

*Project CB005.1.22.166 “Development of common cultural tourism destination in the Strandzha (Yildiz)/ Sakar area based on archaeological and historical objects”*

# **REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STAGE 2**

Expert Geography and History

**Contract N° CB005.1.22.166 – LP – Service 7**

*Collecton and analyses of the existing statistics on tourist flows in the targeted Bulgarian area and how the flow of tourism can be attracted by the new thematic routes.*

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## **I. Introduction**

**Tourism** - in the classical sense, is called a trip for recreation and entertainment.

It can also be seen as an important economic branch that serves tourist activity as revenue for the business and the country's budget.

The founder of Bulgarian tourism is the Bulgarian writer and public figure Aleko Konstantinov. The term comes from the French word "tour".

The tourism is important in social and economic terms. Thanks to it, human health and employability are stabilizing and are emerging work places, which are sometimes a major source of income for a particular settlement and improving of living standards.

Personally, the travels people take often enrich their mental, linguistic, cognitive and social culture.

Tourism can be sea, mountain, religious, ecological, extreme, cultural, folklore and many other forms depending on the desires, the demand and the supply.

According to his goals, desires, demand and supply, it divides into many varieties, each of which has its own contingent and fans in time.

Here we will briefly analyze the types of tourism, opportunities and services available in the border region and its capacities and where its guests are currently targeting and how the wealth of the region could change over time these tourist flows:

## **II. Cultural-cognitive tourism**

The entire border region from the Kapitan Andreevo village on the Maritsa River to Rezovo on the Black Sea, the border region between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey, which covers the three mountains Strandzha Mountain, the Derwent Heights and Sakar Mountains offers excellent and not yet

appreciated opportunities for cultural -Travel tourism on both sides of the border.

In general, let us give a traction and why we place this type of tourism first. Because it is the wealth of the area. Cultural Tourism is a form of tourism where the main purpose of tourists is the visit of sites related to the culture and cultural specifics of some age or to some group of people (nation, ethnicity, tribe, etc.).

The objects of Cultural tourism can be represented by different forms of art represented in art galleries or in open-air places, historical sites and sites (historical monuments) - buildings, localities, settlements, objects, historical museums, archaeological museums and excavations, ethnographic museums, etc.

The Cultural tourism also includes visits to various cultural events such as festivals, theater productions, presentations of local folk traditions, customs, rituals and more.

Cultural tourism meets specific aesthetic, intellectual and psychological needs of the personality and implies a high general culture, increased curiosity and the existence of a research spirit among practitioners. This kind of tourism can be extremely exciting and satisfying. Introducing new cultural traditions, customs, art, history, worldview, religion and value system is always a test of intellect and character.

Tourists who practice cultural and cognitive tourism are more mobile and spend more money than ordinary tourists who have previously purchased tourist packages.

The considered area can be defined as the richest of objects of cultural and cognitive tourism for the whole of Bulgaria and it has complete grounds. As a confirmation of the said words, objects that are of the world and of the world are to be mentioned.

Such are the megalithic monuments in the Sakar Mountains - the dolmens in the lands of the villages of Hlyabovo, Sakarci, Oryahovo in the Sakar Mountains, *menhira* near the village of Ovbarovo, Harmanli. The Dolmens at Begik Tash, Belevren, Evrenozovo, Granichar, Kirovo in the Strandzha Mountain, the Dolmens near the village Golyam Derwent in the Derwent Heights. Here is one of the world cradle of ancient megalith culture.

It is worth mentioning the many places with strong earthly energy felt by the ancient inhabitants of the area who at such places built their cult places for contact with the earth forces that formed and modeled the quality of their life. Such strong cult places have from one end to the other. The Thracian cult complexes, including "Paleocastro", 2 km southwest of Topolovgrad, "Mishkova niva", the Thracian tomb and sanctuary, about 10 km southeast of Malko Tarnovo, are of great value for the region, but also of great significance are Begliktash, Propada, Indipasha, Markov Kamak, Kamenna Mogila and many other ancient sanctuaries and consecrated grounds that carry their power and impact to this day scattered around Strandzha Mountain and Sakar Mountains.

The region has a long and revolutionary history, as many anthropogenic masterpieces from the distant past astonish today with its uniqueness a large scale and awe: Such are the Ancient Sozopol Reserve. Saint John's Island (where the casket was found with the relics of St. John the Baptist) Natural and Archeological Reserve - the largest of the five islands on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Here are traces of a Thracian sanctuary from the 7th century BC, an ancient Greek temple probably dedicated to Apollo Healer (V century BC), remains of the monastery "St. John the Precursor", an ancient lighthouse, a Russian military cemetery; (The Sozopol Foundation has reconstructed the harbors on the island to facilitate access for tourists and sheds for observation of the island's biodiversity), Architectural and Historic Complex



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"South Fortress and Tower" - combines elements of different epochs - an ancient well (IV - III c. BC); part of an Early Byzantine economic building from V-VI century, where a museum collection is presented; a medieval fortress wall and tower and adjoining outbuildings; exhibition hall for contemporary painting, sculpture and chamber concerts; restored traditional house - architectural monument from 18th to 19th century, the Citadel Bukelon near Matochina village, the ancient town of Debelt, the fortified ruler's home from the Hellenistic era in the locality Tatar Masha near the village of Knyazhevo, the majestic remains of the Hesychastic Monastery with Voden, the residence and a fortified royal home in the locality. "Gola Niva" near Sinemorets village, Akra fortress near Chernomorets, Uguri fortress near the village of Bulgari, the Erkesiyata defense facility in the Sredets municipality with a length of 142 km and hundreds of objects which, for various reasons, fall into oblivion and ruin. And they could draw with their uniqueness guests from near and far. But time will show that they have endured thousands of years ...

### **III. Alternative Tourism Types**

Religious sites are many and varied, scattered throughout the region. They can be grouped into two main parts that attract tourists to themselves. The first are the medieval Christian sites, such as Sozopol and around it, Ahtopol, the rock churches near Mihalichi village, Matochina village and the old church over Man. "St. Trinity ". The other large group of these are the religious temples built in the region during the Bulgarian Renaissance and at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century by the indigenous population. The majority of them are still active, but a significant part of them is recovering. The area is distinguished by its peculiar cult architecture. In Strandzha, almost all churches are both architectural and artistic values due to the iconography specific to the region. The main features of Strandzha's art are the strong influence of Baroque and the



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multi-layered solution, which has no parallel in the church painting of other Bulgarian art schools. Its apogee The Strandzha iconography school reached its peak in the 19th century, after which the painters from Tryavna came and changed the direction of the artistic life. In Sredets is the only surviving monastery in Strandzha Mountain - "St. Zhivopriemni Iztochnik", built during the Bulgarian Renaissance. In the Sakar Mountain near the village of Ustrem, Topolovgrad municipality there is another cult site, the biggest in the Strandzha-Sakar region and of national significance Ustrem monastery "St. Trinity ". It was built in the Middle Ages, after which it was devastated and built in its present form in the 19th century. Significant religious sites in Topolovgrad municipality are the 4 temples in Topolovgrad, the rock church "The Old church" and the revival of many chapels "St. Marina", "St. Spas" and "Holy Virgin", "St. Ilia", "St. Healers Kozma and Damian", "St. Atanasii", "St. Cyril and Methodius" and others.

Museums and galleries are also a desirable place where the history and customs of an area are concentrated, the museums in Sozopol, the Art Gallery, the museums in Elhovo Malko Tarnovo, Chernomorets, Primorsko, Tsarevo, Sredets, Harmanli, Svilengrad, Topolovgrad , Bolyarovo and others.

The significance of the local spiritual culture and traditions, which have laid their foundations from the Middle Ages to the present day, is also very important.

The intangible cultural heritage is also a business card for the region because this raion is unique to Bulgaria in its traditions, such as the fire-dancing, which is a unique custom.

In the interior of Strandzha, the Strandzha language and toponymy have been preserved. Well-preserved are colorful and original rituals that are performed in connection with certain events and holidays. Typically, regional is the unique Nestinarstvo (*fire-dancing*) custom,



which occurs only in the Strandzha region and is performed on the day of St. St. Constantine and Elena. In 2009, the Nestinarstvo was included in the UNESCO World Non-Cultural Heritage List. Only here is the so-called. "Byal Kuker" - a Kuker without a mask. The folklore ritual "Filek" (only in the town of Veliko Tarnovo) continues in the region to celebrate the rituals of Koleduvane, Lazaritsa, the custom for rain and fertility "Dzhamali", "Peperuda", "Eniova bulya", "Medzhia", "Wedding", Malko Tarnovo and the village of Brashlyan), the Indipasha worship. The traditional folk struggles as a compulsory element of the folkloric reunions, as well as the popular struggles of the fair of the monastery "St. Trinity ".

All customs are performed with specific requisites and ritual clothing. Interesting are the colorful Sakar women's costumes, embodying the traditions of Thrace and Aegean Macedonia.

To the cultural tourism in the region should be included different types of visits to interesting and non-standard places that can attract guests all year round:

- Visit to settlements - architectural reserves, ethnographic complexes (Ahtopol, Bulgari, Kosti, Kondolovo etc.);
- Visit to museums, galleries, historical and archeological monuments, places of historical and cultural significance, including churches and sacred places related to Christianity (Sozopol, Elhovo, Primorsko, Sredets, Malko Tarnovo, Tsarevo, Topolovgrad, Harmanli, Svilengrad, Ahtopol, Tsarevo, Bulgari, Kosti, Brodilovo etc.);
- Understanding the life and activity of historical figures and historical events (Transfiguration Uprising);
- Local crafts - demonstrations and hobby courses (boatbuilding, fishing, knitting);



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- Festivals, shows and others such as Apollonia, the Topolovgrad Theater Festival, the Greenpeace Festival, the Festival of Manna Honey and others.

- Introduction to the authentic folklore - Unique, as they are only found in Strandzha, are the fire-dancers and the so-called "White Kuker" - dressed in white animal furs and with a black face but without a mask, only one in the Kuker group, while everywhere else in Bulgaria he is dressed more often in dark furs, with a terrible, masculine mask and always - in a company of his own kind".

- Local cuisine - Beekeeping is highly developed and here is the famous "Manna Honey". Among the local culinary specialties, the most famous are "Strandzha Grandpa", "Fish on a tile", "Trahulia", "Planinovsko Stewed", "Kokoka with Katmi", "Vilengrad Malebi" etc.

- Hobby courses and more.

And if this is not unused treasure, with so many examples and what kind of country we are ...

**Mountain tourism** - Connected with visiting and staying in mountain resorts, localities, huts, mountain terrain hiking, etc.

There are good conditions for relaxation and recreation in the region, and therefore mountain tourism is relatively well developed. It can be realized as individual and group and in a different tourist base - hotels, holiday homes, chalets, campsites, private houses, camps, etc.

It has good conditions for development mainly in Strandzha Mountain and Sakar Mountains.

Here the Strandzha Nature Park - is the largest protected natural territory in Bulgaria, the area of which is 1161 km<sup>2</sup> and covers the central Strandzha with access to the Black Sea.

Created to preserve unique ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as to preserve the unique Strandzha folklore, culture and historical

heritage. Its territory is over 1% of the country's territory. In 1933 it was the first reserve in Bulgaria - Silkosia.

Strandzha is the only Bulgarian territory included in the five priority conservation areas in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the Strandzha passes the second largest bird way in Europe - Via Pontica. The total number of habitat types is 121, with this indicator being the first of the protected areas in Europe. There are 54 species of mammals and 261 species of birds in the park. Like any place on the Black Sea coast, Strandzha is threatened with destruction through illegal constructions, while its mountainous part and preserved forests attract cutters-poachers.

The protected territories with independent status, according to Art. 5 of the Protected Areas Act in Strandzha Park are 32 in number. The most famous of them are "Paroria", "Veleka River mouth", "Dokuzak", " Rudenovo ", " Silistar ", " Krivinizovo ", " Moryane ", "Kamaka" and others. The other mountain that offers somewhere for mountain tourism is Sakar Mountain. But the possibilities in it are very limited due to the smaller territory, the arable land and the places to visit. Interesting places to visit here are the high part of the mountain with the massif of Visegrad peak, the valleys of Bakrullia and Fishera, the gorge of river Tundzha and others.

Mountain tourism can be joined as well as scientific-cognitive tourism, to which can be referred:

- botanical
- ornithological
- observation of butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, mammals, etc.
- geological and mineralogical

**Sea tourism** - This type of tourism is related to visiting the seaside. It is used for recreation, relax and restoration of the powers of the people. The properties of sea water, sunshine, beaches and other natural and anthropogenic factors are used. Sea tourism is a major type of tourism for the region.

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Sea tourism is a seasonal type of tourism - mostly summer time.

The Strandzha Black Sea coast offers many good conditions for sea tourism. Here, it is a structurally dominant branch around which the whole economy and the life of the region as a whole. Summer year and lifestyle not only on the coast but also on most of the Strandzha mountain. Some of the seaside resorts are of national and international importance. Of particular importance are the town of Sozopol, where the seaside and cultural tourism are hand in hand. Primorsko, Tsarevo, Ahtopol as well as the resorts and complexes Kavatsite, Dyuni, Kiten, Lozenets, Varvara, Sinemorets and Rezovo are important.

**Water / River / Tourism:** The area is a little covered mainly in the lower rivers Veleka, Ropotamo and Rezovska rivers, horse riding and fishing.

Good conditions offer the lower stream of Tundzha river but are not developed. Interesting for river downhill with kayaks and boats is the Lower Tundzha Gorge and locality Darkaya. The river has good fishing conditions.

Water tourism is also practiced at the bigger water reservoirs in the area - the Malko Sharkovo Dam, the Kruduza dere dam and others. They are mainly used for short-term recreation and fishing.

**Cave tourism:** - The site of the visit is the karst caves. It may be related to studies of unrecognized caves, underground galleries, passages, abysses, etc. and visiting interesting caves. Bulgaria has enough good cave sites.

The area does not offer great opportunities for such tourism. Cave formations are almost not used by tourists. These are the cave Babini Bozki at the village of Mramor, the Peshtera and the springs of Mladezhka River, the Habarcheto cave, the Bratanova cave - the village of Brushlian, the Dranci dupka cave – village of Melnitsa and others.

**Healing (spa) tourism** - in the area there are limited conditions due to the lack of available mineral springs with

useful components. Such conditions are available in the village of Stefan Karadzhovo, Bolyarovo.

**Business tourism** (here is also the congress and the fair tourism) - this is a type of tourism with future mainly on the southern Black Sea where there are plenty of events in the garden and the available congress base in the bigger hotels. Business tourism has its overlap in Sozopol, Primorsko, Tsarevo and Lozenets. Incidentally but every year such famous fair events take place in Malko Tarnovo, Gramatikovo, Topolovgrad, Monastery "St. Trinity", Petrova niva and others.

The most famous events taking place in the area are the Apolonia Arts Festivities - in Sozopol and the International Festival of Amateur Comedy Compositions and the Pantomime "Velko Kanev" - Topolovgrad.

- **sports tourism:** The area offers good opportunities for training athletes and conducting various sports events.

- The Southern Black Sea coast offers good conditions for surfing, water skiing, diving.

- Mountains that are low and with many black roads offer good conditions for cross training.

- Many professional teams use bases along the Southeast coast to prepare for various sports.

- cycling tourism - has a perfect base of a lowland area, low mountains interesting places to reach. A prerequisite for its more active development is the developed system of rural and forest roads.

- Equestrian tourism - Equestrian centers and companies offering Equestrian tourism are in Lozenets and others.

**Rural tourism:** (here is also rural tourism and agro-tourism) - Along with the cultural-cognitive, recreational, rural tourism there are excellent conditions and a base for development in the region.

The conditions are very large and at the same time very limited due to the demographic collapse of the area under consideration.

Because of the very negative conditions, rural tourism will not have the necessary development here.

The reasons are complex and unsolvable. Demographic, transport infrastructure, social infrastructure, community housing in the raion, existing for hundreds of years in the near future, may disappear as a settlement.

**Fishing and hunting tourism:** As a developed tourism in Bulgaria, hunting tourism brings significant revenues to the state. The state is divided into 9 hunting areas. The Strandzha-Sakar Region is one of them (the municipalities of Malko Tarnovo, Topolovgrad and Bolyarovo). The populations of wild boar, red deer, roe deer and partridge have been stabilized in the territory of Strandzha - Sakar region. Several state forestries are concentrated in the municipality of Malko Tarnovo, in the village of Gramatikovo there is a game breeding station. Suitable conditions for hunting tourism, combined with cultural values, exist in the municipality of Topolovgrad. In the municipality of Bolyarovo are built aviaries for the production of pheasant, cedar and partridge for displacement. In the Elhovo municipality, one of the oldest pheasants in the country, where over 7,000 birds are grown annually, is located in the preserved reserve "Dolna Topchia", near the only pond in Colchids pheasant in Europe. The presence of these sites is a prerequisite for the development of both hunting and cognitive tourism.

**Ecotourism:** - is a form of sustainable tourism, focused on visits to relatively untouched by anthropogenic impact natural areas. The term was officially used for the first time at a Mexican ecologist conference, Ector Sebielos-Lasquaine, in the first half of the 1980s.

In the professional (also in the academic) circles, there are several ecotourism definitions similar in meaning.

"Environmentally Responsible Tourism with respect to nature-friendly and nature-friendly recreation and recreation, which contributes to the preservation of nature, has a "soft" impact on the

environment, ensures the active socio-economic participation of local residents and gaining the benefits of this activity. "(International Union for the Conservation of Nature).

"Responsible tourism in natural areas that contributes to the conservation of nature and improves the welfare of the local population." (The Ecotourism Society)

"Tourism involving travel to places with a relatively intact human nature to gain insight into the natural, cultural and ethnographic characteristics of the area, which does not disturb the integrity of the ecosystem and creates economic conditions for the protection of the environment and natural resources from the local population. This type of tourism based on living nature and its wealth has great potential in the region under consideration. Which will increase with a drastic reduction in population. The richness of living nature, the existence of protected areas such as Strandzha Nature Park, reserves, protected areas, interesting places and rock formations, harmony between nature and man. It can lead to the widespread development of ecotourism in this clean border region, with many natural amenities. For now, eco tourism is mainly developed within the borders of Strandzha Nature Park, these are different eco paths, places for recreation and shelter, maintained religious sites, small socialization of some of the anthropogenic sites. The Derwent Heights as well as the Sakar Mountains also have perfect conditions for ecotourism development, but here it is not developed.

**Trekking** - the only conditions offered by the Lower Tundzha Gorge from Knyazhevo to the locality Darkaya on the Tundzha River.

**Hobby-tourism** - Very low is covered. Mostly on the Black Sea coast - practicing some hobbies related to the water, especially during the summer.

In the mountainous parts it is connected with the study and collection of various herbs and plants, photo-tourism, observation of various birds and animals / Imperial Eagle in the region of Topolovgrad and Sakar Mountains, interest in different ethnographic customs and traditions, culinary etc.

### **Religious tourism (pilgrimage): -**

This type of tourism has its place in the area because it has been Eastern Orthodox centers since the Middle Ages.

The main centers of religious tourism here are the two active monasteries Golyamo Bukovski "Zhivopriemni Iztochnik" and Ustremski "St. Trinity" hundreds of Eastern Orthodox temples and chapels scattered around the Strandzha and Sakar Mountains.

Many tourists, mostly non-organized, visit these religious centers. This tour is all year round but is active during the warm part of the year.

Of great interest are various religious places that are visited by many people for the sake of deliverance - Indipasha, Petka, St. Konstantin, St. healers Kozma and Damian, the rock church of St. Panteleymon. Religious monuments of the medieval culture related to the religion of Sozopol, island St. Ivan, Ahtopol, Urguri fortress, the rock churches in Mihaic and Matochina can also be exalted to the religious tourism.

Religious tourism can also include a visit to various local fairs throughout the year throughout the region, which attract a significant number of guests to the region for a short period of 2-3 days.

### **Wine tourism: -**

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has been developing over the last 15 years in the Sakar Mountain because of the good soil and climatic conditions and the creation of a significant volume of vineyards. Mostly in the municipalities of Svilengrad, Harmanli, Lyubimets and Topolovgrad.

Sakar Mountain is a natural terroir. The built wine-making facilities, besides the production of quality wines, also attract visitors for sightseeing and tasting. The best known were the Castra Rubra wineries in the village of Kolarovo, Katardzhyna Estate in the town of Svisrengrad and Villa Lyubimets.

Very fine wine is produced by small owners, with great respect in the area is the holiday of the viticultor "St. Triphon".

Other forms of tourism are relatively or almost uncooperative: sex tourism, extreme tourism, military tourism, social tourism.

*According to the time for tourism activity, short, long-term, weekly and other types of tourism are distinguished.*

*According to the economic results, it shares economic and social tourism.*

*Today, social tourism does not exist purely because all tourist activities are market-based.*

*According to the way tourism is organized, tourism is organized, not organized, group, individual, etc.*

#### **IV. The factors contributing to the development of tourism in the Strandzha Mountain, the Dervent Heights and the Sakar Mountains are**

In the tourist literature, in most of the cases where tourism development issues are dealt with, the terms "*conditions*" and "*factors*" are used, with emphasis being placed on the factors. This gives us reason to refine their use.

In the Bulgarian vocabulary, it is clearly stated how the two words should be understood and what their interpretation should be. There we find that the word condition has four basic interpretations and opportunities for proper use. In the specific case, when it comes to the conditions for the development of tourism, the following terms are to be taken into account "**requirement**" or "**requirements**" or "**that what other depends on**", "**prerequisite**".

From the point of view of economic sciences, it is clear that the emergence and development of a particular socio-economic branch is due to the external influences and elements of the environment, which predict its development. Stagnate or facilitate its evolution. In this light we can accept the definition of M. Bachvarov: "These influences are called conditions ..." (see Bachvarov 1996, p.34). However, the author adds that those conditions that are of particular importance, "... decisive ...", are defined as factors. From the above it follows the logical conclusion that it is not always necessary that conditions become "factors". M. Bachvarov adds that with the development of the sector (sophisticated socio-economic system- *note of the author*), "... its constituent elements also become factors that hinder or support the functioning and its further development.

Factors for tourism development are common - with global impacts and local ones - with regional or local impacts. In addition, factors can be considered as selective, localizing, and realizational. On this occasion, M. Bachvarov points out that the former determine the emergence of tourist needs and the choice of demand, the latter determine the place to which the demand is directed, and the latter - the availability of the necessary technical and other elements to ensure supply in the chosen place. The same author defines selective factors as genetic factors, and localization and realization factors as realizational, factors that are related to targeting a tourist destination to a given geographical destination (see again there, pp. 34-35)

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**Genetic factors** of the tourist flows and their movement to certain places - create the necessity of traveling with recreational and cognitive purpose. These are the conditions of the tourist environment that determine tourist demand. Genetic factors differentiate the following groups:

**Socio-economic factors** - include the nature and extent of a socio-economic development of a society; the nature and intensity of work that determine the type and duration of the break; industrialization and scientific and technological development; the volume and structure of leisure time; income, living standards and material provision of the population; social security - insurance.

**Demographic factors** - number, distribution and movement of the population; age and family structure; the professional structure of the local population and tourists; degree of urbanization; the nature of the settlement network and the settlement of the settlements.

**Ecological and medical-biological factors** - quality of the living environment in the settlement; housing conditions; working conditions; the health condition of the population.

**Legal and political factors** - internal and external political situation; social policy of the country; border, visa and customs formalities.

**Psychological factors** - value orientation of different categories of people; national and cultural traditions; tourist habits; demonstrating social prestige, status and financial capabilities; cultural level of the participants in tourism.

**Realizing actions** - specific to the product offered - are related to the supply within the tourist destination itself and include:

**availability of resources** (natural and anthropogenic)

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## **availability of material and technical facilities and infrastructure**

**availability of staff** (management, information, guides, support staff) and organizational structure

## **development of transport**

**development of links** between industries, industrial enterprises and the main supplier to the tourism industry

## **spatial planning environment.**

**Tourist resources** are objects, processes and phenomena created by man and nature. Two large groups of tourism resources are formed on the basis of development factors: natural and cultural-historical (anthropogenic).

**Natural resources** include the following main components: relief, climate, water, biogenic resources (flora, fauna), soils.

**Anthropogenic resources** are divided into cognitive, business, and sports.

The region of Strandzha Mountain, the Dervent Heights and the Sakar Mountain is an extremely rich region of **tourist resources** as well as the diversity of its natural resources and the uniqueness of its anthropogenic resources spread from ancient times to the present day, an inexhaustible base for development.

**The material base of tourism in the Region includes accommodation and accommodation facilities** (hotels, hostels, guest houses, motels, campsites, chalets, private rooms, restaurants) as well as all facilities and activities related to tourist services.

The material part is inextricably linked to the region's rich resource supply, it forms it into a desired complex of assets that will attract guests here and again. It is an integral part of the tourist product and creates the real conditions for its production and realization, absorption and utilization of the tourist resources.

It is defined as a set of material conditions for the production and realization of basic services (accommodation, meals, transport) and additional services (sports, entertainment, recreation, etc.) to satisfy the needs of tourists in connection with the travel and the stay in the tourist place. As a material carrier, it carries its features and specific features:

1. The material base is heterogeneous - it contains elements of different functional purpose, which, although difficult, must function as a system as the tourist assesses complexly and requires the tourist supply to be harmonious.
2. The material base is of a complex nature, because it satisfies complex human needs.
3. The material base is stationary and slightly elastic - there are stationary elements (buildings, structures), the moving and active elements are only a third part of it. Slightly elastic to market changes (elasticity - unit change in price affects demand). There is limited opportunity to respond to market changes, as passive elements do not allow for alternative solutions.
4. The material base is territorially determined and requires a high level of investment that the state needs to stimulate to be invested in this rich and grateful border region. The high price and the mentioned passive elements add to the high price of the land, especially in the more famous resorts.

5. The material base is directly related to tourist resources. They also define its key features such as type, capacity, standard, etc.

6. Seasonality in the use of the material base - depending on the type of resources and climatic conditions, we have higher or less pronounced seasonality. This seasonal exploitation determines the more difficult return on investment in the material base. It is important to look for opportunities, ways and activities for the year-round use of the facilities, which will have an economic and social effect on the area.

Requirements to the material base are for functionality, aesthetics and psychological comfort. That is why the material base is relied upon to form the atmosphere and the image of the whole tourist product. Requirements also exist in terms of safety and security.

For Bulgaria as a whole and for the region in particular the material base is controlled and regulated through the system of categorization. The given category informs about the type and quality of its components, the level of service and personnel.

**The structure of the material base is divided into two groups - tourist infrastructure and tourist superstructure.** Tourist infrastructure is the set of all structures under and above the ground connecting a territory with other places and carrying out intense activity on them. It is divided into general and specialized.

The tourist superstructure refers to buildings, furnishings and equipment for shelter, accommodation, dining and entertainment, brokerage firms and retail outlets. It captures the capacity and absorption of the capacity and the absorption of the tourist territory.

**Weaknesses that negatively affect the development and the prospect of tourism in the border region Strandzha Mountain, Dervent hills and Sakar Mountain**

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- The terrible demographic situation, especially in the interior of the region and especially along the border.
- The worsened political situation in the Middle East and the problems along the border with the influx of immigrants from the region. The construction of the preventive facility and the actions of border police in this area.
- Poor state of technical infrastructure in the area
- Low qualification of staff in the service sector as a whole
- Poorly developed and unmotivated sectoral and non-governmental sector working in the field of tourism
- Lack of additional tourist services
- A small number of local tourist companies
- Concentration of services and institutions in municipal and district centers
- Serious difficulties in quality control and compliance with legal requirements
- The offered product has insufficient level of services / hotels, restaurants, etc. /
- Lack of tourist statistics
- Monostructure of the product and poorly developed infrastructure inside the region - lack of a comprehensive tourist product and uniformity of the existing tourist product;
- There is a disproportion - concentration of a contingent of the sea and unutilized significant tourist resource inside the region

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- The development of modern information technologies and reservation systems is lagging behind.

### **Threats:**

Most of the external factors could be considered both as an opportunity and as a threat depending on the situation. Generally speaking, opportunities and threats are beyond the direct control of stakeholders and can hardly be affected. Threats to the development of tourism can be:

- Regional instability and conflict
- Unrealistic high expectations from tourism and profits
- The threat of terrorism - on a global scale, for Bulgaria and for tourism
- Economic and legal changes that can lead to an increase in the price of the offered tourist product and the loss of competitive positions and clientele
- Campaigns of competitive destinations offering holidays with very large discounts; strong campaigns of competing destinations like Greece, Turkey, Croatia
- Because of limited advertising resources, Bulgaria has failed to create a profound advertising campaign, which in turn will prevent the flow of tourists stimulated by international economic stabilization.



## **V. The main objective for the development of tourism in the border region of the Strandzha Mountains, the Derwent Heights and the Sakar Mountains and promotion of new thematic routes**

**Expanding and changing the structure of demand for the tourist product aimed at the anthropogenic monuments of culture attracting Bulgarian and foreign tourists, increasing the number and stay in Bulgarian and foreign citizens who are living in the region during extended tourist season.**

Achieving the primary goal will **mean**:

- Attract more and more solvent tourists in the region to accommodate and diversify and enrich the tourist supply;
- Increasing the revenues from international and domestic tourism in the region;
- Growth of visitors traveling to the region for cultural tourism in the region;
- Expanding the Border Region in the target markets by diversifying the product offer (combined travel and specialized tourism) and attracting new consumer segments;
- Longer use of the region's tourism resources on the basis of the variety of products offered.

### Specific objectives:

1. Sustainable development of an integrated tourist product based on the diversity of natural and anthropogenic features of the Border Region and improvement of its quality
2. Effective Marketing Policy of the Destination to Promote and Impose Anthropogenic Cultural Tourism on the Tourism Market

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3. Improving the state of the local environment and infrastructure for the development of cultural tourism in the border region.

4. Establishment and strengthening of the institutional framework for the development of tourism in the region

5. Effective marketing policy of the destination for promotion and enforcement of the product on the tourist market

***On-the-site advertising - Infotours and tourist centers in the Border Region with the participation of foreign and local tour operators.***

The organization of infotours on the territory of the Strandzha Mountain, the Dervent Heights and the Sakar Mountain together with the tourism industry requires a relatively small resource and is highly efficient as tour operators and other interested participants on the spot become acquainted with and experience the happening and will also touch survive the proposed matter.

***Collecting and maintaining up-to-date information on tourist offerings in Bulgaria***

The aim is to constantly monitor what tourist products and services offer competitive destinations within Bulgaria. On the one hand, this can provide valuable ideas for diversifying the municipality's own tourist product and for issuing quality promotional materials, and on the other - to help develop and offer unique, unforgettable attractions and services. Such information can initially be collected through visits to national and regional tourism exchanges. It is desirable to engage different people to visit the stock exchanges in order to reach a maximum percentage of the local community.

***Switching to Web Marketing in the Border region and the best in it.***

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- Creating and starting an effective marketing web page using the web capabilities - search engines, travel portals, related sites.
- Using web marketing capabilities - meta tags (automatically linking relevant keywords to hundreds of search engines). For this purpose, a program must be purchased.
- Publishing banner ads to other target sites on the Internet.
- Another possibility to promote the website and to attract more traffic to it is the advertising brochures containing the Border Region
- Organization of workshops.

*Improvement of tourist information services by building a network of tourist information points on the territory of the Border Region in the developed places to visit and still the settlements with available human resources. To be first aid to guests wishing to receive information. Dissolve each local method in favor of the native country.*

*Informational provision of tourist sites - making of boards, instructional and information boards, billboards.*

*Stimulation of the local initiative and entrepreneurship, paying close attention to the few remaining locals who are willing and be helped to invest in the tourist business in the area.*

- Information and educational campaigns
- Consulting activity

*Development of general infrastructure.*

- Reconstruction and modernization of **all roads** serving the settlements in the Region, bringing all the elements of the road network to European standards; (to prepare a plan-by program by year and by settlement)



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- Completion and development of **all streets** in the settlements; (to prepare a plan-by program by year and by settlement)
- Completion and improvement of the **water supply and sewerage network** in the settlements Reconstruction of the water supply and sewerage network and construction of water treatment plants and modules
- Construction of electricity networks in the Region; replacement and restoration of the street lighting of all settlements.
- Establishment of **regulated landfills** and organization of modern waste management, including the processing thereof.
- Construction of a **hydromeliorative structure**, providing the basis for the production of vegetable crops, necessary to ensure the tourist flow in the region; (to prepare a plan-by program by year and by settlement)

#### **Strengthening of Regional local capacity:**

- Establishment of a Regional Council to work all year round for the development of tourism and solving of the pressing problems. Provide the targeted State support to the Region.
- Split the region into three sub-ranges to identify problems and their specific solutions in measurable time.
- Carrying out institutional training to build teamwork skills in vertical and horizontal interactions;
- Carrying out demonstration events for lasting partnerships and interaction;
- Regional information campaigns for the public;
- Partner roundtables.

## **VI. Directions of the main tourist flows in the Strandzha Mountain, Dervetski Heights and Sakar Mountains**

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The Tourism, for which resources are available and set as a priority in all 12 municipal development plans, is underdeveloped in the area. These municipalities have a unique combination of natural, cultural, historical and social resources, which suggests a leading place of tourism in their economic structure.

Of particular importance is the integration between the cultural anthropogenic heritage and the natural features of Strandzha and Sakar, which has been encouraged over the years but not sufficiently developed. In this respect, the proximity to the Black Sea and the main highway in the Maritsa valley is of great advantage. The Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria with a horizon of 2030 highlights the need to overcome the seasonality of maritime and ski tourism.

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For this purpose, the development of the cultural anthropogenic tourism is a prerequisite due to the very rich base combination with other types of tourism - eco-marine, rural, spa, adventure, which allows the border region to develop as complementary to the Black Sea coastal area.

Linking the features of national and global significance and their presentation in order to exploit their potential is also a key issue for the development of cultural tourism.

In the Bulgarian strategy for local tourist systems with its own face and uniqueness, it is also pointed out the specificity of the region and more specifically of Strandzha, as well as the Sakar Mountains. As a territory with significant potential for development of various forms of tourism, the Strandzha Mountain is among the 13 districts - **locuses**, which aim at linking resources and making them a factor for tourist attractiveness and economic development. The variety of cultural values by type (architectural, artistic, historical) and belonging to the historical period is enormous. Regardless of the regional nature of tourism resources, which can hardly attract

significant autonomous tourist flow. Of great importance for the development of tourism are the opportunities for combining unique natural and cultural values for the region and Europe. Binding of cultural and natural values should be sought throughout the whole Strandzha-Sakar region, not only by municipalities. An important tourist resource for the development of prophylactics and balneotherapy are the mineral waters in the village of Stefan Karadzovo for the treatment of urological, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular and endocrine diseases. The regional development plan for the Southeastern Level 2 region, which covers all municipalities except the Sakar Mountains that fall within the South Central Region, views the Strandzha-Sakar Region as a priority for tourism development and recognizes the network of protected areas as the basis for the development of its specialized forms.

The existing over 50 hiking trails on the territory of the Strandzha Nature Park are the basis for the establishment of 18 routes with different thematic direction. Linking European and international tourist, pilgrimage, cultural and cycling routes through which connections with neighboring countries and the most important cultural and natural sites are to be attracted will attract more interest and a greater flow of tourists. According to the tourist zoning of the country, the municipalities within the scope of the targeted investment program "Strandzha - Sakar" fall into 2 tourist regions. Sredets and Malko Tarnovo are part of the Southern Black Sea coast, a sub-region of Strandzha Black Sea. The Black Sea region is specialized in marine and cultural tourism, and its extensive specialization covers adventure, eco, health, rural, hunting and religious tourism.

The municipalities of Bolyarovo, Elhovo and Topolovgrad, Harmanli, Svilengrad, Lyubimets, Simeonovgrad and Galabovo belong to the Thrace region, Stara Zagora subregion. The main specialization of Trakia region is in the cultural and wine tourism, and the extended - in business, urban entertainment, health and adventure and eco tourism. In the event that joint tourism development is sought



in all 12 municipalities, the fact that they fall into different tourist areas will to some extent make it more difficult for them to manage together, but can be considered as yet another opportunity to diversify the tourist product. The unique combination of tourism resources should be at the heart of the activities of affirming the area as an attractive destination. In this respect, the Strandzha Nature Park Directorate has also played a major role, and has directed part of its projects to promote tourism as a leading industry. It is planned to build additional routes that will "close" the series of roundabouts and further develop the network of cultural, "green", cycling, pilgrimage, historical and religious routes. An interesting initiative is the established regional brand "Strandzha", which has already certified several guest houses in the region. It will be used by local producers and craftsmen and entrepreneurs in the tourism business as a guarantee of quality and sustainable use of resources in tourist sites and will help to promote the regional tourist product. The state of the branch in the area can be judged by the number of shelters, beds and nights spent. The information on these indicators is scarce but indicative. The most important are the shelters and beds respectively on the southern Black Sea respectively Sozopol, Tsarevo, Primorsko. Inside, comparatively large capacity is Malko Tarnovo municipality in a smaller step Elhovo and Topolovgrad. The municipalities of Svilengrad and Harmanli are situated on the main road E 80.

Many guest houses and smaller family-run hotels operate in the area under consideration, but it is clear that with increased tourist interest in the area, the bed base will not be enough. Tourism development efforts should focus on high-quality boutique services provided primarily by small and medium-sized businesses. In this connection, the shelters can benefit from the "authentic Bulgaria" brand, which, like the regional brand "Strandzha" or the Dervent Heights and Sakar respectively, guarantees quality but also aims at

attracting mostly solvent, foreign tourists. All municipalities in the area under consideration regard tourism in their development plans and evaluate it as a priority sector for which there are natural and cultural assets. They also appreciate the poor quality of the general and specialized tourist infrastructure. Apart from the commented capacity of the shelter, another problem is the transport infrastructure that connects the tourist sites.

The specialized infrastructure needed to develop some forms of tourism is not built, and the status of many tourist sites is not good. It is precisely in this direction that the investments in the region of Strandzha and Sakar should be directed because tourism is an opportunity for improving the quality of life of local people and stopping or delaying the processes of depopulation.

Another problem that municipalities report in terms of tourism development is the qualification of the cadres. The management and the support staff have a low foreign language culture, often without adequate education or training in tourism. Particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring better qualifications for employees in the sector through appropriate vocational training and retraining, as it is crucial for the quality of the services offered. Undoubtedly, tourism has prerequisites for development in the Strandzha-Sakar region, but it is not a panacea.

In times of crisis, the tourism sector is among the first to be affected, in areas dependent on tourism, economic recessions and their consequences are the heaviest.

Therefore, the municipalities of Strandzha and Sakar need to develop a variety of tourist products in order to reduce dependence on a certain group of tourists.

Tourism should be combined with accompanying economic activities that will provide additional employment. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain the balance between development and

protection of the environment, as the preserved environment and cultural heritage are the most important competitive advantage of the area.

The Europe-Asia-wide buffer zone between Europe and Asia is growing and the boundaries of the Christian and Muslim world are increasing, and the capacity of the actors in the territory to meet the development needs and the expectations of the institutions and society diminishes.

The hundred-year trend of people and capital leaks, the decline of settlements and the restraint of economic activities in the land already crosses the critical boundaries after which local communities collapse, the continuity of culture is lost, biodiversity changes become irreversible. After being withdrawn from the territory of the third civilian sector, there is room for action in the fourth criminal sector.

The management the border area is important because good borders and fences make good neighbors. Strandzha-Sakar is not just a fence between the EU and Turkey, it is the EU facade of this great world crossroads. The successful development of Strandzha and Sakar is an essential element of the EU Communication Strategy.

**Creating a Regional Brand "Strandzha"** is a good practice for promoting the Region, but Strandzha is only one of its components, such brands must have for the other two parts namely the Dervent Heights and Sakar Mountains. And a common brand to summarize and attract guests to the border region and why not on both sides of the border. This will also help for the good neighborhood and mutual help to overcome problems easily and help move forward.

Creating and affirming a brand is designed to create trust, product recognition, and quality assurance. The development and introduction of a Strandzha Quality Brand is based on the need to create and enforce a more effective marketing tool through which the products

from the Strandzha Nature Park region can be more competitive on the market.

### **Nature and purpose of the brand**

The aim of the brand is to distinguish the product from that of competitors, to enhance the perception of value and the satisfaction of the experience. Due to the ever-increasing choice of consumers, the importance of branding has been progressively growing over the years. Customers are willing to pay more for well-established and popular brands. Building a successful brand identity is a competitive advantage and a lever to increase sales and profit. However, it should be borne in mind that an approach that is successful in one market would be a failure of another if not taking into account the natural assets and cultural differences in the region. Both communication and the product itself have to be adapted for the local market.

The proposal of Natural Park “Strandzha” is for the criteria for obtaining and using this trademark to be introduced in the accommodation places - guest houses; family hotels and all other tourist sites interested in the process and its benefits, as well as to entrepreneurs offering services related to tourism in the area. This process is a system of voluntary certification of quality and sustainable use of resources in tourist sites and other businesses related to the park territory. For this reason, sites must first be categorized or categorized and maintain a consistent level of quality according to their category.

The brand will be used both by entrepreneurs in the tourism business as well as by local producers and craftsmen. It will be awarded by a Local Certification Group, which includes independent assessors, representatives of the DPP “Strandzha” and the local communities for a period of 3 years, after which the sites again undergo a certification process. The goal is to demonstrate that they continue to meet the high standards of service quality and environmental friendliness, namely:

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- focusing on the natural environment, cultural and historical landmarks in the region through pictures, printed and electronic materials, contact with guides and the opportunity to communicate with nature in an appropriate way;
- emphasis on the good interpretation of the park's natural values, knowledge of the natural and cultural landmarks of the area, as well as the problems related to reducing the negative influence of human activity on nature;
- Proven practice of environmental sustainability and minimal negative environmental impact, including advice to guests about environmental protection.
- contributing to nature conservation and supporting activities related to sustainable tourism, the Park and the protection of the wildlife;
- support for NGOs working to protect the environment, protect guests from the purchase of goods related to rare and protected species, etc .;
- contributing to the local community and hiring local staff;
- offering local products and souvenirs, furnishing mainly with Bulgarian goods, inclusion in the menu of traditional dishes and beverages for the region;
- respect for local culture and integration of relevant cultural elements from the region or prepared with the involvement of the local community;
- information and interpretative programs to accurately and accurately portray local culture and traditions;
- customer care.



### **Necessity of entering a brand:**

The need for voluntary certification is due to the fact that for tourists from economically developed countries the guarantee of good quality of services is of particular importance and in some cases is crucial when deciding on the choice of destination and place of accommodation. The same is expected to apply to Bulgarian tourists as Bulgaria's membership in the EU will increasingly require the imposition of high quality standards for services and products. The assessment of the quality of services in the area is an important marketing tool that aims to help local small businesses, improve their market positions and increase their sales. The objects and services that make up the Strandzha brand provide personalized service and direct contact with the local community, an opportunity to experience the local lifestyle, culture and traditions, including cuisine and drinks. The main competitive advantage is proven environmental sustainability and care for preservation and preservation of natural and anthropogenic resources on the territory of the Park. The brand of proven quality will allow visitors in the area to choose quality accommodation and ancillary services, relying on the branded guarantee. [6]

An important result of the voluntary certification process under the “Strandzha” standards is that the tourist sites and the companies that own the trademark offer authentic services and experiences to the consumers in the area. There is an opportunity to attract sustainable market interest and to provide local businesses with a niche based on an original product that guarantees a different experience than what mass tourism offers in Bulgaria. The “Strandzha” Quality Brand proves to the guests that the houses, family hotels and services have undergone a solid and responsible evaluation process aimed at meeting the needs of visitors to the area. Only categorized objects can wear the trademark for quality after having undergone an independent evaluation. Up to now, certified sites are 30, of which 29 are accommodations and one tourist attraction.

## **VII. Major tourist flows in the border region. Directions, peculiarities, perspectives. Opportunities that Anthropogenic Monuments of Culture Provide.**

First, before commenting on and analyzing the circumstances, the opportunities, the supply, the capacity, the quality, the main tourist flows, where they are currently moving, and how and under what circumstances, those interested can be directed to the new thematic routes that will show them a new, a mysterious world.

Unique wealth that only this region has in Europe. Richness inherited and accumulated for millennia and transformed and enriched by anthropogenic genius over the long period of human history with which this area is rich.

But first, what is the current state of the region, and what state of mind it provides.

As we have noted in many places, the area in question is peripheral, borders both for Bulgaria and for the European Union. It is a border region between two world religions, Christianity and Muslims. Here, history and politics have artificially pushed through a dividing line, soaked with many blood, weighing in atrocities, sorrow, grief, destruction, memories and graves, through these three Bulgarian mountains the state border between Bulgaria and Turkey was pushed through.

The border region of the Strandzha Mountain, the Dervent Heights and the Sakar Mountains is problematic and very backward in economic terms and with very bad demographic indicators for more than 50 years. The region's problems have gotten terrifying in the past 20 years.

Most of the settlements are extinct in the Strandzha Mountain, the Dervent Heights and the Sakar Mountains. The exception is the

Black Sea coast of the Strandzha Mountain and the Maritsa River valley, which are radically different from the rest of the region.

The region has a considerable untapped resource potential for the development of anthropogenic cultural tourism based on the monuments of the developed millennial anthropogenic culture. For the development of ecotourism, organic farming, livestock, beekeeping, light and food industry. Resource potential that is not used to be in favor of the state.

Appropriate local and state policy is needed and concrete practical measures are needed to enable this rich and blessed Bulgarian region to occupy and acquire its proper place.

At present, the main flows of visitors to the region are directed seasonally mainly to the Black Sea coast. The border region is mainly visited during the warm half-year, with the predominant part of the guests mostly during the summer season June-September

A very small decrease is the number of visitors in the spring and autumn. Winter can still be called dead-season for tourism for this border region. The area offers attractions and attractions that could form a year-round flood of visitors to the region, and the tourism industry can become a revenue-generating sector throughout the year. And the results will be both social, demographic and economical, and will lead the region out of its collapse.

The fact that we offer cultural anthropogenic monuments as an alternative for year-round tourism is based on a wide and unassuming capacity that may hide many more exciting outbursts. This is a forgotten wealth that can give image, reputation, popularity, means, and a strong social effect, the question is business and state to take along in this inbred but gracious way. This is one of the main directions for future development, the population could take over the

region to take up its rightful place in the country. Yes, the wealth is great, and the capabilities of the state for the moment are limited, which is a shame. The main passenger and tourist flows are mostly based on peripheral reasons. And the main part of the area is not used at all.

Despite the available capacity, but suffering from a lack of many key and important factors, the region fell into long agony, ruined and vanishing for more than 50 years. This irretrievably backward region will agonize more and more and which, without state support, can not cope, it lacks its own human resource that does not have the necessary human, economic, infrastructure capacity, and has very poor demographics.

Today major Republican transport thoroughfares pass on the periphery of the area, they also take the main year-round tourist flow. Both transited and directed to the Bulgarian ambitions.

The two main road arteries, which are used throughout the year, include the main road A1 and the Maritza highway, which is part of the European road E 80, this important transport artery runs along the Maritsa valley and connects Europe with Turkey, Middle and Middle East. Through this route there is a year-round passenger and tourist flow from Europe to Asia and vice versa. This is the main route for the state. This route has economic, transport, tourism and social importance throughout the year.

Another important transport artery for the region is the first-class road 9, which is part of the European corridor E 87 from Constanta / Romania / on the Black Sea coast via Varna, Burgas, Tsarevo, Malko Tarnovo, to Turkey – town Kirklareli.

This is also the main tourist destination, which is the busiest during the summer season, but it is used all year round. On this route you can reach every point of the southern Black Sea coast and a

significant part of the eastern Strandzha, to feel the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, the soul of the mountain and the pearl of Strandzha in Malko Tarnovo. This tourist destination leads to the different Bulgarian seaside resorts situated to the south of Bourgas to the border with Bulgaria. Republic of Turkey. Many of the amenities along the southern Black Sea coast and the municipalities of Sozopol, Primorsko, Tsarevo and Malko Tarnovo can be seen along this route. This route can take tourists to some of the most unique anthropogenic cultural monuments in the region.

The most important transport, economic and social significance for the area has the following roads, which pass through the whole area and are decisive for its life. These are the Second Class roads 98 Burgas - Malko Tarnovo,

In recent years, with the opening of the Lesovo - Hambazayli - Edirne border crossing, first - class road 7 has become important as a new North - European transport corridor. Through it can be reached and visited the municipal center of Elhovo, and through its branches can be visited, a protected area and the cave Dranci dupka near Melnitsa village, the Thracian rock sanctuary with Melnitsa and Lower Tundzha Gorge near the village of Lesovo

The international road E87 and the second class road Burgas - Malko Tarnovo are the most important transport for the Bulgarian Strandzha. These are the roads that take over the automobile and human traffic on the mountain and the coast. A second-class road 79 Bourgas - Elhovo, which connects the regional center of Burgas with western Strandzha, passes along the periphery of the whole Dervent Heights, connecting them with the small regional center for the region - Elhovo. Another important transport corridor for the region is a second-class road 76 from the town of Elhovo - to the town of Harmanli, the river from the valley of the Tundja to the valley of the

Maritsa river, a road that crosses the Sakar Mountain and is the most important for the region throughout the year. These two routes and their branches are the major transport arteries that have a vital determinant of the entire region, and they can, along with their deviations from those who wish to the important monuments of human culture and building genius in the area.

The tourist flow, which moves along the main road 9 seasonally and all year round, is directed, attracted and strives to reach the monuments of human culture and the beauty of the nature along the southern Black Sea coast, the tourist flow is most active during the warm half-year.

If you are traveling along this route, natural landmarks and monuments of anthropogenic culture can be visited in: Kraimorie, Atia, Chernomorets, Sozopol, Primorsko, Kiten, Lozenets and Tsarevo along the coast. You can touch unique places of worship from the Strandzha Mountain to Malko Tarnovo and the villages of Gramatikovo, Kondolovo and Bulgari. On this route you can touch the spirit and architecture preserved from the days of ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantium.

Touching the grandeur and beauty of the Natural Magic of Strandzha Mountain. Next to the enchantment and magic of the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast with its sheltered bays and rocky shores.

Close to the route there are sights that will entice you. The castle in Ravadinovo, the Ropotamo Nature Reserve, the Thracian cult complex Beglik tash and Mishkova niva, the tomb of the locality. Falls, the ancient magic of Indipasha, the fire dance of the Nestinars and the beauties of Maslen Nose, the valleys of the Veleka and Rezovska rivers, are unforgettable experiences.

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From main road 9 you can take a trip to objects that will touch your senses and soul. Namely deviation from Tsarevo to the south to Rezovo. Here you will be impressed by Ahtopol, the mouth of the Veleka River and the beautiful sheltered bays like Silistar.

An interest may be the deviation to the right of the road before Atia to the right to the village of Rosen - Veselie village - Yasna Polyana and from there to the town of Primorsko.

The other main transport corridor for Bulgarian Strandzha is a secondary road 98 from Burgas to Malko Tarnovo and from there to the Republic of Turkey. This time deviates from Kraimorie to Strandzha Mountain, passing through the villages of Marinka, Krushevets, Zvezdets, Malko Tarnovo and the border with Turkey.

This way you will touch the tender and pure heart of Strandzha Mountain. This is an incredible journey and experience in gentle beauty and enchanting the fresh and fresh nature. At Bosna junction it is possible to take a trip to the right to the village of Byala Voda, the village of Kalo Vidin and Kondolovo, and to the left you are immersed in the embrace of Strandzha and along the small and beautiful Varovnik you reach the Tagarevo / Valchanov / secondary road 79.

Other interesting deviations you can make from a secondary road are 98 from the village of Marinka to the village of Tvurditsa, the village of Dimchevo, the village of Prasad, the village of Zidarovo, the village of Gabar, the village of Vurshilo. Branches from the road are to the village of Izvor, the village of Novo Panicharevo, the village of Yasna Polyana and the town of Primorsko, as well as for the village of Indzhe voivoda the village of Byala voda and the village of Brashlyan.

Along the way you can visit Ancient Thrace and its culture to touch the ancient rock sanctuaries, megaliths, chapels, to touch the

interesting Strandzha architecture and religious sites. To be one with a mountain and its tender breath and bewitch.

For the three mountains with the highest importance transport, economic and social are the second class roads 79 from Burgas - Sredets - Elhovo and second class road 76 from Elhovo - Topolovgrad - Harmanli.

This is, of course, part of the shortest route from the White to the Black Sea. It starts from the city of Komotini / Greece / through the Makaza pass - Kardzhali - Harmanli - Elhovo - Burgas.

This time is the main one for the Western Strandzha, for the Derwent Heights as well as for the Sakar Mountains. This route is the largest passenger flow and freight transport for the region.

On this route, tourists can get acquainted with anthropogenic building landmarks from antiquity to the present day and follow the development and achievements of human construction genius from antiquity to the present day. This time travelers can get to know a wide range of attractions built impressively long before the new era.

These are ancient megalithic monuments / dolmens / in Sakar Mountain, the village of Hlyabovo: bicameral dolmen "Nachova chair" dug dolmen "Evdzhika" double dolmen "Gaydarova peshtera" double dolmen "Belata treva". Along the road southwest of Topolovgrad, on one of the peaks of Sakar Mountain is situated the largest Thracian rock sanctuary of the Sun - Paleocastro peak. In a Knyajevo along the road already eight years running study of unique Thracian and Macedonian ruler's home from the time of Philip of Macedonia, Alexander of Macedonia and his followers. The site can be visited all year round, the Municipality of Topolovgrad will turn it into a suitable tourist attraction.

Interesting fortification and urban construction facilities from the antiquity along the route can be seen and touched with Debelt, namely the ancient Roman Colony Flavia Pacis Deultensium (Columna Flavia Pacis Deultensium, shortly Deultum) The colony was founded during the rule of the

Flavian Dynasty in Rome, and more specifically in the years of Emperor Vespasian in the 70s of the I<sup>st</sup> century. The colony was founded near the already existing Thracian settlement Develt or Debelt from where the name of the colony originates.

The colony emerged as a settlement of veterans of VIII Augustus legion, which under Roman law were probably landed in a rather large area between the lakes of Burgas and Mandrensko.

In the town of Sredets you can visit the antique and medieval fortress of Potamukastel, located southwest of the town, the Karabunarsko house and the historical museum, as well as the base of the town "Bozhura".

There are interesting religious sites such as Sredets, Elhovo, Topolovgrad, Harmanli and other interesting places along the road. The museums in the mentioned towns. Ethnographic and architectural sites in Sredets and Bolyarovo.

In Topolovgrad you can see the statue of "the Blessing Christ", this is the first stone monument of the Son of God in Bulgaria and 4th among the most famous in the world (after those in Rio de Janeiro, Cusco and Poland). Such a statue is a novelty for Orthodoxy, although it is an old tradition in Catholic countries.

From these two important second-class roads to the region, there are many deviations to settlements to the border areas of the region and to the interior of the country, some of these deviations lead to interesting and remarkable natural and anthropogenic creations.

We will mention the most interesting of them, and you can take advantage of them and visit them, these deviations can take you to unique monuments of ancient human culture, enveloped in oblivion, for how long...

Deviation from Tagarevsko / Vulchanovo / inn in the village Varovnik: By this detour you enter the enchantment of western Strandzha, you can visit the Golyamo Bukovski Monastery, the only mountain in the Strandzha mountain. If you wish, you can visit unique megalithic monuments in the villages of Kirovo, Granichar and Belevren.

The road entrance to the village of Fakia and the villages of Momina tsarkva, Gorno and Dolno Yabalkovo - this is an interesting route that can immerse you in the magic of western Strandzha, the warmth and coziness of the Bulgarian village. To touch and hear the old heroic Strandzha stories about the

Bimbalov family in the village of Fakia, visit the largest village in Strandzha Momina Church, beautiful and pure nature.

After 3 km Southwest from the town of Bolyarovo to the left of the road there are deviations to the village of Mamarchevo and to the villages of Malko Sharkovo, Voden, Strandzha and Kraynovo. This route will immerse you in the breathtaking scenery of the Derwent Heights. You can visit Malko Sharkovo Dam The dam has the largest landfill wall in Bulgaria and has a maximum volume of 55 million cubic meters. The area of the Malko Sharkovo Dam is 3.9 km<sup>2</sup>. The fishermen here can rely on good catfish, bass, toothbrush, white fish, karaoke, perch, crocus, carp, clay, catfish, etc. A place for relaxation and short breaks.

This route can also be visited by some of the most interesting anthropogenic monuments in the Derwent Heights, namely the medieval Christian monastery south of the village of Voden, near the villages of Strandzha and Krainovo. Nature is splendid, the villages are beautiful but empty for regret.

5 km before the town of Elhovo to the left of the road there is a branch for the villages of Malomirovo, Slaveikovo, Lalkovo, Sitovo, Iglia, Chernozem, Razdel and Golyam Derwent. This is the last deviation from the road that is worth to be done because in the village of Goliam Derwent you will meet and touch some of the most interesting magnificent ancient constructions on our lands – the Dolmen near the village of Golyam Derwent.

When visiting Elhovo visit the Ethnographic and Archaeological Museum and the church "St. Dimitar".

In Sakar Mountain, the most important transport artery, which has high traffic all year round, is the second class road 76 from Elhovo through Topolovgrad to Harmanli, where it flows into the A 1 road and the Maritza highway.

If you are traveling along this main road to Sakar Mountain, you can find treasures of human genius, creations from the dawn of human culture that impress with its dimensions, building genius and power of thought. These are the ancient megalithic monuments in the Sakar Mountains, the land of the village of Hlyabovo: the two-chamber dolmen "Nachov's Chairi", the dug-in dolmen "Evdzhik", the two-chamber dolmen "Byalata treva".

After Bogomil village you can reach the road 7604 and after 4 km. climbing and downhill you reach the village of Ovcharovo, along which is the menhira Chuchul stone. It is assumed that the site played an important role in the cult of fertility to inhabit this region local Thracian tribes, who have performed seasonal rituals around the stone. In a later period, there were folk gatherings at the Chuchul stone.

Along the road southwest of town Topolovgrad, on one of the peaks of Sakar Mountain is situated the largest Thracian rock sanctuary of the Sun - Paleocastro peak.

In the village of Knyazhevo, along the road, for 8 years, the study of a unique Thracian and Macedonian rulers' home from the age of Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great and his followers took place. The site can be visited all year round, the Municipality of Topolovgrad will turn it into a suitable tourist attraction.

In Topolovgrad you can see the statue of "the Blessing Christ", this is the first stone monument of the Son of God in Bulgaria and 4th among the most famous in the world (after those in Rio de Janeiro, Cusco and Poland). Such a statue is a novelty for Orthodoxy, although it is an old tradition in Catholic countries. The city can see four churches, three of which are active, several interesting chapels and a municipal museum of history. From Topolovgrad you can take excursions to some interesting natural sites in the Sakar Mountains.



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Interest will be a deviation from the road 76 to the left at the village of Knyazhevo to the village of Srem - the village of Ostrem with Radovets third class road 761. From the village of Radovets to the second class 55 the third-class road is numbered 5507 and passes through the village of Studena - the village of Levka - the village of Pastrogor - town Svilengrad. On this interesting route you can see ancient anthropogenic monuments that have no analogues not only in Bulgaria but also on the Balkan Peninsula. In the village of Knyazhevo, along the road, for 8 years, the study of a unique Thracian and Macedonian rulers' home from the age of Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great and his followers took place. From the village of Knyazhevo to the village of Srem, the road moves scenic through the Srem Gorge formed here by the river Tundzha.

Then you reach the largest village in the Sakar Mountains village of Ustrem where you can relax and visit the Church of St. Dimitar. 3.5 km from the village is the only active monastery in Sakar Mountain - the female monastery "St. Trinity". The monastery has a long history, starting from the rock cave church during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, burned three times during the Ottoman rule, sheltered famous Bulgarian haidouts such as Indzhe voivoda, Kara Kolyu, Hristo voyvoda, Kara Thanas, Garapchi Georgi and others and it is not accidentally called the Haiduk Monastery. A major event for southeastern Bulgaria is the annual fair held in the temple feast. There are interesting natural sites along the monastery.

After the village Ustrem passes through the villages of Radovets and Studena and from the center of the village of Studena goes south to the villages of Sladun and Matochina. At the village of Matochina, on the very border with the Republic of Turkey, there is the ancient fortress Bukelon and the Dekili kaya rock church.



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The fortress is situated on a small hill above the village of Matochina, whose slopes are hard to reach, and in places completely inaccessible, except from the south, where the road leads from the village. The ridge of the hill is relatively flat and resembles a small plateau.

The medieval tower of the 13th-14th century, a type of deposit, is well preserved. The height of the remains of the tower is about 18 meters and they represent a magnificent view, filling the panorama of the region.

The rock church at Locality "Dekilikaya" near the village of Matochina. This rock church is excavated 2 km southwest of the village of Matochina in a rocky hill. The local population calls the object "Decili kaya". It dates back to the 10th century. It is shaped like a rectangular arched room that enters through a small, also arched corridor. The total length of the facility is 14.05 m, and only the corridor is 4.20 m. The height of the vault is 3 m. To the left of the entrance to the rock are visible cut steps that lead to the ridge of the hill where the church is located. There are traces of graves buried in the rock.

After looking at these forgotten majestic human creations, you return back through the dead village of Varnik, in the village of Sladun, and navigate on the third-class road 5509, which reaches Svilengrad.

After 5 km you can reach the rock church "St. Panteleimon" shortly before Mikhalich village. The church is situated on a hill southeast of the village of Mikhalich (1km) and is carved on the rocky terrace in the locality "Aipando" on the steep and western slope. The rock church in the village of Michalic is the only one in Bulgaria with a unique three-premises form. The whole is cut / carved/ into a limestone rock. In plan, it represents a truly arched three-premises church, as if it were made of ordinary building material. Its internal space is perceived as a cross-dome.



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Unseen architects have achieved a remarkable resemblance to classical cross-church Christian temples. Crosses have been carved in several places on the walls. The church is entered through stairs, monumentally cut into the rocks, with 14 steps. Aside are formed niches for putting gifts and icons. It seems that there was a wooden shed over the open staircase, showing the holes in the side rocks. The rock church at Mihalich is distinguished by all the rock churches in Bulgaria in its complex, three-premises form, which is found on the Balkan Peninsula only in the buildings built in the ancient period and in the churches in the Early Byzantine period. It was probably done in the restless years of the X century...

Then the road passes through the villages of Pashovo, Shtit and Raikova mogila and reaches the town of Svilengrad.

The road 5507 from Studena village can be continued on the hill of Dervish Mogila and from there descends to the small valley where the village of Levka is situated, from where it continues and soon reaches the lake Levka and second class road 55 through which the village of Pastrogor is reached to the town of Svilengrad.

From the junction “Golyama zvezda” you can take to Lyubimets. On this route you can see megaliths near the village of Izvorovo and the forgotten excavations of the Roman road station and Castra Rubra fortress, and near the village of Jerusalemovo you can touch the beauties of the protected area Bakurlia.

We have described many places and directions you can take, of course, if you have desire, if you are interested, if you are a little adventurer, if you love your country if you want to dive and relax in the pure nature and feel the spirit of the real Bulgaria. And the state is the time to understand what riches is going on, and how it condemns irreversible disappearance a glorious Bulgarian region.

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