



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

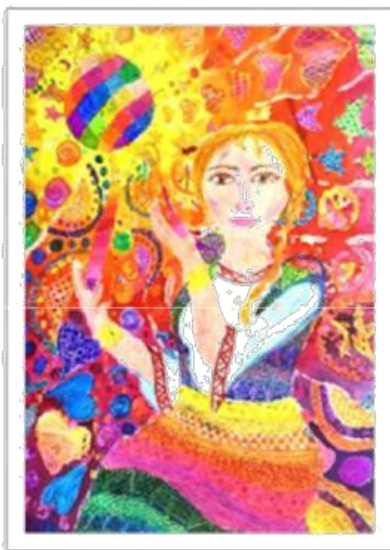
(issue 6, August 2016)

NEWS AND EVENTS RELATING TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

End of the child painting competition themed My EDEN Destination in Bulgaria is over

The child painting competition themed 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, is over. More than 40 paintings of children aged 7-14 were received following announcement of the assignment. The initiative focused attention to the "child" perception of landmarks and attractions located within the EDEN destinations in Bulgaria (Silistra, Lukovit, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Belogradchik, Belitsa, Sapareva Banya, Kavarna, Vratsa, Strandzha, Kazanlak, and Kardzhali). 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):



A painting by Alexandra Hristova Atanasova, 13, destination - Belogradchik



First place (Facebook voting)

*A painting by Ivayla Georgieva Petrova, 12,
destination - Kardzhali*



Second place (jury-ranked):

A painting by Kaloyan Ilkov
Hadzhistoychev, 8, destination - Kyustendil



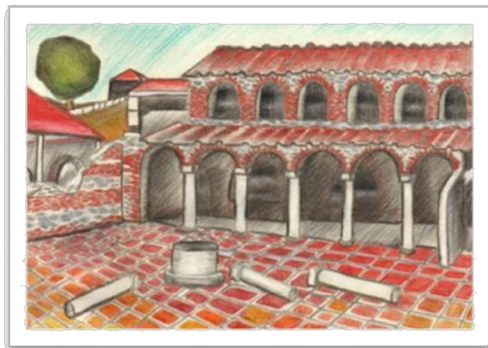
Second place (Facebook voting):

A painting by Stanimira Nikolova
Mertekchiiska, 14, destination Sapareva
Banya



Third place (jury-ranked):

*A painting authored by Vyara Ivaylova
Stoyanova, 7, destination - Silistra*



Third place (Facebook voting):

A painting authored by Alexander Yanev Kamenarov, 11, destination – Sandanski

The paintings will be emblazoned on the advertising souvenirs (cards and magnets) envisaged under the project, which will be disseminated in the country and abroad. The authors of the top ranked works will be handed certificates and encouragement rewards, contact has already been made with each author to arrange receipt of the bestowed awards.

EVENTS FROM THE EDEN DESTINATIONS

Sports-tourism festival STRANDZHA WITHOUT LIMITATIONS



The autumn-, third consecutive sports-tourism celebration STRANDZHA WITHOUT LIMITATIONS will be held between September 22 – 25, 2016, under the moto JUST MOVE. The event is seen as a mass celebration of movement in a natural environment and is held in the Strandzha mountain. Only some of the disciplines contain competitive elements.

The Strandzha Without Limitations campaign of the Green Strandzha Association aims at a more extensive presentation of the tourism, sports, and entertainment opportunities in the Strandzha mountain.

The organizers of the autumn sports-tourism celebration Strandzha Without Limitations are Green Strandzha – a non-profit association to the public benefit, Tsarevo Municipality, and Ahtopol Mayoralty.

The event will take place over 4 days and will feature various pleasant challenges to tourists and athletes alike:

22.09 /Thursday/ - 10 km PEDESTRIAN MARCH. Details - <http://>

zelenastrandja.com/cat_podrobno.php?id=77&main_category_id=1&category_id=1

23.09 /Friday/ - 110 km PEDESTRIAN OR BICYCLE RACE. Details - http://zelenastrandja.com/cat_podrobno.php?id=80&main_category_id=1&category_id=3

24.09 /Saturday/ - 43 km SKY-RUNNING. Details - http://zelenastrandja.com/cat_podrobno.php?id=78&main_category_id=1&category_id=3

25.09 /Sunday/ - 43 km MOUNTAIN BIKING. Details - http://zelenastrandja.com/cat_podrobno.php?id=79&main_category_id=1&category_id=2

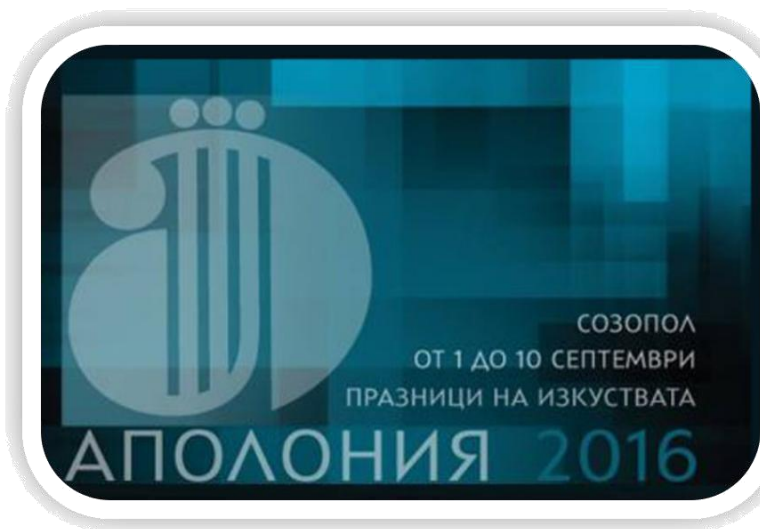
22 - 25.09 – a kayak voyage downstream of and to the mouth of Veleka river.

Official events from the celebration's agenda:

- 22.09.2016 (National Holiday – Independence Day), 10:30 hrs. – Opening of the event and commencement of the pedestrian march. Location, the village square of Kostj, Tsarevo municipality;
- 23.09, after 15:00 hrs. – Greeting the participants of the bicycle and pedestrian mountain race from Golyamo Buhovo village to town of Ahtopol, 110 km. Location – the port of the town of Ahtopol;
- 24.09, 8:30 hrs. – Commencement of the 43 km sky-running discipline. 12:00 hrs. – greeting the finalists. 14:30 – award ceremony for the finalists. Location – the port of the town of Ahtopol;
- 25.09, 8:30 hrs. - Commencement of the 43 km mountain biking discipline. 10:30 hrs. - greeting the finalists. 13:30 hrs. - award ceremony for the finalists and ceremonial closing of the sports holiday. Location – the port of the town of Ahtopol.

Registration to participate is made via the website of Green Strandzha -http://zelenastrandja.com/cat_podrobno74.php?id=74&main_category_id=3

Apollonia arts festivals



During the September 1 – 10 period, Sozopol will welcome the Apollonia Arts Festival for the 32nd time. The Festival comprises over 70 events with the most celebrated artists on the Bulgarian and international stage and their works, stage plays, spectacles, performances, etc. The 2016 Apollonia Arts Festival aims to display the achievements of Bulgarian artists – authors and performers, preserve the tradition, and support new ideas, experimental and unconventional solutions in all arts.

The entire 2016 Apollonia agenda may be found at: <http://www.apollonia.bg>

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 Strandzha EDEN destination



STRANDZHA

Taking on in Strandzha, on the crossroad between Europe and Asia, in the Balkan peninsula's south-easternmost point, the very first steps imbue the sense of discovery. Among the mysterious mountain's centuries-old forest each step reveals the inspiration and the sense of freedom, the same way that the green, plicate hills marked by the marks of a millennial history reveal themselves as well.

A journey in the Strandzha Natural Park restores the roads to the lost East, reveals the biological treasury Colchis, which has preserved plant and animal species some million years old, becoming their only home in Europe.

It is inhabited by people, who have transmitted, over the course of millennia and from generation to generation, rituals, faith, and conviction that Strandzha is blessed by God.

The Strandzha Natural Park is the largest protected territory in Bulgaria, offering you the unique chance to see the largest preserved deciduous forest complex in Europe. It is the only place on the continent where typically Tertiary forests (dating back 1 mil. years) have been preserved.

Forests cover more than 80% of the Park's area. The average age is 30 higher than the average age for the country, while the old forests aged 100+ comprise 30% of forests in the protected territory – three-fold more than the average for the country! In the natural massifs of old forests – the most valuable habitats from the viewpoint of conservation significance – trees of *Quercus petraea*, *Quercus frainetto*, *Fagus orientalis*, and *Quercus hartwissiana* type are frequently encountered, with diameters of 1.5 – 2.0 m and age 500+.

In the Natural Park you can meet the biggest diversity of amphibious reptiles in Europe, come upon remnants of Thracian tombs, enjoy the blossoming *Vinca* in May, step into crystal clear rivers, appreciate archaic folklore habits and traditions surviving since Pagan Antiquity and lovingly preserved by people throughout the mountain.





More information about the park can be found at:

http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/95/Priroden_park_Strandja

Main contact info about the destination:

Strandzha Natural Park directorate
8162 Malko Tarnovo, 1, Yanko Maslinkov St.
тел./факс: +359 5952 3635
e-mail: park@strandja.bg
www.strandja.bg

Tourist information centre Malko Tarnovo Municipality, Tourism and Information Services department

tel./fax + 359 5952 3017

e-mail: tic_mtarnovo@mail.bg

<http://www.malkotarnovo.org/tic.html>



Popular destination events:

May – Vinca Festival

In May each year the Vinca Festival gathers friends from all over Bulgaria and international guests. The Park administration arranges opportunities for new tourist routes in the mountain, get-to-know discussions about the Strandzha forests, tent camping or staying at the hospitable local houses, a bazaar of traditional Strandzha products, pottery and art workshops, and many other attractions characteristic for the region.



The Festival is held with the financial support of the Executive Forest Agency and the project entitled Collaboration for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Local Development in Strandzha Mountain of the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, which was funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the financial mechanism of the European Economic Area.



Nestinari ritual – June, Balgari village

The direct cultural continuity carried out in Strandzha is the reason why this Pagan ritual dating back to the Thracian times has preserved its main characteristics to this day. More than 2 millennia ago, the Thracian kings, who were also the high priests, were the only one entitled to make contact with the gods, direct requests and queries to the gods, and be deified upon death. Before entering the sacred place the priest-king would dance with his closest aristocrats – his mystics. He was the only one dancing on the embers of the fire burning before the heroon's gate (hero's temple – the king's predecessor). Entry into the fire connected him to the gods so he would seek their counsel. After such contact, he would face his people and announce the divine will and providence.



Resonation from this ritual is observed in contemporary Nestinari dances in Strandzha. Only the initiated ones can dance on the embers, being possessed by the saint's spirit. Among them, only the chief Nestinar or Nestinaress, while bearing the icon of the deified king Constantine, i.e. the hero, can make contact with him and forward the people's request. Only he can transmit the response to those, who await them. He is the resurrected Thracian priest-king in his mediator role – a go-between the two worlds and the chief prophet.

Nowadays, the stunning dance in the Balgari village is but an echo of those ancient festivals and rituals. Nevertheless, the grand fiery mystery still keeps its magnetism.

<http://www.strandja.bg/bg/info/51-sybori-i-festivali>

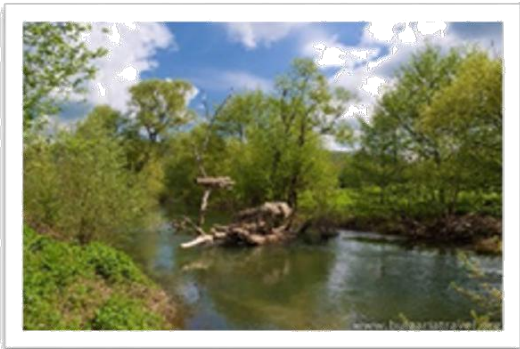


Recommended sight-seeing:

Attractive tourist path Springs of Mladezhka river

The path is some 3 hrs long. It impresses with its Karst scenery – trees hanging over the crystal clear river, discharging springs, and numerous caves.

<http://greencorridors.burgas.bg/bg/objects/view/37>



Protected locality Mouth of the Veleka river

Protects the Veleka valley, the sandspit (some 500 m long) and a part of the Black Sea coastline. The area is one of the most picturesque corners along the Bulgarian Black Sea coastline.

http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/112/Veleka_zashtitena_mestnost



Thracian rock sanctuary in the Kamaka locality (KAMENSKA BARCHINA)

The locality's rocks are a natural landmark. They can only be reached by foot – a 15 min. gently sloped ascension to the rock top with its peculiar natural forms huddles by the skies. One of the rocks has a narrow crevice – a "wriggle-through". If you crawl through it, you would be rid of trouble and healthy all year. On another rock which is shone upon by the sun all day long, circles, channels and small basins are carved. Supposedly, these were sacrificial places used to prepare sacred ones – pouring of water, milk, flavors, and herbs билки. More than 4000 on summer solstice day, ancient Thracians would meet the Sun-God with rituals.

<http://greencorridors.burgas.bg/bg/objects/view/30>

Forest gathering in the Gramatikovo village

Within the gathering's framework, the exposition entitled Rare and Protected Species in Strandzha is presented. Interpretative modules and gameplays enable you to learn more about the Natural Park and the man-nature connection

<http://nature.freehosting.bg/index.php?p=tour&c=11>



Nestinari hub Balgari village

It is the last Nestinari hub in Bulgaria. It follows the ancient date to perform the magical ritual – the night of 3 to 4 June – the Holiday of St. Constantine and Elena.

http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/404/Nestinarski_igri



Protected locality Petrova Niva

The monument erected in this locality is in memory of the Bulgarians, who died during the Ilinden-Preobrazhen uprising in 1903 and their struggle for freedom. There is a museum exposition and bone chapel St. Petka. This is one of the peculiar viewing points to the Veleka river valley.

<http://greencorridors.burgas.bg/bg/objects/view/34>

Brashlyan architectural reserve

76 houses, which are monuments of architecture and culture and typical specimen of Strandzha architecture. 200 years old village houses welcome tourists and bear the regional quality brand of Strandzha". Interesting sites St. Dimitar Church, Cell school, Open-air traditional agriculture museum, Ethnographic collection.

http://www.myastoto.bg/index.php?place_id=29

Thracian veneration complex in Mishkova niva locality



In Antiquity, the complex comprised a sanctuary, a fortified building, a residence of the temple servants, a mound necropolis, and ancient water supply, a mine, and a fortification (Golyamo Gradishte fortification). Today one can see the foundations of the circular structure with 3 rows of block of white marble. From the site southwards the ancient road to the sanctuary is visible. The most impressive sacred complex still bears the traces of Thracian beliefs in Orpheus and energy immortality and is one of the most popular monuments of ancient spirituality in Southeastern Europe.

http://www.rock-cut.thracians.org/bg/s_m_mishkova.php



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