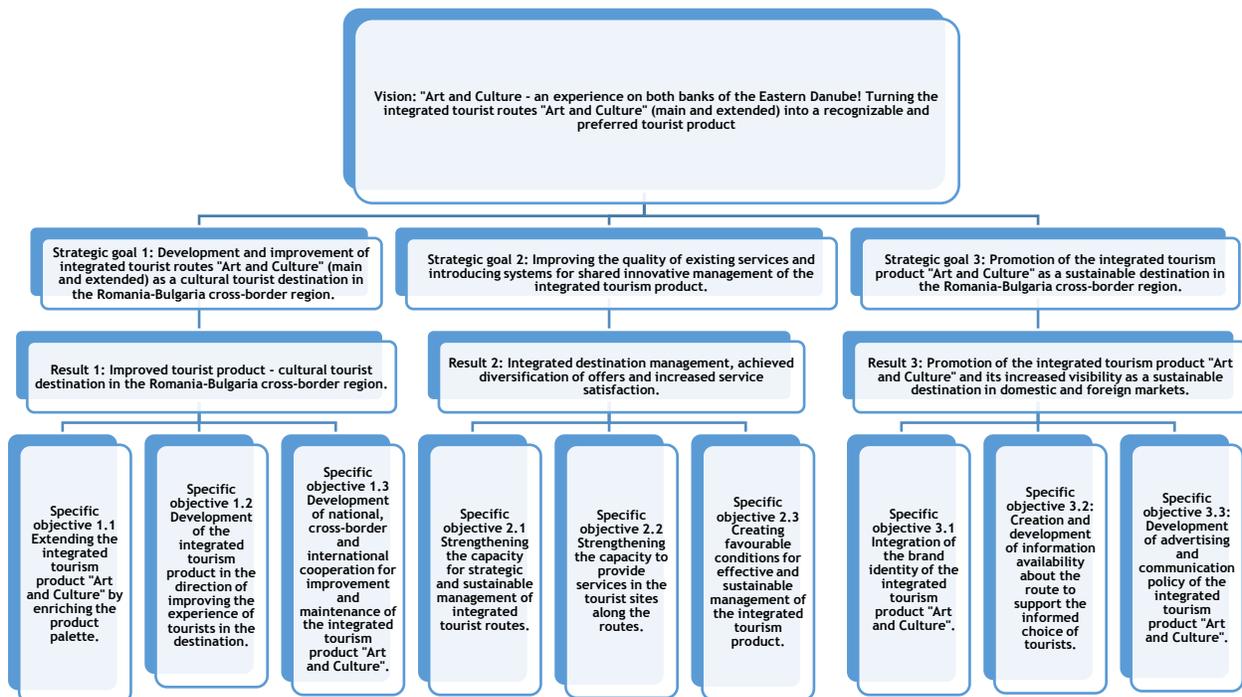


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Figure 30 Scheme of a common strategic framework for the implementation of a Marketing Strategy for the implementation of an integrated tourism product including a joint thematic route "Art and Culture" (2021 - 2027)



3.7. Monitoring and evaluation

The marketing strategy monitoring and evaluation deal with monitoring of the strategy and action plan implementation, based on systematic and regular data collection and analysis necessary for evaluating the implementation and, if necessary, updating the marketing strategy



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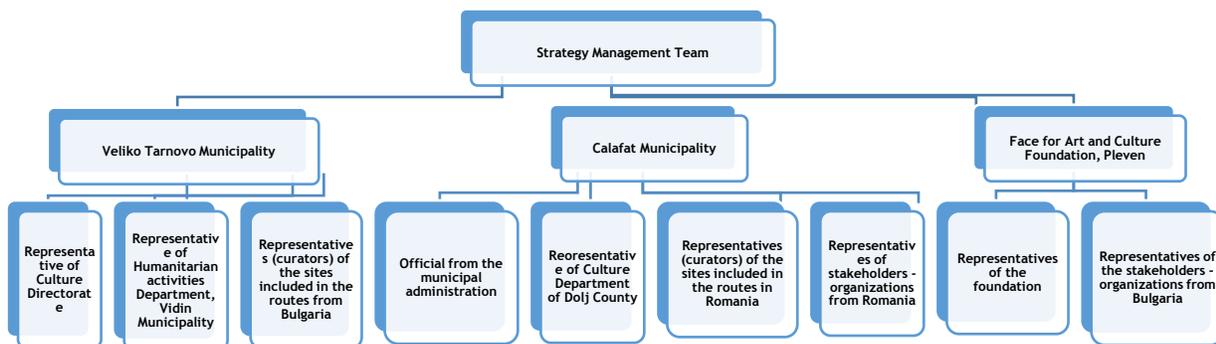
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and/or action plan. This is a continuous process of collecting data and information in order to monitor and control the implementation of planned measures and activities.

The process of monitoring the Strategy and the Action Plan for achieving the specific goals will be carried out by a joint team, including representatives of the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, the Municipality of Calafat and the Face for Art and Culture Foundation based in Pleven. In the first 3 years of the implementation of the marketing strategy, the Face for Art and Culture Foundation, Pleven, will be the leading organization.

It is envisaged that the team members will be assisted also by experts, representatives of the sites included in the routes (main and extended), officials from the municipal/district administrations and representatives of the stakeholders.

Figure 31 Management structure for the management of the Strategy in the first three years (2021 - 2024)



The process of monitoring the implementation of the Strategy will be carried out in compliance with several basic principles:

1. Comprehensiveness of the objects of monitoring;
2. Clarity and transparency;
3. Objectivity;



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4. Mutual control and coordination between the responsible institutional units;
5. Existence of clear rules and procedures for conducting the monitoring;
6. Partnership and interaction with all stakeholders.

Monitoring the implementation of the strategy is an important function of management. The "control" function plays the role of feedback in management. As a result of the performed control, information is received on the status of the implementation of the Strategy and the assessment of its impact.

The main purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to identify in a timely manner the potential problems and difficulties in the implementation of the marketing strategy and action plan as well as to identify the main risks and elements by taking action to amend it.

The specific objectives of marketing monitoring and evaluation are the following:

- achieving the target values of the monitoring indicators;
- verification of the financial implementation of the marketing strategy and action plan;
- verification of the implementation of the marketing strategy and action plan within a certain period of time;
- verification of compliance with the requirements of the marketing strategy and action plan implementation.



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Table 29 Impact indicators

Level of measurement (Type of indicator)	Object of measurement	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Base value (base year 2020)	Intermediate value /2024 /	Target value /2027 /	Source of information
Impact Indicator	Strategic goal 1: Development and improvement of integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) as a cultural tourist destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.	Preserving and expanding the sites included in the integrated tourist routes (6 in the main and 23 in the extended)	number	6/23	8/26	10/30	Data from the contractor
	Strategic goal 2: Improving the quality of existing services and introducing systems for shared	Growth of tourist arrivals in accommodation establishments in the target regions (in	% of the base value	1,107,443 ¹³⁸	4%	7%	NSIs of Bulgaria and Romania, Eurostat, institutions/ organisations related to tourism.

¹³⁸ Nights spent in accommodation establishments in the target regions of Bulgaria and Romania in 2019. Source: NSIs of Bulgaria and Romania.



Level of measurement (Type of indicator)	Object of measurement	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Base value (base year 2020)	Intermediate value /2024 /	Target value /2027 /	Source of information
	innovative management of the integrated tourism product.	Bulgaria and Romania)					
	Strategic goal 3 Promotion of the integrated tourism product “Art and Culture” as a sustainable integrated joint thematic and innovative tourism product.	Rise in the visits to the sites in the joint tourist routes “Art and Culture” (main and extended). Visits conducted by users of the tourist routes.	% of the base value	0 ¹³⁹	5%	10%	NSIs of Bulgaria and Romania, Eurostat, institutions/ organisations related to tourism.

Table 30 Indicators for implementation

¹³⁹ The base value is “0” because the developed Joint integrated tourist routes “Art and Culture” are a new product on the market.





Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
Strategic goal 1: Development and improvement of integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) as a cultural tourist destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.					
Specific objective 1.1 Extending the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" by enriching the product palette.	Set up teams	number	1	1	Strategy implementation reports
	Developed sub-routes	number	1	3	Strategy implementation reports, developed sub-routes
	Established contacts for including the integrated tourist product in similar routes.	number	3	10	Strategy implementation report
	Updated cultural (event) calendars.	number	1	4	Strategy implementation report - updated cultural calendars.
Specific objective 1.2 Development of the integrated tourism product in the direction of improving the experience of tourists in the destination.	Established partnerships with representatives of the stakeholders.	number	3	10	Partnership agreements signed
	Developed thematic tourist packages.	number	1	3	Reports on the implementation of the developed thematic tourist packages
	Events held at the sites along the integrated tourist routes (main and extended)	number	5	10	Strategy implementation reports - Posters for conducting the events in the sites along the main and extended integrated tourist routes.





Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
	Developed tourist packages with festival events included.	number	1	3	Reports on the implementation of the developed tourist packages.
Specific objective 1.3 Development of national, cross-border and international cooperation for improvement and maintenance of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".	Working meetings held with the participants in the managements and development of the integrated tourist product "Art and Culture"	number	2	5	Implementation reports
	Established partnerships with world and European tour operators.	number	1	3	Implementation reports
	Established partnerships with online tourist platforms.	number	2	5	Implementation reports
	Established contacts with organizers of tourist exchanges and fairs.	number	2	5	Implementation reports
Strategic goal 2: Improving the quality of existing services and introducing systems for shared innovative management of the integrated tourism product .					
Specific objective 2.1 Strengthening the capacity for strategic and sustainable management of integrated tourist routes.	Conducted analyses of the training needed	number	1	1	Implementation reports - prepared analysis of training needs
	Number of the conducted trainings for improving the administrative capacity for development and management of the tourist destination and development of thematic tourist routes.	number	1	1	Implementation reports



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Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
	Conducted trainings for improving the administrative capacity for management of the implementation and evaluation of the marketing strategy.	number	1	1	Implementation reports
	Participation in training visits to organizations in charge of management of tourist destinations.	number	1	2	Implementation reports
Specific objective 2.2 Strengthening the capacity to provide services in the tourist sites along the routes.	Developed programs for continuing interactive training in the field of tourism and the specifics of marketing and offering thematic tourist routes.	number	1	1	Implementation reports
	Conducted trainings for stakeholders in the field of tourism and the specifics of marketing and offering thematic tourist routes.	number	1	1	Implementation reports
Specific objective 2.3 Creating favorable conditions for effective and sustainable management of the integrated tourism product.	Developed mechanisms for information sharing between all partners and sites.	number	1	1	Implementation reports - the developed mechanism
	Participation/events held with those interested for presenting the integrated tourism product. Conducted annual surveys on the attendance of the sites of the joint tourist	number	2	5	Implementation reports



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Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
	routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended).				
	Conducted annual surveys about the attendance of the sites in the joint tourist routes "Art and Culture"	number	2	4	Implementation reports - analysis of the surveys
Strategic goal 3: Promotion of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" as a sustainable destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.					
Specific objective 3.1 Integration of the brand identity of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".	Developed brand mythology	number	1	1	Implementation reports
	Prepared manual for applying visual identity.	number	1	1	Implementation reports - the developed manual
Specific objective 3.2: Creation and development of information availability about the route to support the informed choice of tourists.	Prepared advertising materials for online commercials (bilingual in Bulgarian/English and Romanian/English) - 10 pcs.	number	5	10	Implementation reports - prepared materials for online advertising
	Cultural calendars - in English and Bulgarian, and in Romanian and English	number	1000	2,000 pcs in English and Bulgarian and 1,000 pcs in	Implementation reports - prepared cultural calendars



Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
				Romanian and English	
	Brochures describing the main and extended integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" - in English and Bulgarian and in Romanian and English.	number	1000	2,000 pcs 1,000 pcs in English and Bulgarian and 1,000 pcs in Romanian and English	Implementation reports - brochures prepared
	Posers containing information about the events at the sites along the routes) - in English and Bulgarian and in Romanian and English.	number	500	1,000 pcs 500 pcs in English and Bulgarian and 1,000 pcs in Romanian and English	Implementation reports - prepared posters
	Leaflets - containing information about the events at the sites along the routes (in Bulgarian and English and in Romanian and English).	number	1000	2,000 pcs 1,000 pcs in English and Bulgarian and 1,000 pcs in Romanian and English	Implementation reports - prepared leaflets

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Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
	fCatalogs containing the extended route - in English and Bulgarian and also in Romanian and English	number	500	1,000 500 pcs in English and Bulgarian and 500 pcs in Romanian and English	Implementation reports - prepared catalogs
	A set developed, printed and distributed in the sites along the integrated tourist routes - a map (for collecting stickers) with stickers of the 23 sites - in three languages - Bulgarian, English, Romanian	number	3000	3000	Implementation reports - the set
	Participation of the integrated tourist product in advertising campaigns.	number	1	3	Implementation reports - materials from the advertising campaigns
	Online advertising banners (in Romanian, English and Bulgarian)	number	3	3	Implementation reports - advertising online banners
	Advertising posts in social media.	number	5	10	Implementation reports - links to advertising materials
	System for quick response	number	1	1	The online platform of the integrated tourist product



Object of measurement	Indicator for result	Unit of measurement	Intermediate value - 2024	Target value - 2027	Information source
	Special section in the online platform for individual planning of visits to the sites along the routes.	number	1	1	The online platform of the integrated tourist product
	Special section in the online platform representing the partner tourist agencies offering the route.	number	1	1	The online platform of the integrated tourist product
Specific objective 3.3: Development of advertising and communication policy of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".	Developed plan for reputation management	number	1	1	Implementation reports - the developed plan
	Working meetings conducted with representatives of the local tourist information centres	number	5	5	Implementation reports
	Participation in tourist exchanges and fairs	number	2	3	Implementation reports
	Developed digital channels (Facebook, YouTube, blogs, online media, etc.)	number	5	5	Implementation reports
	Workshops/seminars in which the route is popularized.	number	3	5	Implementation reports



3.8. Action plan.

Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
TOTAL INDICATIVE VALUE	€114 500					
Strategic goal 1: Development and improvement of integrated tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) as a cultural tourist destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.	€7 500					
Specific objective 1.1 Extending the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" by enriching the product palette.	€3 500					
Activity 1.1.1: Setting up of a joint working group with representatives of the stakeholders for development of criteria for expansion of the routes with sites, attractions, natural resources, activities, etc.	€500	Own funds and EU funds				
1.1.2: Development of local tourist routes (sub-routes), integrated with other forms of tourism.	€1 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 1.1.3: Adding the route to existing, thematically similar routes related to art and culture on the territory of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.	€1 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 1.1.4: Expansion and updating of the cultural (event) calendar of the integrated tourist product.	€ 1000	Own funds				
Specific objective 1.2 Development of the integrated tourism product in the direction of improving the	€2 100					



Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
experience of tourists in the destination.						
Activity 1.2.1: Establishment of partnerships with representatives of stakeholders (representatives of the tourism sector: hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents; chambers of craftsmen; professional organizations of tourist guides; managers of cultural institutions; organizers of festivals and management attractions, cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc.).	€500	Own funds and EU funds				
Activity 1.2.2: Development of specialized tourist packages (eg. thematic packages - Art and culture along the road of wine, etc.) in partnership with stakeholders, building on the developed integrated tourist routes "Art and culture" (main and extended).	€500	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 1.2.3: Development of an event program for conducting of events in the sites of the main and extended integrated tourist routes and its implementation.	€ 600	Own funds				
Activity 1.2.4: Development of tourist packages for combining the integrated tourist product with festival events in the destination, a key element for intercultural exchange and the intensity of social contacts.	€500	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Specific objective 1.3 Development of national, cross-border and international cooperation for	€1 900					





Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
improvement and maintenance of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".						
Activity 1.3.1: Strengthening the interaction between the participants in the management and development of the integrated tourist product "Art and Culture". Promoting inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation to ensure the development of the route.	€1000	Own funds and other sources				
Activity 1.3.2: Development of partnerships with European and world tour operators for inclusion of the integrated tourism product or its sites in routes developed by and operating with them.	€300	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 1.3.3: Development of partnerships with international and national online platforms for tourism for inclusion of the routes in the respective platforms.	€300	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 1.3.4: Establishing contacts with organizers of tourism fairs and exhibitions for the inclusion of the integrated tourism product in their programs.	€300	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Strategic goal 2: Improving the quality of existing services and introducing systems for shared innovative management of the integrated tourism product.	€15 500					
Specific objective 2.1 Strengthening the capacity for strategic and	€6 000					



Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
sustainable management of integrated tourist routes.						
Activity 2.1.1: Analysis of the training needs of the managers of the marketing strategy and the management of the destination. Development of training programs (based on analysis) to improve knowledge and skills.	€1 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 2.1.2: Conducting trainings for improvement of the administrative capacity for development and management of a tourist destination, and development of thematic tourist routes.	€1 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 2.1.3: Conducting trainings for improvement of the administrative capacity for management of the implementation and evaluation of the marketing strategy.	€1 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 2.1.4: Participation in training visits to organizations responsible for the management of tourist destinations.	€3 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Specific objective 2.2 Strengthening the capacity to provide services in the tourist sites along the routes.	€1 000					
Activity 2.2.1: Development of programs for continuing interactive training in the field of tourism and the specifics of marketing and offering thematic tourist routes.	€500	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Activity 2.2.2: Conducting trainings for improvement of the knowledge and	€500	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				





Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
skills of the providers of tourist services in the marketing and offering of thematic tourist routes.						
Specific objective 2.3 Creating favourable conditions for effective and sustainable management of the integrated tourism product.	€8 500					
Activity 2.3.1: Development of a mechanism for sharing information between all partners and sites included in the integrated tourism product in order to avoid information vacuum and untimely informing of tourists.	€5 000	Own funds (salaries of employees of Culture department of Veliko Tarnovo municipality)				
Activity 2.3.2: Carrying out of and participation in periodic events with the stakeholders, in connection with information presentation of the integrated tourist product and the communication connection with the different audiences.	€1 500	Own funds (funds from Veliko Tarnovo Municipality and Calafat Municipality)				
Activity 2.3.3: Conducting annual surveys on the attendance of the sites of the joint tourist routes "Art and Culture" (main and extended) and the transformation of the results into action measures.	€2 000	Own funds, EU funds and other sources				
Strategic goal 3: Promotion of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture" as a sustainable destination in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region.	€91 500					



Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
Specific objective 3.1 Integration of the brand identity of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".	€4 000					
Activity 3.1.1: Development of brand mythology related to all sites along the joint tourist routes.	€3 000	Own funds (salaries employees of the foundation)				
Activity 3.1.2: Development of a Visual Identity Guide and its implementation by all participants in the management and sales of the integrated tourism product.	€1 000	Own funds (salaries employees of the foundation) and other sources				
Specific objective 3.2: Creation and development of information availability about the route to support the informed choice of tourists.	€60 000					
Activity 3.2.1: Development and distribution of advertising materials (online and on analogue media), presenting a good price-quality-experience ratio and their connection.	€5 000	Own funds (funds of the municipal administrations, foundation)				
Activity 3.2.2: Development and distribution in the sites of the integrated tourist routes of stickers of the route and a map for collecting stickers from the visitors (a souvenir from the integrated product).	€3 000	Own funds (funds of municipal administrations, the foundation)				
Activity 3.2.3: Participation of the integrated product in advertising campaigns at local, regional and national level.	€45 000	Own funds (municipal and state budget)				



Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
Activity 3.2.4: Promotion of the developed platform and mobile application in the online environment (social networks), development of advertising banners.	€3 000	Own funds (municipal and state budget)				
Activity 3.2.5: Creating a model and a system for quick response "in the routes platform" when there are questions by tourists, other audiences, media, etc., to provide relevant information.	€2 000	Own funds (salaries IT municipal employees Veliko Tarnovo)				
Activity 3.2.6: Construction of a section in the online platform for individual planning of visits to the sites of the route (tourist calculator).	€1 000	Own funds (salaries IT municipal employees Veliko Tarnovo)				
Activity 3.2.7: Creation of a section on the website of the integrated tourist product, in which to present the partnering travel agencies that offer the route.	€1 000	Own funds (salaries IT municipal employees Veliko Tarnovo)				
Specific objective 3.3: Development of advertising and communication policy of the integrated tourism product "Art and Culture".	€27 500					
Activity 3.3.1: Development of an action plan in the direction of managing the reputation of the sites and the overall presentation of the integrated product "Art and Culture", in accordance with the communication objectives and the established brand.	€1 000	Own funds (salaries employees Foundation)				
Activity 3.3.2: Boosting the work with local tourist information centres.	€500	Own funds				



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Name	Indicative value	Funding source	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027
Activity 3.3.3: Participation and presentation of the integrated product in national and international tourism fairs/exhibitions.	€20 000	Own funds (municipal and state budget)				
Activity 3.3.4: Development of digital channels to reach different tourist groups.	€1 000	Own funds (salaries of employees Foundation)				
Activity 3.3.5: Conducting workshops/seminars for representatives of the tourism industry, in connection with the offering of the tourist product and the tourist experience.	€5 000	Own funds				