



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

**(issue 7, September 2016)**

### **NEWS AND EVENTS RELATING TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **The Ministry of Tourism rewards participants in the My EDEN Destination in Bulgaria competition**

The Ministry of Tourism rewarded the participants in the child painting competition entitled My EDEN Destination in Bulgaria, which was held as part of the implementation of the project entitled Communication



Campaign to Promote Bulgarian EDEN Destinations – Second Edition, as funded by the COSME 2014 -2020 program of the European Commission.

The best paintings were ranked using two parallel, separate methods – online voting in Facebook and evaluation by an expanded jury comprising representatives of the project implementation team, representatives of EDEN destinations in Bulgaria, and 1 representative of the National Association for Child- and Youth Tourism.

The authors of the 6 winning paintings in the competition are:

#### **First place:**

- Jury-ranked – Painting 14 - Alexandra Hristova Atanasova, 13, destination - Belogradchik;

Facebook voting – Painting 15 - Ivayla Georgieva Petrova, 12, destination - Kardjali;

#### **Second place:**

- Jury-ranked – Painting 6 - Kaloyan Ilkov Hadjistoychev, 8, destination - Kyustendil;

Facebook voting – Painting 26 - Stanimira Nikolova Mertekchiiska, 14, destination - Sapareva Banya;

**Third place:**

- Jury-ranked – Painting 19 - Vyara Ivaylova Stoyanova, 7, destination – Silistra;

Facebook voting – Painting 30 - Alexander Yanev Kamenarov, 11, destination – Sandanski.

*Over 40 paintings of children aged 7 - 14 took part in the competition, the initiative aiming to focus attention on the "child" perception of the places of interest and attractions located in the territory of EDEN destinations in Bulgaria (Silistra, Lukovit, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Belogradchik, Belitsa, Sapareva Banya, Kavarna, Vratsa, Strandja, Kazanlak, and Kardjali). The rewarded paintings will be emblazoned on the advertising souvenirs (cards and magnets) envisaged under the project, which will be disseminated in the country and abroad.*



## **EVENTS FROM THE EDEN DESTINATIONS**

### **Belogradchik Rocks&Roll RUN 2016**

On October 8, 2016 (Saturday) a running will be held – First organized competition in mountain running among the Belogradchik Rocks. The BOROVIĆSA winery is the location for the start and finish.

The event organizers are:

MONTBG – [www.montbg.com](http://www.montbg.com)

ALEXANDERBIKESPRO - [www.alexanderbikespro.com](http://www.alexanderbikespro.com)

Stani Tsvetanova Sunshine Living - <https://www.facebook.com/Sunshinestany/?fref=ts>

More information at:

<https://fievent.com/e/rocks-roll-run-2016/3652822>

## **PRESENTATION OF EDEN DESTINATIONS**

*According to tradition, we will be presenting to you one Bulgaria EDEN destination in each bulletin issues. For this issue we have planned to familiarize you with the **Belogradchik** EDEN destination*

### ***Belogradchik***

Myths, legends, and even traces of the ancient Thracians await visitors to Belogradchik – a small "white" town in North-western Bulgaria picturesquely located at the foot of the Stara Planina mountain. The area of Belogradchik municipality was once inhabited by the tribal community of the Triballi, whose rich history has bequeathed to the region numerous myths and traditions, even nowadays important dates from the ancient Thracian calendar are celebrated as festivals.

### Natural heritage:

The place is replete with attention-drawing natural features due to its geology, which is also the reason for the network of peculiar rock formations, including the crown jewel as well – the Magurata cave. It is located within the land area of the Rabisha village, 25 km. away from Belogradchik and is the largest cave in Bulgaria. It has galleries and halls, which can attract even the most experienced of speleologists.

The Triumphal Hall, the Bat Gallery, the Speleothems Hall, the Picture Gallery, the Fallen Pine Hall, the Poplar Hall, the Throne Hall, the Ceremonial Hall, the Fiord Corridor – picturesque names inviting visitors to go underground. This Paleolithic cave is famous for both its unique rock pictures made with bat guano and dating back from the epipaleolithic times (10 000 BC) to the early Bronze age, as well as the fossils of wild prehistoric animals. Being open year-round, the cave is well lit, with the paths winding through this underground universe being well-maintained and fenced with protective railing. They can be used by pedestrians and cyclists.



If you sense a fit of claustrophobia, you can find solace observing the stars in the astronomical observatory, which is located among the Belogradchik Rocks. It serves as a romantic escape from the daily life and enables clear view of the Moon, the Saturn rings, the Jupiter satellites, the Venus sickle, comets, stars, and galaxies.

For those, who prefer natural sciences to geology and astronomy, Belogradchik also has the only natural science museum in North-western Bulgaria. Its over 3 000 exhibits introduce visitors to the most attractive part of the rich biodiversity in this part of Bulgaria. Interesting lectures familiarize visitors with fascinating and peculiar facts about the living world.

### Folklore:

One notable annual event is the three-day folklore festival From Timok to Iskar – in the Footsteps of the Thracians, which is held during September.

The festival begins with a Thracian procession from the famous Belogradchik fortress, under the accompaniment of shepherd windpipes and other musical instruments, while participants go through the town, clad in traditional Thracian costumes. The spectacle becomes mysterious once participants clad in costumes and masks appear, wearing torches in their hands. Masks, costumes, and torches are given away freely to those wishing to join.

The Thracian goddess Bendis is honoured with a celebration re-enacting the legend of the goddess amid the rocks, fires, and torchlight, alongside performances such as Orpheus and the Petrified Wedding or Tamiris and the Muses.

Battles between rival tribes are re-enacted using improvised weapons, such as spears,





swords, bows, shields, and clubs. The festival involves other sports competitions as well – javelin and disk throwing, archery, horse racing, and fire jumping. The winners are enwreathed by a young woman posing as the goddess Bendis. In the Panairishte locality space is dedicated to pottery as well, where craftsmen display their skills and the secrets of this craft.

#### Art and culture:

The Belogradchik fortress is built among inapproachable rocks before the Bulgarian nation was formed as was used as a military facility until the Serbian-Bulgarian War of 1885. Visitors nowadays can easily comprehend why the location was selected as for fortification purposes if they climb to the fortress' highest point – the first slab. Bulgaria spreads out before their very eyes – from the Stara Planina ridges to the south to the copper Carpathians in the west. Right beneath them lie the rock formations, which appear even more spectacular from that perspective.

The Panovata Kashta historical museum was built circa 1810 and is a typical example of West Balkan architecture, having been transformed into a museum after being restored in 1970. The exposition, which comprises 8 000 exhibits, reflects the lifestyle, occupations, and battles of the then populace.

Historical architecture and a reflection of the populace lifestyle from times past can also be found in the Anishte locality – remnants of a destroyed ancient village, collected artefacts, which include 3rd century pottery vessel fragments, jewellery, and coins.

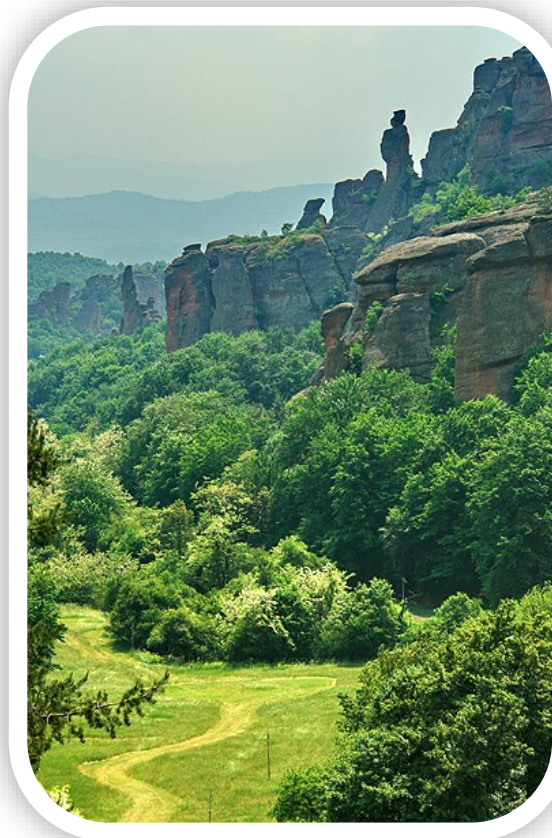
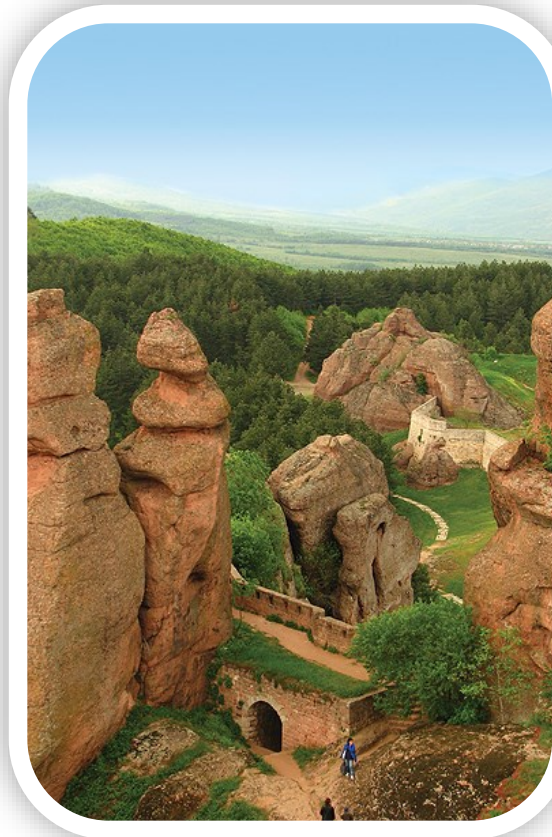
The Hadji Hussain mosque is also a place of interest worth visiting, as it boasts the best of Bulgarian wood-carving and is the only mosque country-wide to feature a ceiling with Bulgarian wood-carving.

#### Winemaking:

The region is famous for its wine, for the locals degustation forms a key part of their traditions. Thracians believed that wine can elevate people from earth to the heavens, while locals and tourists alike are willing to try this theory in real life.

#### Peculiar fact:

One of the most interesting formations found in the Magurata cave is the so-called "cave milk".



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

#### **Tourism information centre**

3900 Belogradchik, 1A, Poruchik Dvoryanov St.

tel. + 359 881283

e-mail: [tourism@belogradchik.bg](mailto:tourism@belogradchik.bg)

[www.belogradchik-eu.net](http://www.belogradchik-eu.net)

### **Destination-popular events:**

#### **June - From Timok to Iskar – in the Footsteps of the Thracians traditional folklore festival**

It dates back to 1968. The first festival day is always dedicated to a Thracian theme and must include reenactment of legends from the Thracian mythology and a torch procession of young people along the town streets. The following festival days feature folklore song & dance groups from Belogradchik and the region.

#### **Belogradchik Day**

Celebrated annually on St. Peter's day, in the framework of a traditional fair lasting several days. It is as though this Christian holiday was meant to be the Belogradchik Day. Our ancestors associated St. Peter's day with the Belogradchik because translated from Greek (Πέτρος) Peter means Stone.

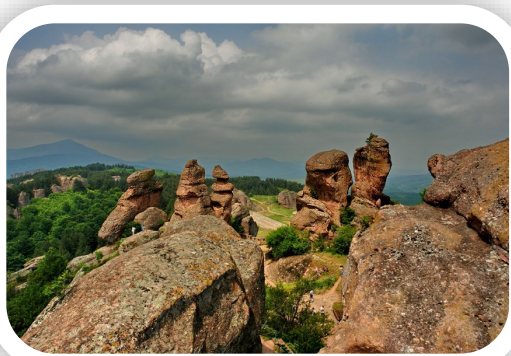
#### **The largest uprising in North-Western Bulgaria in 1850**

It is celebrated annually, at the end of May. The 1850 Uprising is the most powerful display of Bulgarian resistance to foreign oppression during the 19<sup>th</sup> century's 1<sup>st</sup> half. Reverence to this event was notable in the very first post-Liberation days and gradually became a tradition.

#### **International border regions fair in the Cadi Boaz locality**

It is held annually, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July. On the border between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Serbia, in the area of the Salash and Novo Korito villages, Bulgarians and Serbs pass through the border freely, exempted from the normal admission regime. The fair lasts for three days – Friday through Sunday – and aims at commercial and cultural exchange.





### **Recommended site-seeing:**

#### **Belogradchik Rocks**

One of the natural wonders of the world! The unique natural phenomenon, the Belogradchik Rocks, is a rock complex some 30 km. long and 6-7 km wide. With its rock formations diverse in form and size, the Belogradchik Rocks rise to a height of over 100 m and were shaped by nature in the course of over 200 mil. years. Their reddish shade is due to the presence of iron oxide.

[http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/1/Belogradchishki\\_skali](http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/1/Belogradchishki_skali)



#### **Belogradchik fortress**

The Belogradchik fortress is among the best preserved fortresses in our country. The earliest information about it dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC when it formed part of a large system of fortifications. The fortress was carved into the Belogradchik Rocks, with the natural stone blocs used instead of walls on two of its four sides. It continued to play an important part in the region following establishment of the Bulgarian state and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century it served as a summer residence of the Bulgarian king

Ivan Sratsimir. The fortress was used as a military fortification all the way to 1885.

<http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/51/Belogradchishkakrepost>

#### **Magurata (Rabisha cave)**

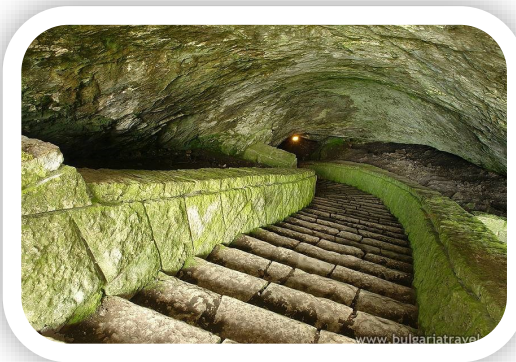
Located just 20 km. away from Belogradchik is one of the largest and most beautiful caves in Bulgaria - the Magurata cave. According to geologists, formation of the cave began some 15 mil. years ago. Prehistoric paintings have been discovered in one of the halls, carved into the rocks and painted with bat guano (manure). Paintings date back to various eras – epipaleolith, neolith, eneolith, early Bronze Age, and depict dancing female silhouettes, dancing and hunting men, masked people, animals, stars, tools, and plants. The solar annual calendar from the late neolith, which was discovered there, is the oldest solar calendar discovered thus far in Europe. It was painted on the walls of the shrine hall and marks at least 5 holidays, as well as 366 days.

[http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/32/Magurata\\_peshtera](http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/32/Magurata_peshtera)

#### **Rabisha lake**

Rabisha lake is the oldest tectonic lake in Bulgaria, with an area of 3 250 decares. Its depth reaches 10-15 m., some researchers even assert 45 m. Age-wise, it is a „peer“ of the Loch Ness in Northern Scotland (3,5 – 4 000 000 yrs.) and similarly, as old legends claim, a quaternary monster inhabits the lake. Rabisha lake offers excellent opportunities for surfing, swimming, and fishing.

Locals believed that the lake's waters were inhabited by mermaids, wyverns, devils, and a mythical monster. Legends more than 2 centuries old say that in order to save her people from the misfortunes that befell them, the most beautiful young girl sacrificed herself to the lake monster. Even nowadays, at full Moon, one may allegedly see the beauty float above the lake as a fabulous apparition heading to the point of her demise, only to disappear into the depths.



### **Natural Sciences museum**

The Natural Sciences museum is the only one of its kind in North-western Bulgaria. Its total stock comprises 3000 exhibits. The exposition features many endemic and relict species for the Balkans and Europe.

Contact: tel. 0877 85 22 57

[http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/otdel\\_priroda\\_bg.html](http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/otdel_priroda_bg.html)

### **Anishte locality**

12 km. away from Belogradchik, near Granichak village, is where the late Antiquity settlement Anishte is located. Initially, attention was focused on revealing the nature and functions of the emerging apsidal room located in the location's southwestern part. A hypocaust was discovered at 1,65 m. depth from the upper humus layer.

### **Historical museum**

The historical museum entitled Panovata Kashta has a stock of over 8000 exhibits from the pre-historic, ancient, and medieval eras. One can observe there exhibits discovered in the Kozarnika cave, such as bones of a prehistoric bear, hyena, wild horse, etc.

3900 Belogradchik, 1, Kapitan Krastyu St.

e-mail: [muzeibelogradchik@abv.bg](mailto:muzeibelogradchik@abv.bg), tel.: 0936 /5 34 – 69

[http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/kontakti\\_bg.html](http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/kontakti_bg.html)

### **Art Gallery**

The gallery features over 255 canvases – graphics and oil paintings, some of which were painted during the plain-air painting events annually held in Belogradchik and its vicinity.

tel.: 0936/936 53042

[http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/hud\\_galeria\\_bg.html](http://www.muzeibelogradchik.com/hud_galeria_bg.html)



*This material was created within the framework of the project entitled Communication Campaign to Promote Bulgarian EDEN Destinations – Second Edition, under a Grant Financial Aid Agreement No 699265 of Jan 18, 2016, as implemented with the financial support of the EU's COSME (2014-2020) program. The contents of this material presents the views of the Ministry of Tourism only and is the latter's full responsibility; this document should not be deemed to represent the official opinion of the European Commission and/or the Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency, or any other EU body. The European Commission and the Agency bear no responsibility for the benefit, which will be created out of the information contained in the document.*

### **Kozarnika cave**

The cave is located 5 km. away from Belogradchik. It is unique with the recently discovered 1 600 000 year-old footsteps, which presumably belong to the first man of the Homo erectus type on the European continent.

### **Astronomical observatory**

The observatory of the BAS Astronomy Institute has three telescopes, one of which is the third longest in Bulgaria, a computer to process and store data from electro-photometric observations and CCD camera recordings.

Opening hours: upon request

Contacts: tel.: 0936/ 53372



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