



Ministry of Tourism of the
Republic of Bulgaria

NEWS BULLETIN

Ministry of Tourism

Issue 16/ 10th September 2016

Minister Angelkova finds out the progress of archaeological explorations of the Rusokastro fortress

3 September 2016

On 3 of September the Minister of Tourism, Nikolina Angelkova, visited the Rusokastro fortress to see first-hand the archaeological explorations of the site and the conservation work performed on the unearthed structures. She was greeted by the Kameno mayor, Zhelyo Vardunski, and the Municipal Council chair, Radoslav Boyadjiev, who shared with her the Municipality's plans to develop the site as a tourist attraction. According to scholars, this was one of the biggest-scale defence facilities, with a well preserved 14th century flooring having been discovered there just days ago.

„It is a site of big potential, not just because of its scale, but also due to its location. Some of the most frequented Black Sea resorts are in the vicinity, with proactive advertising this site can welcome tens, even hundreds of thousands of tourists a year“, Minister An-

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Photos of the visit of Minister Angelkova of the fortress Rusokastro.



gelkova said. She emphasized that it was very important for work to continue on the exploration of the site and creation of further services for the tourists. „On our part, we are ready to support promotion of the fortress on a national level, but it is important to have something to show to the tourists when we focus attention on it“, Nikolina Angelkova added.

Mayor Vardunski and the head of the archaeological explorations, Milen Nikolov, displayed to the Minister the work performed thus far. For the first time funding for the archaeological explorations is provided in a targeted manner from the budget of Kameno Municipality, which has set for itself the objective of turning the site into an attractive tourism destination. For 2016 it has made available to Burgas History Museum BGN 33 000, with a further BGN 5 000 of government subsidy added by the Ministry of Culture. The plans are to proceed to conservation-restoration works on the unearthed structures once the archaeological season is over.

Owing to Kameno Municipality, the road to the fortress has also been gentrified, with all required amenities having been provided to the archaeologists. The mayors gave assurances that residents of Rusokastro village and Zhelyazovo village are also providing contribution to the experts' work.

The Rusokastro fortress is located in Burgas region, on an elevated hill, flanked by the Rusokastro river. It is also known as the Red Fortress due to the red colour of ambient rocks (from the Latin rosso – red, purple, and kastron – castle). Since 2006 the Burgas Regional Museum of History has consistently been exploring the site. The outcome is the uncovering of the largest fortress in today's South-Eastern Bulgaria, with an area of 5 hectares, fortified by double walls and a citadel. It is mentioned numerous times in historical 12th-14th century sources, with scholars believing that it was constructed atop an ancient Thracian shrine.

Minister Angelkova gives the start to the 36th edition of Sliven Rally

2 September 2016



Some 10 000 to 15 000 are expected to attend the 36th edition of Sliven Rally during the three days of its conduct. The event's official start was given today by the Minister of Tourism, Nikolina Angelkova. The ceremony was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Sliven, Stefan Konduzov, the Municipal Council chair Dimitar Matev, Maria Belova, MP, the Regional Governor, Tatyana Petkova and her Deputy, Kamen Kostov, etc.

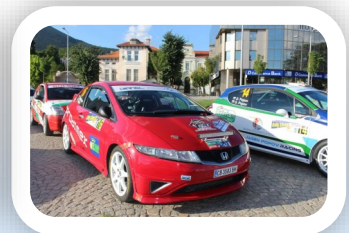
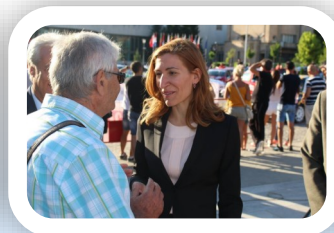
Minister Angelkova during the official start of the 36th edition of Rally Sliven.

"Seeing so many people here today convinces me yet again of the sports tourism prospects. Its poten-

tial can be used for the balanced development of the regions, because when people travel to see a sports event, they also visit many of the tourist attractions in that area", Minister Angelkova said. Sliven is part of one of the 8 cultural-historical destinations developed by the Ministry of Tourism, with more than 20 sites in the area having been included in the online Registry of Tourist Attractions.

Responding to reporter queries, Minister Angelkova announced that during H1 of 2016 over 23 000 tourists have stayed in accommodation facilities with 10+ beds within Sliven region. The night-stays achieved exceed 38 000 and the revenues generated therefrom amount to nearly BGN 1.5 mil. "These numbers indicate that there is a good foundation for us to build up with joint efforts ", she added.

37 crews were tacked part in Rally Sliven, the fourth round of the national championship, which was also a round of the European rally trophy, Balkans region. The tournament started on 2 of September with an official opening and a rally stage on the city streets, followed by 12 high-speed sections on September 3 and 4. This year's participants include the leader in our national championship, Yordan Atanasov (navigator Angel Bashkehayov, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX), the winner of Rally Bulgaria, Rasheed Al Ketbi (navigator Carina Heperle), as well as the pilot, who won two of the Bulgarian championship's first three rounds – Plamen Staykov (navigator David Kvaratshelya, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX).



Photos from the official start of the 36th edition of Rally Sliven.

Minister Nikolina Angelkova and Mayor Ivan Alexiev discuss opportunities to promote the Ancient Beehive Tomb in Pomorie

1 September 2016



The Ancient Beehive Tomb in Pomorie was visited by over 8 000 tourists in 2015. This year further growth is expected, with visitors exceeding 7 200 in just the first 7 months. This was announced during a meeting between the Minister of Tourism, Nikolina Angelkova, and the Pomorie Mayor, Ivan Alexiev on 1 of September.

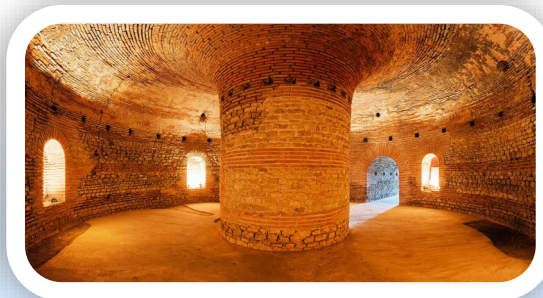
Minister Angelkova together with the Mayor of Pomorie Ivan Alexiev.

„The site has huge potential, which was the reason why it was one of the symbols of the campaign to promote domestic tourism, which we carried out last year“, Nikolina Angelkova emphasized.

Mayor Alexiev also briefed her on the Municipality's plans to develop the site and improve its socialization. Preliminary communication has already taken place, work is being done to improve its road, water, and sewer infrastructure and create extra tourist attraction. "My wish is that this monument becomes as accessible as possible for more guests and tourists. The tomb is exclusive state property, a national-significance site. I am optimistic that when government, municipality, and businesses stand shoulder to shoulder we can achieve great results in this ", Mayor Alexiev shared.

„You have Ministry of Tourism's full support and my personal commitment for us to turn this site into one of the symbols of cultural-historical tourism at the Black Sea coast“, Minister Angelkova said. She highlighted that during the first 6 months of this year Burgas Region has welcomed over 286 000 international tourism and that had promotion of and services at the site been more diverse, even better results could have been achieved.

The Ancient Beehive Tomb is a genuine masterpiece of ancient architecture. The unique archaeological monument is located 4 km from Pomorie and is one of the most visited cultural-historical sites in the municipality.



Photos of the visit of Minister Angelkova of Ancient tomb in Pomorie.

Deputy Minister Irena Georgieva takes part in the Security and Sustainability in Tourism roundtable in Slovenia

6 September 2016



Deputy Minister Irena Georgieva during the roundtable in town of Bled.

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Irena Georgieva took part in the Security and Sustainability in Tourism roundtable. The discussion forms part of the 11th Strategic Forum, Safeguarding Our Future, which is being held in the town of Bled, Slovenia, on September 6 2016. The tourism panel was opened by Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the UNWTO.

„The tourism business faces numerous challenges. Therefore, the countries need to spend more effort to develop the tourism products they market“, noted

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Irena Georgieva, in her speech. She commented that the global economic crisis, the enhanced competitiveness of both near and remote destinations, the effects of climate change, and the seasonal nature, are the topics that need to be resolved in order to develop the tourism business in a positive direction. Demographic changes in Europe, diversification of the tourist services offers, and the growing influence of information & communication technologies all exert influence on tourism and its related industries. „It is imperative to explore these opportunities jointly with the local and regional authorities“, she added further.

„When new tourism services are developed or existing ones are upgraded, it is necessary to carefully analyse what the consumer requirements at that particular point in time are“, Irena Georgieva indicated. She explained that a trend towards self-organized and so-called budget travels is observed, with demand for alternative types of tourism being on the rise. „In this context, today’s situation imposes on as determinants, such as high quality of the tourism service marketed, product sustainability, innovations, staff training, etc.“ Deputy Minister Georgieva added.

According to her, despite global challenges, Bulgaria has started the summer season very well. At present data indicates that the high level achieved will also be kept in September. High-category facilities are full, with available beds hard to find in the other recreation facilities as well. During the first 7 months of 2016 alone, our country was visited by over 4.5 mil. international tourists, which is nearly 17 % more (over 650 000 visits more) vis-à-vis the first 7 months of 2015, Deputy Minister Irena Georgieva announced.

Annual Tourism Awards established

31 August 2016

The Ministry of Tourism is establishing Annual Tourism Awards. The competition's objective is to promote development of Bulgarian tourism via promotion of tourism sites and destinations, enhancement of the tourism service's competitiveness and quality. The competition will also encourage implementation of innovative practices in the industry for the purpose of achieving higher efficiency in the tourism services supplied. The idea is for the competition to provide an opportunity for players in the industry to take active part each year and thus receive a deserved appreciation of their efforts in presenting and improving the Bulgarian tourism product. The plans are to evaluate winners in the Annual Tourism Awards under several basic criteria. A special methodology is being elaborated, the main objective being to put forth clear evaluation criteria with an appropriate set of quantified and qualified criteria and indicators to select the best ones in each category.



„As soon as the Ministry of Tourism was set up, it was very important for us to give deserved recognition to all players in the tourism industry, to all tourism-related organizations, which put efforts into the development of successful tourism in Bulgaria. I believe the Annual Tourism Awards are precisely the form that will acknowledge the best ones, will create the required competition in the sector, and that we will thus manage to provide to the Bulgarian and international tourists an even better, higher-grade tourism product. It is our ambition to turn these awards into a tradition”, Minister Angelkova said.

The Annual Tourism Awards will feature a special category, which will reward the best tourist attraction. All types of tourist attractions will be eligible to apply for reward. Applications will be evaluated by factoring in revenues from the underlying tourism service, the number of visitors during the active season, promotion for the attraction, physical accessibility thereto, etc. The best tourism event will also be rewarded, this category being for the organizers of tourism events held with a given period of time – such as carnivals, festivals, celebrations, holidays, including business- and science events under other tourism-related forums. Here again, applications will be evaluated under certain indicators, among which number of visitors, sales revenues, the marketing & advertising approach selected, etc. A reward is also being established for tourism organizations producing or preparing high-grade products or offering experiences, which preserve customs and/or folklore. The prerequisite is to use local traditions and resources, thus contributing to the respective region's long-term sustainable development.

Tour operators, tour agents, guides, transport companies, tourism complexes will be eligible to

apply for reward in the Specialized Tourism category. The types of tourism covered will be: cultural-historical; balneal, spa & wellness; eco and rural tourism; enotourism and gourmet tourism; congress- and event tourism; golf, adventure, etc. Economic indicators, quality of service, use of marketing & advertising to promote the particular tourism type, etc. will be graded. Various representatives from the tourism industry will also be eligible to apply for reward under the Innovation category, which will focus on innovative approaches, services, products, technology solutions and concepts. Grading will be based on concept, innovation effect, etc.

The best tourism destination will also receive an annual tourism award. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated vis-à-vis availability of an elaborated and implemented sustainable development strategy, how the destination is managed, access to facilities for people with disabilities and special needs, as well as based on economic criteria. The special award will be “Bulgarians’ Choice”, with voters being able to pick online their favourite location from the existing tourism sites in Bulgaria.

An award will also be established for the best tourism blog and tourism-related website. The criteria will address vision, purpose, content, number of visitors, average number of publications per month, etc. All amateur bloggers will be eligible to file applications. Technical evaluation criteria will be taken into consideration when selecting the best website - number of unique visitors, number of comments on and shares of publications, etc. The best journalistic text on the subject matter of tourism will also be rewarded. This category is intended for journalist publications in print and/or electronic media on the subject matter of tourism and/or tourism development in Bulgaria. Articles will be graded on creative approach, knowledge of and analysis on the subject matter, etc.

Representatives of local government will also be nominated in the Annual Tourism Awards in the following category: municipality best/most successfully absorbing EU funds intended for the development of tourism and tourism sites; municipality best/most successfully investing funds in the development of tourism and tourism sites; municipality with the biggest contribution to the development of alpine, marine, cultural-historical, spa, specialized, pilgrimage tourism, etc.; municipality with the biggest number of events and initiatives in tourism, including participation in international events; municipality with the biggest tourism tax collection rates.

The plans are for all categories, along with a dedicated module for enrolment applications, to be published on the website of the Ministry of Tourism in early October 2016. There are also plans to establish a Public Board to the Annual Tourism Awards, which will feature prominent experts from the media, the tourism businesses, the academia, etc.

Discovery to share...

...Belogradchik

The town of Belograd is situated in the north-west part of Bulgaria, near the border of Serbia. The town is situated at a distance of about 170 km from Sofia.

The first evidences of the settlement in the region are from the early Middle Ages. Multiple finds of this age have been found in the region of the Belogradchik Rocks and the highest part of the Belogradchik Fortress – the Citadel.

During the 14th century during the existence of the Vidin Kingdom (1371 – 1422) Belogradchik turned into an administrative and cultural center. In 1396 the Belogradchik region was conquered by the Ottomans.

The town gained global fame by being included in the vote for the new Seven Wonders of the World..

The Belogradchik Rocks are a natural phenomenon aged more than 200 million years. They cover a territory of 30 km length and about 6-7 km width. Due to its unusual forms, the rocks have various names. The most popular ones are The Horse Rider, The Maiden, The Castle, Adam and Eve. The rocks called Erkyupriya and Borich are situated to the west of Belogradchik. One can get there by an asphalted road suitable for motor vehicles. Remains of constructions and walls are visible on many places.

Another group of rocks are also situated at a distance of about 4 km from the town – in



the region of Latin Kale and Lepenishka Cave. The last rocks from the rock group are situated around the villages of Gyurich and Belotintsi, which are at a distance of about 40 km from Belogradchik.

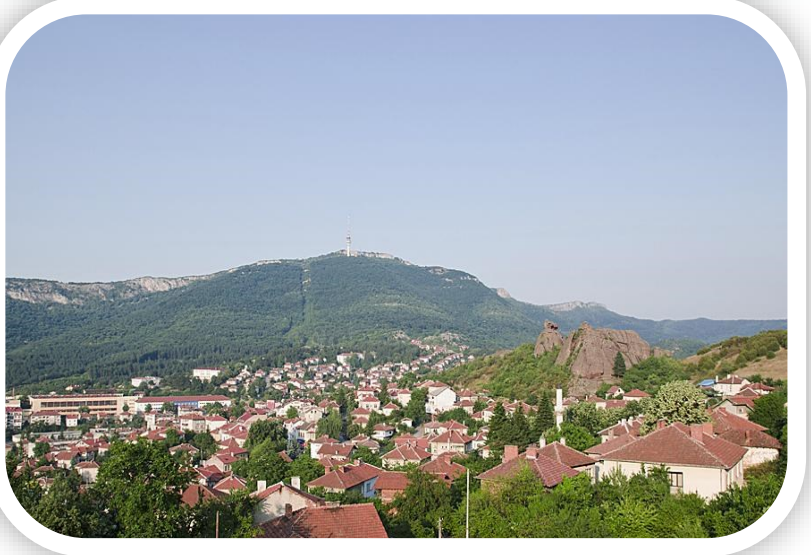
The Belogradchik Fortress which had played an important role during the defense of the region for centuries is situated close to the town, in the region of the rocks.

The Astronomical Observatory of the Astronomy Institute of the Bulgarian Science Academy is situated at a distance of 100 meters from the Belogradchik Fortress. There are three telescopes in the observatory, by which the visitors can watch the night sky. If you visit it during the daylight, you will be able to examine the telescopes and the observatory equipment, as well as pictures of interesting night objects. Night visits are performed upon a preliminary request and only during clear weather.

The historical museum of the town is situated in the Panova House in Belogradchik, which was constructed in 1810. The exposition presents the history, style of life and rituals in the region.

Another interesting landmark is the Art Gallery, in which more than 200 canvases are stored. Among them are works of art by Vladimir Dimitrov Maystora (1882 – 1960), Yoan Leviev (1934 – 1994), Bahit Bapishev, etc.

The only Natural Science Museum in north-west Bulgaria is situated in Belogradchik. The museum was opened





in 1975 and presently stores more than 3000 exponents, which present the plant and animal diversity in the region.

The Magura Cave is situated at a distance of about 20 km from the town. Multiple rock drawings dating back to various periods have been found in the cave. A unique solar calendar with 366 days was found in the cave. The Magura is one of the largest caves in Bulgaria. Galleries with total length of 2500 meters had been found inside it. This is also one of the most visited caves in the country.



The Rabishko Lake is situated close to the Magura. This is the largest tectonic lake in Bulgaria. Its area is 3250 dca. After research, it was found that the lake is not drainable. According to a legend, a monster which wished to receive a beautiful local girl as a sacrifice was living here. The region around the lakes is suitable for camping.



Belogradchik and the region offer diverse accommodation options. Hotels, guest houses, private accommodations and apartments are available for the tourists. The catering and entertainment establishments in the town offer interesting dishes prepared according to traditional local recipes. Ecological routes start from Belogradchik. They lead the tourists to the most interesting sites in the town and the region. The tourist information center of Belogradchik offers more information about the routes and the hiring of a guide.

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