



Communication campaign to promote EDEN destinations in Bulgaria
(BG EDEN Campaign III)

**ONLINE BULLETIN
FOR BULGARIAN EDEN DESTINATIONS CREATED FOR THE PROJECT
“COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE EDEN DESTINATIONS IN BULGARIA –
THIRD EDITION”, IMPLEMENTED BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM UNDER THE GRANT
AGREEMENT № GRO/SME/17/C/095 EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS OF EXCELLENCE
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The on line bulletin is developed under the Communication campaign to promote EDEN destinations in Bulgaria (BG EDEN Campaign III) project will introduce to you related project news, interesting events in EDEN destinations as well as presenting the selected in various edition Bulgarian EDEN destinations.

EDEN is the acronym for European Destinations of Excellence - an initiative promoting sustainable tourism development models across the EU.

For more information about EDEN initiative visit <http://www.edenbulgaria.eu/>, as well as the DG GROW website https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/eden/about_en

The project aims to further develop the previous two projects on the same topic, implemented during the 2016-2017 and 2011 – 2012. Its main objectives are to promote the Bulgarian EDEN destinations on national and foreign tourist markets. Up to now Bulgaria has selected the total of 17 destination of excellence during 4 competitions for selection of destination held in 2017, 2010, 2009, 2008 and, namely Yambol, Mezdra, Dragoman, Ardino, Chavdar, Silistra, Lukovit, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Belogradchik, Belitsa, Sapareva Banya, Kavarna, Vratsa, Strandzha, Kazanlak and Kardzhali.

For more information visit: <http://www.edenbulgaria.eu/>



NEWS

Ministry of Tourism started the implementation of Health and Wellbeing Project GRO/SME/18/C/065 – Bulgaria Sanus per Aquam

Ministry of Tourism started the implementation of Health and Wellbeing Project GRO/SME/18/C/065 – Bulgaria Sanus per Aquam”. The project is financed within the European Destinations of Excellence call – Selection 2019 under the EU COSME 2014-2020 programme. The contracting body is the EC Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises.

The project objective is to select five new less known EDEN destinations for health and wellbeing tourism in Bulgaria. In this way the attention will be raised towards the emerging and less known Bulgarian tourist destinations which offer a specific tourism based on their local natural resources, facilities and infrastructure for the development of health and wellbeing tourism.

An application set of documents will be drafted and published for the application by the potential candidates to be selected as EDEN destinations for health and wellbeing tourism in Bulgaria.

After the evaluation of the submitted application documents, the five new health and wellbeing less known EDEN destinations will be selected.



DESTINATION MEZDRA

Mezdra municipality is located on a territory of 51911.4 ha and includes 28 settlements – incl. the town of Mezdra itself and 27 villages. The largest percentage of the municipality's land is taken up by farming areas and forests, followed by settlements. The relief is semi-mountainous, with prevalent grey forest soils, which are suitable for grown fodder cereals and permanent crops.

Mezdra municipality is situated at an average elevation of 270 m. The climate is temperate continental. The municipality's forest stock takes up 19500.1 ha, incl. 2526.4 ha of coniferous and 2113.6 ha of deciduous forests. Those village, which are remote from the major road arteries are located in environmentally clean mountainous and semi-mountainous areas and have significant potential to develop environmental and rural tourism. The small private and cooperative farms in those settlements produce chemically non-contaminated products – meat, milk, wine, honey, etc.

The mining areas cover some 1260 ha. Characteristic of the area are the deposits of rock lining materials – limestone /so-called "Vratsa stone"/. The following rock varieties are observed: light grey to dark beige limestones with quartz, spotty-striped beige to grey quartz, relatively clean monochrome beige limestones, large-spots limestones, and quaternary.

Rich prehistorical, ancient, and medieval culture used to thrive within the area of present-day Mezdra municipality. Contemporary Mezdra was founded after the Sofia-Gorna Oryakhovitsa railway line was built in late 19th century, the town builders being mostly newcomers from the nearby villages of Moravitsa, Bodenets, and Darmantsi. The town's name comes from the Turkish word "mezra", which means abandoned settlement. On 20.II.1897 the new railway line was put into operation with a water ritual performed by the Orthodox bishop Konstantin, in the presence of Prince Ferdinand and Princess Maria Louisa, who came specifically for the occasion, along with the Serbian king Alexander, as well as the Prime Minister Dr. Konstantin Stoilov. By the late 1920's all that remained from the old settlement was the name, everything else was new and bore the sign of those times. On 31.VIII.1950 Mezdra was declared a town by virtue of Decree 435.

Ivan Vazov described his impressions from traveling in those places in his travel story entitled "Scribbles from the Sofia-Roman journey", while Aleko Konstantinov did similarly in his travel note entitled Sofia-Mezdra-Vratsa. The availability of natural resources for recreation and tourism – historical and natural landmarks, the peacefulness of picturesque villages, the proximity to the Vratsa mountain range, and the good infrastructure are magnets for visitors and holiday makers. Many places in that area are worth seeing.



Kaleto Archaeological Complex, Mezdra

In the southwest part of Mezdra on a high rocky hill, which is towering above the left bank of the Iskar river, is preserved 70 centuries old history, which is told today at the Archaeological Complex "Kaleto".

The hill is naturally defended and it is situated on place which is a point of intersection of main roads used since ancient times. At this crossroad of civilizations, remains were collected from the entire history of mankind – from the Copper-stone age to the Middle Ages.

The hill above the Iskar river has kept the traces of two consecutively existed fortified settlements since the end of the Cooper- stone Age and the Eneolithic Age to the Bronze age. These settlements were destroyed by conflagrations. This time period spans the end of the 5th century and the first half of the 4th century BC. The numerous artifacts from the excavations of "Kaleto" show that at the end of the Copper- stone age the settlement was flourishing as a craft center.

"The sanctuary of the auroch" is one of the most significant finds since the end of the Copper-stone age. It was discovered in 2008 and has no analogue in Bulgaria. The auroch was a pagan divinity, which supports the world by his horns according to ancients. 2 500 years later at the same place where were "The sanctuary of the auroch" it was built an early Thracian sacred structure. Ancient Thracians of the "tribals" tribe lived in the area until the 1st century, when the settlement together with whole Misia was captured by the Roman Empire.

The story of "Kaleto" continues in Antiquity. There was a Roman fort in the middle of the 2nd century, a pagan cult center during the 3rd century, a fortified settlement during the 4th and 5th centuries, which was developing in the late Roman and early Byzantine period. Even now you can see the basics



of the pagan sanctuary, which grew into a pagan cultural center. They are located just above the prehistoric "The sanctuary of the auroch". There are so many bronze coins found from the time of the Roman emperors Dometian, Claudius II Gothicus and Probus; bronze fibulae (brooches); decorations for belts; a torques and a silver leaf from a laurel wreath. It was found a rare find under the fortress walls - a bronze cast of an eagle. This is one of the earliest images of this bird. It was a symbol of the Roman Empire, which express a power and strength. Another valuable find is a bronze key, which is found among the remains of the most imposing building at Kaletu. Because of the strategic location of the Romanian fortress, which is the best preserved fortress from this period in Bulgaria, the archaeologists assume that it is found the symbolic Key of the Northwest.





Festival of Medieval Traditions, lifestyle and Culture "Kaleto Mezdra"

The annual fest of Medieval Traditions, lifestyle and Culture Kaleto-Mezdra is held in the Archeological Complex "Kaleto" in the last weekend of May. Visitors are immersing in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, touching the life and culture of the old Bulgarians and their neighbors and rivals on the battlefield. The air is saturated with medieval music and flavors of medieval dishes.



Dionysian feasts under the motto "to revive the 70 centuries of history"

On 14 February each year, the Archaeological complex "Kaleto" organizes "Dionysian Feasts". The visitors of this holiday will experience the intertwining of the ancient Thracian mysteries, the Roman cult of God Dionysius and the Saint Trifon revered among the medieval Bulgarians. In the celebrations attend community centers of Mezdra Municipality, Representative dance ensemble Mezdra, the team of Archaeological Complex "Kaleto" and other ensembles. One of the main attractions is the preparation of mulled wine with spices by a secret ancient Roman recipe. The wine is preparing in front of the guests' eyes in a cauldron on a burning fire and can be tasted by all the guests. Visitors can also tasting the Roman toning drink "Poska", which is a soft drink and acts as a modern energy drink. The traveler who have visited the Dionysian feasts, will warming up his soul and body on the chilly winter night.





12 km from the town of Mezdra, on the left bank of the river Iskar, is situated one of the most interesting rock formations of the Iskar Gorge - "Ritlite". They are parallel rock walls. The length of the rocks ranges from 200 to 400 meters. They reach a height of 80 meters above the river Iskar. These rock formations date back 120 million years.



On the territory of Mezdra municipality is located one of the most famous monasteries in Bulgaria - Cherepishki monastery "Assumption". It is located near the village of Lutybrod, 10 km from the town of Mezdra. The monastery was founded during the Second Bulgarian Empire



during the reign of Tsar Ivan Shishman (1371-1393 AD), but was destroyed during the invasion of the Turks. According to legend, the monastery got its name from the white bones of fallen warriors left after the battle of Tzar Shishman against the Ottoman invaders. In Church History and Archeology Museum in Sofia store statute (Typikon) of monastery composed around 1396, which mentions that it was destroyed during the battle.



Rock drawings Tsarevets village

Tsarevets village is located 10 km east of the town of Mezdra. The area of Tsarevets village has been inhabited since primeval times, which is also attested by the remnants of the late Antiquity fortress Gradishteto. It is located some 2-3 km northeast of the village, on rising ground, which opens up panoramic sight to the Isskar river bed. In documents dating back to the Chiprovtsi uprising, the village was known as Vlashko selo. The name originates from the fact that a shepherd from the Danube river area used to take his herds to that area to graze. An interesting landmark of Tsarevets are the rock apertures located south of the village, in the rocky range on the left bank of Isskar river, at the foot of the Srednia Kamik and Govedarnika hills. Some 30 small caves and apertures in the 40-meter rocks may be found there. They have been explored by experts, who found there numerous graffiti with figural, anthropomorphic, and abstract images dating back to Bronze Age and up to the Middle Ages. The figural zoomorphic images are dominated by paintings of deer, bucks, and horses, with occasional drawings of birds. A monastery complex used to exist in the rock apertures in medieval times as well. A carved full-size human figure and a deer figure can clearly be seen in one of the apertures in Srednia Kamik massif. Interwoven above the entire composition are the letters III, H and B, i.e. Shishman. Shishman initials are also carved out in three more spots in the Govedarnika caves. Those monograms are associated with the



name of king Ivan Shishman because the lands around Vratsa and Oryakhovo were part of the Tarnovo kingdom in the latter half of the 14th century.

The same natural cave formations were used as dwellings by the populace of Vlashko Selo during the plague epidemic, which raged in 1762.

