



Ministry of Tourism of the
Republic of Bulgaria

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Minister Angelkova: We expect nearly 800 thousand foreign tourists to visit Bulgaria in the first winter months

28 October 2016

We expect nearly 800 thousand foreign tourists to visit Bulgaria in November and December. Preliminary data show an increased interest for the winter season by a number of important markets and the expected growth for the season is between 4,5 and 5%. This was announced on 28 October by the Minister of Tourism at a meeting of the National Council on Tourism held in Plovdiv, which discussed the results of the summer season and the preparations for the forthcoming winter season. It was attended by the Mayor of the municipality Ivan Totev, the Chairman of the Commission for Consumer Protection Dimitar Margaritov, representatives of the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency, the National Revenue Agency, the Ministry of Interior, ministries and municipalities, the tourist industry, national resorts etc.

“Taking into account the booked flights, we can say that there is a 24% growth from the Russian market, 20% from Israel; 74% from Ireland,” said Nikolina Angelkova. According to her, there is an increased interest from the United Kingdom as well. Romania, Greece, Turkey and Macedonia also tra-

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Photo from the National Council on Tourism in Plovdiv

ditionally prefer Bulgaria for the winter vacation, she pointed out.

In the framework of the meeting of the National Council on Tourism, the inspections planned for the next season were also discussed. Each of the representatives of CCP, NRA, Mol and BFSA presented a report of the summer activities of the relevant institution and a plan for the winter inspections. “It is crucial for all of us that the users of touristic services receive a high-quality product, so we will be uncompromising in the inspections”, underlined Minister Angelkova.

She announced that the inspections of the accommodation facilities and food establishments will continue. From the beginning of the year the Ministry of Tourism has made around 1,000 inspections. “As an administration, we will not tolerate any infringements. We are ready to start a procedure of taking away a start from any hotel that regularly breaks the rules. We already have one such case in Veliko Tarnovo and most probably it will not remain isolated,” said the Minister of Tourism.

Particular attention was paid to the Ordinance on the safety and information security of the ski runs in the Republic of Bulgaria. It entered into force on 1 October 2015, but this season will be the first of its full implementation. 52 ski slopes have been categorised under the ordinance and joint teams of the MT and CCP will monitor the information security and the observance of the safety requirements on the slopes in the new season.

During the official opening, Minister Angelkova presented the mayor of Plovdiv Ivan Totev with a honorary placard on the occasion of the 10th year since the opening of the Tourist Information Centre in the town and for the efforts of the municipality to develop the tourism in the region. “By the end of the year we will surpass half a million of overnights on the territory of the municipality. If we compare these numbers with the levels from 5 years ago, we will see that they have doubled”, said the mayor and thanked the ministry of tourism for the good work.

The CCP reported a general drop in the infringements in the field of tourism and presented a report of their activity in 2016. There have been over 5,000 inspections since the beginning of the year to this moment and offices will be opened in the big winter resorts for the busy season, pointed out Dimitar Margaritov.



Photo from the National Council on Tourism in Plovdiv

Minister Angelkova: We welcomed 5 million foreign tourists for summer 2016, which is an absolute record

27 October 2016



Photo from the press conference in Sofia

The aggregated data show that in the active summer season (June - September), Bulgaria has welcomed over 5 million foreign citizens. Their number is by over 18% greater compared to the same period in 2015. This was announced by Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova on

27 October during the press conference on the reporting of the

summer season 2016, held today. The figures are based on data published by the National Statistical Institute and they confirm the trend that this has been the best summer season for the tourist sector.

Minister Angelkova informed that significant growth has been reported for this period in many markets: Germany - growth of 33%; Romania - 15%, Russia - 22%, Poland - 38%, Ukraine - 10%, Great Britain - 10%, Czech Republic - 38%, France - 19%, Israel - 16%, Austria - 20%, Netherlands - 34%, Belgium - 15% etc.

If we add the data from the periods immediately preceding and following the active season, we will see that for the period April - September, Bulgaria was visited by a total of 6 million foreigners, which is a 17% growth compared to the previous year. If the pace be preserved, not only summer 2016 will be a record, but also the entire year, she explained.

She pointed out that only for the first 9 months, Bulgaria was visited by nearly 7 million foreign nationals. Comparing with the entire 2015, our country was visited by nearly 7.1 million foreign tourists, i.e. the results for only the first three quarters approach the last year base. In her words, all this has favorably affected the revenues. According to the data of the BNB, revenues from international tourism in the current account of balance of payments for the first eight months of 2016 amount to over 4.7 billion BGN. This means that for the period January - August 2016, the revenues from international tourism are by 621 million BGN more compared to the same period of the preceding year, which is a 15% growth.

“For the first nine months of this year, the Bulgarians, who chose Bulgaria for their summer vacation, are nearly 2.9 million”, added Minister Angelkova. Compared to the same period of 2015, there is a growth of 8%, but only for the summer, in the period April - September 2016, the Bulgarian tourists in Bulgaria rose by more

than 7 % (in 2015 they were 1,992,815 and in 2016 they were 2,136,676, which is a difference of 143,861).

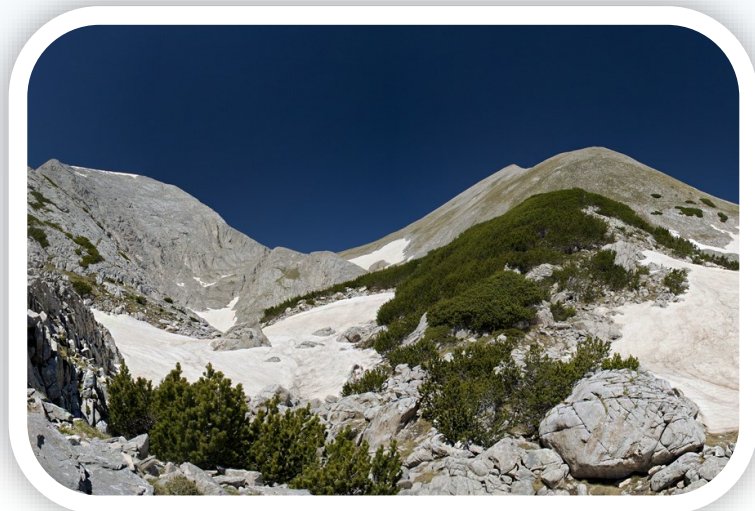
If we sum up the figures of the foreign and Bulgarian tourist flow, we can see that the Bulgarian tourist sector has welcomed and serviced a total of about 10 million tourists for the first 9 months of the year, summarized Nikolina Angelkova.

The minister emphasized, that the ministry is working for the next summer season 2017. "I have had meetings with some of the biggest tour operators such as Thomas Cook and TUI, which forecast an increase of around 30% for the next year according to their programmes", announced the Minister of Tourism. This is an unprecedented volume and record since the beginning of the companies' operations on the Bulgarian market, which means that Bulgaria becomes more and more competitive and a preferred destination for many countries worldwide.

In response to a journalist's question, Minister Angelkova said that from the beginning of the year the ministry experts have carried out nearly 1,000 inspections of categorized accommodation and catering facilities, and only for the active summer season the inspections were 550. As a result of these inspections, a procedure has been started for the taking away of one star from hotels that do not comply with the requirements of the Ordinance on the requirements to accommodation, catering and entertainment facilities and the procedure for establishing the category, refusal, lowering the category, suspension or termination of the category. She further emphasized that the purpose of the inspections is to guarantee the quality of the tourist product.

A Discovery to share...

...Pirin National Park



Pirin National Park is located in the Pirin Mountains, in southwest Bulgaria. The park includes seven municipalities in the district of Blagoevgrad: Bansko, Gotse Delchev, Razlog, Sandanski, Strumyani, Kresna, and Simitli.

In 1962, when Pirin National Park was established, it was known as the Vihren Nature Reserve. At that time it covered 6,212 decares and comprised the highest points of the Demyanishka and Vihren regions. Over the years the territory of the park was increased many times over, and it now covers 40,000 decares. Since 1983, the park has been protected as a UNESCO Heritage Site.



The park includes one of the oldest reserves in Bulgaria – Bayuvi Dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa. The area was granted this status in 1934 so as to protect the endangered black and white fir (*Pinus peuce*) and the habitats of many other plants and animals. In 1977, this reserve was included by UNESCO on its list of reserves as part of the “Man and Biosphere” program, as was the park’s Yulen Reserve, in 1994.



Within the park there are more than 182 species of medicinal plants and 1,315 other plant species – roughly 1/3 of Bulgaria’s total. The park also harbors roughly 320 kinds of moss and lichen and 165 varieties of algae.

The wide variety of plant life supports many

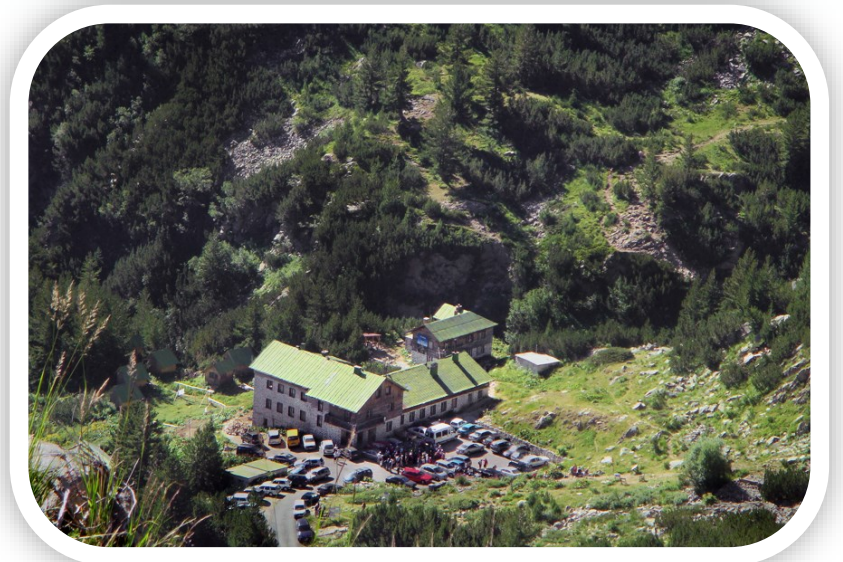
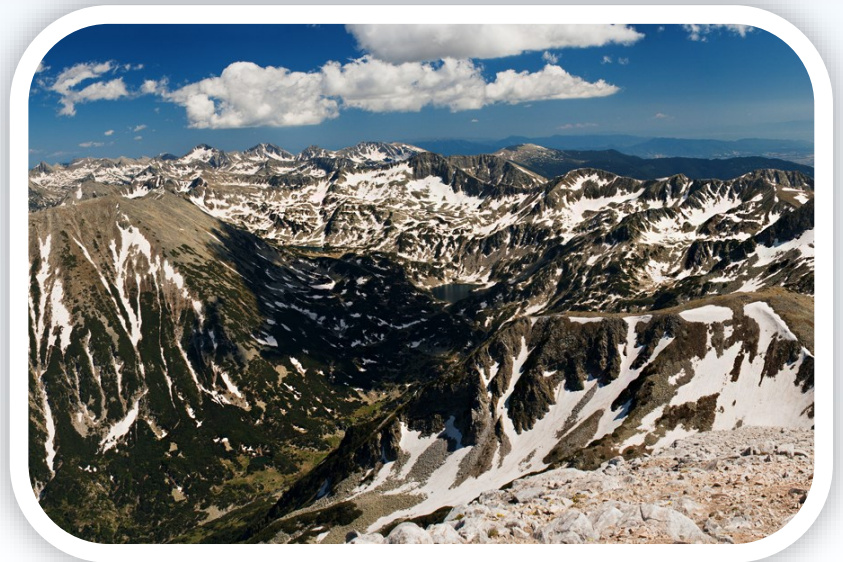
kinds of animals – more than 2,000 invertebrate species and more than 200 vertebrate species. Among them are the European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) and the Eastern Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), both of which are included in The Red Book, an international list of endangered species.

Within the boundaries of the park 159 species of birds have been recorded, amounting to some 40% of all bird species in Bulgaria.

The park is divided into a number of regions: Sinanitsa, Bayuvki Dupki, Vihren, Bezbog, and Kamenitsa, part of which includes the Three Rivers region.

There are two tourist itineraries in Sinanitsa. The route designated by brown markers goes from the Mandrat base to the Sipanitsa Shelter (on the route to the Pirin Shelter, and the route marked in yellow goes from Mandrat base to the Black Water base (on the route to the Yavorov Shelter). At the Mandrat base there is an information center, called Vlahinska River.

The international hikers' route E4, which goes from the Pyrennees through the Alps before crossing Bulgaria's Rila Pirin ranges and ending in the Peloponnese, traverses the park's Bayuvi Dupki reserve. The part of the route in Pirin National Park– goes from the Predel Shelter to the Yavorov Shelter and the Vihren Shelter, then to Tevno Lake, the Pirin Shelter and on to the Popov Grasslands. Another trail begins in the city of Razlog at the Betolovo Base and proceeds to the Yavorov Shelter and





along the Suhondol Ridge to Kresna. There is a park information center in Razlog, in the city's Museum of History.

The Vihren region of the park is most closely associated with the city of Bansko. At 2,914 meters, Vihren Peak is the highest point in the Pirin Mountains, second only to Musala in the Rila Range. The peak is included among Bulgaria's prime tourist destinations, and a stamp confirming ascent of the peak may be obtained at the Vihren Shelter. It is in this region of the park where Bulgaria's oldest tree grows – the Baykusheva Fir, which is more than 1,300 years old. This region of the park is served by a tourist information office located in Bansko.



In the Bezbog Region of the park is found the Yulken Reserve, notable for Polezhan Peak and the Polezhan circus of lakes. The office for this region is located in Dobrinishte.

There are 35 forest trails winding through the park's Kamenitsa Reserve, which incorporates the Three Rivers region. A number of these are named – the international tourist route E4 (red trail markers); the route from the Yane Sandanski Shelter past the Sapno Field to the Begovitsa Shelter (yellow trail markers); from the Yane Sandanski Shelter to the Begovitsa Shelter and the Demyanitsa Shelter (blue trail markers); and from the Yane Sandanski Shelter past the Spano Field to the Begovitsa Shelter and the Pirin Shelter (brown trail markers). The regional park office is located in the city of Sandanski.



Located throughout the park are 8 larger shelters and 4 hikers' huts.



The park's main information center in Bansko houses an interactive exhibit on the park's forests with 22 modules, allowing visitors to acquaint themselves with interesting facts about the park's trees, animals, and vegetation. There is also a 30-seat projection room that is equipped with multimedia equipment and a large screen, where visitors may choose from 150 entertaining and informative films about the park's plants and animals, Pirin Park in general, and other nature reserves in Bulgaria. The center also offers lectures prepared by staff experts. The center also offers a range of classes for both younger visitors and adults, held in the park's outdoor "classroom", as part of the center's program "Nature's Lessons Are Best Learned First-Hand."



The Pirin Nature Park is an extremely important national resource and visitors should take great care to preserve its beauty by not littering. Hunting is strictly prohibited, as is fishing in many of the park's rivers. Logging is also forbidden, as is tampering with the park's signs and trail markers.



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