



**ONLINE BULLETIN ON BULGARIAN EDEN DESTINATIONS, CREATED UNDER THE PROJECT ENTITLED "COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE EDEN DESTINATIONS IN BULGARIA- SECOND EDITION", AS IMPLEMENTED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM UNDER A GRANT AGREEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION NO 699265 OF JAN 18, 2016**

**(issue 12, January 2017)**

**News, related to the project**

**Ministry of Tourism presented Bulgarian EDEN destinations during the TTR I 2017 tourism exhibition in Bucharest, Romania and during the 34th edition of the International Tourism fair "HOLIDAY/SPA EXPO", Sofia**

Within the project "Communication campaign to promote EDEN destinations in Bulgaria - Second Edition", Ministry of Tourism presented the Bulgarian EDEN destinations during the TTR I 2017 tourism exhibition in Bucharest, Romania. The event was held from 16.02.2017-19.02.2017 and it is among the most significant tourism forums in Romania. The exhibition is open to both professionals and the public.



Romania is a major target market for Bulgaria. Last year it topped the chart in terms of number of international tourists in our country, with 1 096 874 visits and a 11,2% growth compared to 2015. The Romanian market is also a major market about short-stay trips to Bulgaria.

Within the project "Communication campaign to promote EDEN destinations in Bulgaria - Second Edition", Ministry of Tourism presented Bulgaria EDEN destinations during the 34th edition of the International tourism fair "HOLIDAY/SPA EXPO", Sofia, which took

place in the period 15-17 February 2017. This is the largest tourism forum, organized in Bulgaria. The exhibition was covered widely in the media.

**Ministry of Tourism is planning to present Bulgaria EDEN destinations during the ITB Berlin from 8 to 11 March 2017.**

Within the project "Communication campaign to promote EDEN destinations in Bulgaria - Second Edition", Ministry of Tourism plans to present the Bulgaria EDEN destinations during the 51 edition of the international tourist fair ITB, Berlin which will take place from 8 to 11 March 2017.

ITB is the world's largest tourism fair and the leading B2B platform for all stakeholders in the tourism process, accompanied by extensive media coverage. ITB Berlin annually attracts over 120 000 visitors and over 10 000 exhibitors from 187 countries. In 2016, more than 5 000 accredited journalists from 80 countries and around 380 bloggers from 30 countries have expressed exhibition.

The presentation of EDEN destinations at the exhibition is an extra opportunity to showing them to professionals engaged in tourism (tour operators, tourist administrations, etc.) not only from Europe but also from third markets (North America, the Far East).



This is one of the first targeted promotion of the destinations. The decision for this to happen in Germany is because it is a traditional market for our country, which offers a variety of target groups interested in alternative tourism, new destinations and products. Besides direct effects on attendance and image of Bulgaria, targeted advertising will contribute to the promotion of EDEN destinations in Bulgaria. At the European level, this is a pre-

requisite for enhancing visibility for the destination and the initiative of the European Commission - EDEN.

### **EVENTS, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN SOME OF BULGARIAN EDEN DESTINATIONS**

#### **Kyustendil – Kyustendil Spring (18-21st of March 2017)**

The holiday "Kyustendil Spring" is a symbol of the city. It is organized by the Municipality of Kyustendil and includes a rich artistic program and the participation of many popular groups and performers. This is the location of the first competition in Bulgaria for choosing the most beautiful maiden.

The holiday "Kyustendil Spring" is a modernized, cultural legacy and a reproduction of ancient local traditions; it is a combination of religious practices of the Thracians and the Romans and the worshipping of them as the sun god and the healers Asclepius, Higia, Telesphorus, Apollo, and Dionysus. This is complemented by Christian semantics from the Middle Ages, with the interpretation of the legend about Saint Forty Martyrs and their devotion to the consecrated grounds of the hill above the city - Hisarluka.

In ancient times, on the day of the spring equinox, March 21st, which coincides with the old celebration of the memory of Saint Forty Martyrs, women knead ritual bread and carry it to the saintly place on Hisarluka and break the bread for health and success at home.

During the year 1966, the tradition of choosing the fairest maiden of "Kyustendil Spring" began. The fairest maiden is accompanied by the girls who won second and third place in the competition. They symbolize the tender step with which spring arrives; youth and new hope, similar to The Three Graces (goddesses of joy, charm and beauty) from the ancient, sacred tablets, found below Hisarluka.

The three beautiful maidens, dressed in white and decorated with spring flowers, are the symbol of the Spring. They bring joy and luck to everyone they see. On the town square, in the center of Kyustendil the maidens accept their three symbols of fortune: mineral water, fruit and bread which are given by God to the city, and are passed down symbolically from last year's fairest maidens.

Every year, during the holiday "Kyustendil Spring", the chosen maidens, escorted in a festive procession, go once again to the hill above the city to wish everyone well. The sacred hill, Hisarluka, opens the south port to the ancient city in order to enter through the symbolic door, the magic of spring and the ritual of the holiday must be woven together to create goodness in life.

On the 21st of March people greet each other with a greeting typical only of the Kyustendil region: "Chestita Prolet" (Happy Spring). Typically, they get together with their families and friends for a festive meal; first they have a picnic on the ground of Hisarluka, and later they continue celebrating at home.

**More information on the following website:** <http://www.kultura-kn.info/>

### **Sapareva banya – Horse race (19th March 2017)**

The horse races for Todorovden will take place on the 19th of March (Saturday) at 11:00 am on a field by the airport of Sapareva Banya. Both horses and donkeys racers can compete.

Besides the horse races, this year there will also be a race for weightlifting. For the winners are prepared cash prizes and plaques, which will be handed over by the mayor of Sapareva Banya.

**More information on the following website:** <http://saparevabanya.bg/pages/mid/52/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%8F%D1%89%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%8A%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F.html>

### **Belogradchik – A contemplation of birds in nature (25th March)**

On the 25th of March - on the occasion of the anniversary of the Liberation of Belogradchik from the Ottoman rule, the Historical Museum organizes thematic talks and activities. For the first time in the calendar, an event of the Nature Department is also included - in February and March, a group of people is going to count the water bird species and photograph them.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE EDEN DESTINATIONS**

*Usually, we present you one of the Bulgarian EDEN destination in each bulletin issue. For this issue we have are planning to familiarize you with the EDEN destination - Vratsa.*

### **VRATSA**

Vratsa has its origin in a rich Thracian settlement. The first traces date back to the Neolithic era and the first settlers in the area are from the Thracian tribe Tribals. For their rich culture and lifestyle, testify findings from Mogilan Mound and Rogozen treasure. Over the centuries, it remains important craft-commercial and and cultural center, and later industrial center.

Vratsa name appears in stone inscription from the time of Bulgarian ruler Michael Asen II /1246-1256/. Today the town of Vratsa is a big administrative, economic and cultural center, situated on 116 km away from the capital Sofia. It takes its name from the beautiful rocky gorge "Vratsata" whose vertical cliffs are the highest on Balkan Peninsula. Near the gorge Vratsata in the "Gradiste" terrain has been found an inscription from the 13th century, which for the first time mentions the name "Vratitsa".

Vratsa is a center of active cultural life and is famous for its cultural institutions - Regional Historical Museum with Art Gallery, Ethnographic - Renaissance complex "St. Sophronius of Vratsa", community center "Development", Palace of Culture.

Natural attractions in the municipality and the city symbols transform Vratsa in a unique and desirable tourist destination for lovers of mountain climbing, steam and paragliding, caving, adventure, cultural - historical, religious, rural and eco tourism. Available for tourists are ski slopes near Parshevitsa hut, numerous trails and hiking trails.

### **Main contact information for the destination:**

#### **Vratsa municipality**

Adress: 3000, Vratsa, 6 Stefanaki Savov str  
Tel.: + 359 92 663 117, Fax: + 359 92627085  
E-mail: obshtinavr@b-trust.org

#### **Directorate of Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park - 3000, Vratsa, fork for Pavolche village, P.O. Boc 241**

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Web: www.vr-balkan.net

### **Sites that we encourage you to see when you visit Vratsa region:**

#### **Ledenika Cave**

The Cave "Ledenika" is one of the most visited caves in Bulgaria. It is open for visits throughout the year. Ledenika Cave is situated 16 km away from the town of Vratsa. The cave is situated 830 m above the sea level. The Ledenika cave is 320 meters and has 10 halls. Named after its first hall where the temperature inside falls to minus 20 Celsius forming a large ice column. This is an interesting phenomenon, as the temperature in the rest of the cave remains between 8 and 16 degrees Celsius, with 92% humidity. The halls and formations in the cave are among the most beautiful in Bulgaria – the "Lake of Desires", "Passage of the Sinners", and "Concert Hall" are some of the most attractive. Huge, impressive and beautiful with exceptional acoustics, it is regularly used by the Vratsa Philharmonic for performances.

The Great Hall in iron bridges passing through Little and Big gap in the hallway pelmet and reaches the so-called White Hall. The highest point in the cave is called "Seventh Heaven". Around the cave has built an attractive entertainment park, which offers a separate theme and adventure modules.

Nearby is located Fun Park "Ledenika". It functions by 2014 and it was created by European project "Tourism without season", together with the Municipality of Vratsa. It is based on the natural phenomenon "Ledenika" cave. The Amusement park offers walks along nature trails, sports and games for all ages, artistic events related to the natural resources of the Natural Park "Vratsa Balkan", quiz shows, carnivals, photo workshops on a given topic and many other activities.



## Contacts:

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axis the tunnel which is formed by the River "Lilyaska bara" is about 100 meters long. Here is the water cave "Ponora" that flowed underground river with small waterfalls and enter only with special equipment and a professional guide.

More information on the following website: <http://www.vr-balkan.net/bg/bozhiyat-most/>

## Vratsa Regional History Museum

The museum detached 9 rooms, 3 playgrounds, art gallery, Lapidarium (valuable exhibits - mosaic of s. Gallatin, funeral steles, votive ari, columns and other architectural details, stone plastics and epigraphic monuments are organized and displayed in an open exhibition), Muzeon (promote the development of museum values made by paper with the technology Zn Art. Through it are reproduced voluminous shapes and can make copies of all treasures and museum exhibit of paper). The museum store exposures of ancient Thracian treasures from Mogilanska Mound and Rogozen treasure, Silver kneepad and clay tile with the earliest protopismennost from Gradeshnitsa. Moreover, in the hall "Background" you can see the skeleton of a prehistoric Todorka, which is aged about 8000 years, skeleton Christo and unique for Europe earthen altar of antlers from Ohoden.



The museum have two Ethnographic - Renaissance complex - Ethnographic-Renaissance complex "Nikola Voyvodov" and Ethnographic - Renaissance complex "St. Sophronius of Vratsa". Ethnographic - Renaissance complex "St. Sophronius of Vratsa" includes one church, Renaissance School and 3 houses with exhibitions representing traditional lifestyle, crafts and culture of the population of Vratsa region from the late 19th to mid-20th century. There are the brass and percussion instruments used by the musicians in the orchestra of

## More information on the following website:

<http://www.vratza.bg/?category=46;>  
[http://www.parkledenika.org/;](http://www.parkledenika.org/)  
[http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/22/Ledenika\\_Peshtera](http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/22/Ledenika_Peshtera)

## God`s bridge

God's Bridge is a natural phenomenon, which is located near the village Lilyache - about 15 km north of Vratsa.

Its height is about 20 meters and the width - 25 meters. In its main



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E-mail: vratsamuseum@mail.bg

**More information on the following websites:**

<http://www.vratsamuseum.com/index.php?lang=bg>;  
[http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/183/regionalen\\_istoricheski\\_muzej\\_vraca](http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/183/regionalen_istoricheski_muzej_vraca)

**Settlement and cult center near the village of Ohoden**

The archaeological site is 1 km away to the east of the road Vratsa-Oryahovo. It is marked with a signpost and is accessible for visitors. In the prehistoric village of Ohoden - Valoga there are remains of dwellings, burial and cult facilities belonging to the so-called "Neolithic monochrome" (end of 7 and beginning of 6 th millennium BC). Four early Neolithic tombs were found, a clay altar with a three-legged skull placed in a certain order, with huge horns (called the "Sunshine of the Sun"), an amulet of jade, an ancient workshop for flint plates. Two of the most attractive human skeletons - bearers of the first agricultural civilization in Europe - are exhibited in a unique way in the Regional History Museum - Vratsa. A center of experimental archeology of prehistoric lifestyle, technology and culture with opportunities for creation and development of alternative (archaeological) tourism has been built in the area of the site.

**More information on the following websites:** <http://www.vratza.bg/?category=49&sub=497>; <http://www.vratsamuseum.com/index.php?lang=bg>

**Archaeological excavations - Vratsata, Gradishte region**

In close proximity to the Vratsata, in the region of Gradishte, located west of the town of Vratsa, during the period 2007-2011, archaeological excavations were carried out, revealing part of the ancient settlement and the medieval fortress from which the modern city originated. Of particular importance is the discovery of a church that is an early Christian basilica with significant dimensions in its time - 18 meters long. During the excavations, artifacts (gold and bronze ornaments) were found, which testify that the temple was built at the beginning of the 6th century.

**More information on the following website:** <http://www.vratza.bg/?category=49&sub=497>

the founder of brass music in northwestern Bulgaria Diko Iliev. In the complex, you can see the unique for Bulgaria Museum of of Phaeton, where they are traditional vehicles made in the factories and workshops of the famous Vratsa entrepreneur of the early 20th century Mito Orozov.

**Contacts:**

Vratsa, Sq. "Hristo Botev" № 2  
Tel .: +359 92 620373 - Director  
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+359 92 624457 - Guides

### **House - museum "Baba Iliytsa"**

Located in the center of the village of Chelopek, the building has an authentic and beautiful architecture. It has a rich and remarkable exposition of old household items and furniture, beautiful carpets, typical folk costumes for this end of Bulgaria. A great interest for the tourists is the family tree of the notorious Bulgarian, the feat of which Ivan Vazov perpetuates in his story "One Bulgarian".

#### **Contacts:**

Тел.: 092/625269

GSM: 0886/859500

**More information on the following websites:** <http://www.vr-balkan.net/bg/kashtamuzey-baba-iliytsa/>; <http://www.vratza.bg/?category=49&sub=497>

### **Passage of "Vratsata"**

The Vratsata Pass - the vertical rocks of the pass are the highest on the Balkan Peninsula - over 400 meters. Every year there are Republican alpinists and international climbing competitions. There are about 70 alpine routes from all the difficulty levels. Nearby is the complex "Chaika", where there is a lake with water wheels.

The Skaklya waterfall is among the highest waterfalls in Bulgaria - the water drops from 141 meters height. At a height of 63 meters is the "Borov Kamak" waterfall, which is located on the territory of Vratsa Balkan Nature Park. Next to it is an eco-path, which starts from the end of the village of Zgorigrad.

#### **More information on the following websites:**

[http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/50/Vrachanski\\_Balkan](http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/50/Vrachanski_Balkan);

<http://www.vratza.bg/?category=49&sub=496>;

<http://www.vr-balkan.net/bg/prohodat-vratstata/>



### **Multipurpose Nature Conservation Center "Natura"**

The Nature Conservation Center is the Vratsa Eski Mosque, which was built in the first half of the 18th century. It is located in the oldest district of Vratsa - "Kemer", at the foot of the mountain, where the main tourist routes to the village of Zgorigrad, the Ledenika Cave and the Parshevitsa region. Only the main building of the temple is preserved, the minaret was partially destroyed in an earthquake and subsequently destroyed by the bombing of Vratsa in 1943-1944. The Eski mosque was declared a monument of culture and architecture. Nature Conservation Center "Natura" practically combines the functions of Visitor Center and Information Center of Vratsa Municipality and Vratsa Balkan Nature Park. It has a seminar room.

The **Vratsa Balkan Nature Park** is the second largest natural park, declared in 1989 with a territory of 28,844.8 hectares. The territory of the park is the richest in caves region in Bulgaria - over 600, which are unique with its beauty and the presence of rare cave organisms.



Many tourist routes and eco-paths pass through the park. In the Vratsa Balkan in Yolkovitsa locality is the historical peak "Okolchitsa" - the hunting place of Hristo Botev. A 35 meter monument with an opulent cross is erected on top. Each year there are the participants in the traditional national march "On the way to the Botev Chit", the citizens and the guests of the town during the celebrations on June 2 and the feast of Vratsa.



**Contacts:**

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**More information on the following website:**

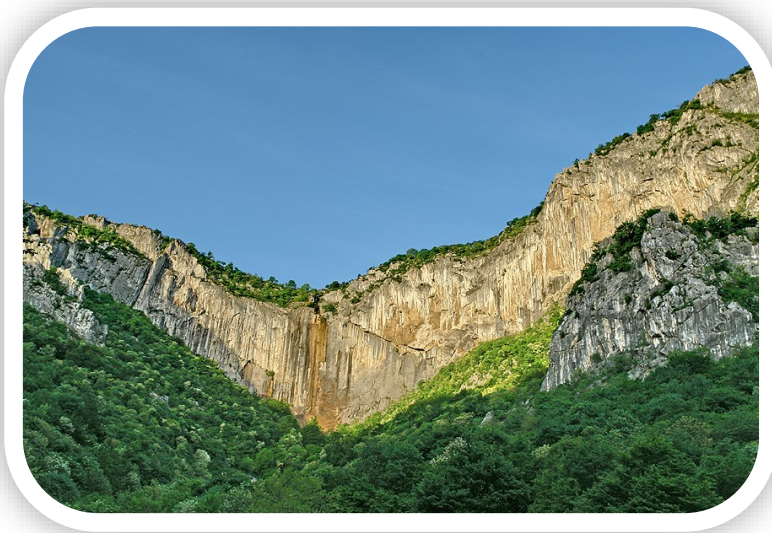
[www.vr-balkan.net](http://www.vr-balkan.net)

There are **two medieval towers** in the town of Vratsa - the **Kurtpashova tower**, which dates back to the 17th century and is a fortified dwelling of a local feudal lord and the **Meschiite Tower** - its shape is a proper stone prism with a height of 13 m. In the ground there was a warehouse, and the three floors are used for residential purposes. It dates back to the 16th century and was rebuilt as a city clock at the end of the 19th century.

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**For more information:** <http://www.vratza.bg/?category=49&sub=497>; <http://vratzamusium.com/index.php?pageID=28&lang=bg>



**Other tourist attractions we are recommend to visit**

**Amusement park "The Fairytale"**

Amusement Park "The Fairytale" is a private tourist site with an area of 20 decares, which is located in the immediate vicinity of Vratsa, about 300 meters from the hotel complex "Hashove" in the direction of Pavolche village. Attraction Adventure Park offers 21 attractions. Bowling, minigolf, bows and air weapons, precise kick, rope gardens are built. Pony rides and carriage rides are available. For the lovers of more extreme experiences and adventures there





are paintball, alpine wall, alpine garden and bungee pendulum. There is also a small lake with a port for boat and boat models and a museum of old crafts. "The Fairytale" amusement park has a café-garden and a children's playground for the youngest, barbecue and summer cinema with a stage.

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**More information on the following website:**

<http://www.prikazkata.com/>

**Entertainment Complex "Middle Ages"** is a private tourist site, located at the exit of Vratsa to the city of Montana. The entertainment complex has an aqua park with 3 outdoor swimming pools, 3 water slides, a bistro, a summer bar and a horse base. It has a private hall for 100 people for organizing business meetings, seminars and conferences.

A tourist attraction is the **Vestitel complex**, also called "the hut", where the Russian soldier Petlak

announced on 9 November 1877 the liberation of the town of Vratsa.

**Contacts:**

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**More information on the following website:** <http://www.srednovekovie.com/>



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