

MACEDONIAN VILLAGES

LIFE MUSEUMS OF THE PAST
THE UNTOUCHED BEAUTY OF THE MACEDONIAN VILLAGES

THE WINE ROAD

THE HEADY POWER OF THE MACEDONIAN WINE



Ministry of Economy
Tourism Department


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Springs with foam water, high and green forests, mountain peaks that capture you with their beauty, the ecological apples that grow at 1.200 meters above the sea level, are only part of the values that Macedonian villages have. Located in mountain bosom, they are enchanting with their authentic architecture, warmth and cordiality of their hosts. Windmills where flour is still made, old bobbins, making pipes and flutes that produce the sounds of the folk songs and dances are part of the mosaic of the Macedonian villages.

To wake up with a view at Prespa Lake, to feel the excitement of the visit to the unique snake island Big City or to touch the three-century old, hand-made folk costume-is there anything more exciting than that!. In the morning try a local desert made of figs or mush, for launch try fresh "gjomleze" baked under vrshnik (iron pan for baking a bread), in the evening before you go to bed, have a liquor made in Strumica and nail your look to the beautiful mountain of Belasica. Then you'll feel Macedonia.



The country is abundant with untouched beauty and villages, which have kept the architecture of several centuries ago. The most attractive for visitors are the villages beside the lakes in Prespa and Ohrid region, but also the mountain rare locations on mountains Bistra, Korab, Karaorman, Maleshevo or Osogovo. The eco-tourism in the picturesque village Brajcino and the village tourism in Ljubojno, Stenje, Dolno Dupeni, Trpejca, Pestani, Bukovo, Modric, Drenok, Galicnik, Lazaropole, the areas

of Malesija and Azot are the chief assets for development of the village tourism in Macedonia. Beside the accommodation in a rural area, collecting forest fruits, mowing grass, milking the cattle, enjoying the local food and the fresh air, tourists have the possibility to walk the surrounding mountains and familiarize themselves with the cultural riches and the monasteries.

The village Brajcino, hidden in the bosom of the mountain Baba, with fresh air of Pelister and bathed in Prespa sun, is unique in many

ways. It is only 15 minutes drive from Prespa Lake and it is very close to the National Park "Pelister". The five churches and the monastery around the village, dating back in the 16th century, brings back the spirit of the past, complemented with specific village architecture of the 19th century. For the restless seekers of new adventures, the six-hour walk to the "Big Lake" in the middle of mountain Pelister, at a height of 2.200 meters is very attractive. There from one may visit the villages of Magarevo, Nizepole or





Maloviste, villages with rich architecture and specific traditional food.

For the lovers of water and birds, interesting destinations are the isle "Big City", Ezerani, as well as, Podmocani, where the museum with the richest collection of folk costumes is located. The private museum of folk costumes, owned by Jone Eftimovski, in the village Podmocani, recently has been enriched with a folk costume dating 300 years ago.

Don't forget to visit the church of "St. George", near Kurbinovo, because of the wonderful frescoes dating back in 1191. The specific wall decoration of the church is one of the best examples of the Middle Ages painting in the country. On the "Big City" island traces may be found of different historical periods, among which the churches of "St. Peter" and "St. Dimitrij" from the 14th century. Today, the island is home of rare plants, such as foie and animal life of different types of birds that are real tourist attraction for observation.



Unique in its own beauty is also the region Reka, located in the Western part of the country, between Mavrovo and Debar, on one side, and between the Albanian border and Kicevo area, on the other. The Reka region was named after the Radika River and its tributary Mala Reka. The people from this area have always been famous as masters of frescoes and painting, xylographers, builders, mosaic masters and are among the most often hired in Italy and Europe.

The borders of the region match the borders of the National Park "Mavrovo". There you can find endemic plants, such as "Gostivar violet", than rock fields, observation points and slopes in the heart of Bistra mountain, where you would have a possibility to see few of the folds, where tasty cheeses are produced. Within the limits of the park, there are 36 rare villages, 14 of which are completely empty.

The most picturesque village is Galichnik, famous for the traditional event "Galichnik Wedding". Each year, young couples from all over the country and abroad, dressed in richly decorated folk costumes from Galichnik, are being wed at the most massive wedding, held according to the traditional rituals. On St. Peter's Day (July 12) Galichnik roars with the sounds of zurles, drums and songs that follow the ritual procession. As it goes with the tradition, the bride first goes to bring water, together with



her friends, while her groom is being shaved at the doorstep of his house. The in-laws take the bride from her home, climbed on a horse and take her to the house of the groom, where she makes bread and offers the guests with wine.

Deeper in the womb of the mountain at the chutes of the Mala River rises the phenomenal bridge "Deer's Leap". Take a moment there and admire the hanging bridge with interesting construction, built without iron and concrete. The legend says it was built in the 18th century by an Ottoman Bey who was delighted by the leap of a deer from one to the other side of the river and in its honor he built the bridge. According to other stories, the bridge was built for the remembrance of a boy, who in an attempt to defend the honor of his girlfriend, killed an Ottoman Bey.

The splendor of nature may be best felt at the monastery of "St. John the Baptizer". The complex built from a scale stone is famous as Bigorski monastery. It was established in 1020

and it has one of the most famous iconostasis work of the xylographers Petre Filipovski-Garkata and Makarija Frckovski from the village Galicnik.

The canyon on the Radika River is enchanting with the clear mountain water, surrounded by thick vegetation, as well as with the abundance of trout fish, which lures the fishing lovers. The scientists have researched over 30 caves, 10 meters long, in the upper part of the Radika River. Outstanding with its beauty is the cave "Simka", which is 500 meters long.

For the local people of different parts of the country, waterfalls are places where religious holidays are celebrated, where illnesses are healed, where winter is bid farewell and spring welcome. Believed it or not, there are about 150 waterfalls in Macedonia. The highest one is on mountain Korab. It is 138 meters high and is located under the top Mal Korab, near the former village Zuznje.

Hidden in the deepest forests, visited

only by the bravest and the most persistent nature lovers, the waterfalls may be a unique event and adventure. There are waterfalls on the mountains Korab, Shara, Jablanica, but the most visited are the waterfall in Smolare and Koleshino, at the slopes of the mountain Belasica. At the border between Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece, at 650 meters above the sea level the Smolare waterfall is located. It is one of the biggest waterfalls on Belasica, where the water falls from the rocks at a height of 35-40 meters. The area around the waterfall is abundant with vegetation and moss that never changes its green color. Here, during winter, nature creates the most beautiful icicles hanging over the rocks. In front of the waterfall there is a hole for which the locals tell their own story. The legend says that King Marko jumped with his horse from the waterfall, and the horse's shoe made a hole in the stone. The people from Smolare call this hole "dira".

Near the Smolare waterfall is located the

Kolesino waterfall. It is in the south-east part of the country, in the lower flow of the Baba River. It is 21 meters high, with fall width of about 16 meters, and is of the step-type of waterfalls.

On the road between the two waterfalls, at 300 meters above the sea level, are located the Mokrino springs. These are among the strongest waterfalls on this mountain, with capacity of about 100 liters in second. The view is amazing-the water springs from century-old trees, with old, fat roots, coming out on the surface. These springs are traditional place where the inhabitants of the village Mokrino gather.

Near is the spa "Bansko", with remains of Roman spas, the Monospitovo moor, remaining from the glacier period, as well as the monasteries of Veljusa and Vodoca, from the 10th century. Vodoca monastery is far famous as a place where the soldiers of Tsar Samuil were blinded, after their defeat in the battle of Belasica by the Byzantine emperor Basil the Second, after which the village was named.

Macedonia is also a land of carnivals. Traditionally, they are held during winter time, in the New Year's period, but also in spring and they are characteristic for several regions in the country. Each carnival has its own feature, colorfulness and different symbolism. The cheerful and masked faces in Bitola region are called "babari", in Ohrid region-"vasilicari", in Skopje and Kavadarci regions-"dzamalari".

For those who would like to dive into the roots of the Macedonian tradition, a real rarity is to attend the "Vevcani carnival". It has been held in continuity for 1.400 years, from the establishment of the village itself, and since 1993 the "Vevcani carnival" is a member of the World Carnival Federation. For the 48 hours, during the carnival customs, the whole area around Vevcani transforms into a huge theater, where on an open stage you can see the most creative and most mystical masks.

You wonder how the carnival began? The legend says that a boy, who was the most beau-

tiful boy in Vevcani, before going abroad to work, has been engaged with the most beautiful girl in the village. However, while working abroad, the boy fell from a tall building and suffered severe scars on his face. In winter, when his friends returned to Vevcani, he asked them to hide their faces with masks, so that his fiancé could easier get used to his scared face. This was the origin of the carnival in Vevcani, village located in the foot of the mountain Jablanica. The rich architecture, the colorful nature and the abundant waters of the Vevcani springs, but also the untamed spirit of its inhabitants who proclaimed their village a "Republic", introducing Vevcani currency and passport for entry in the village, lure huge number of visitors that come to feel the spirit of this place.

The roots of the "Strumica carnival" originate in Pagan times, giving special mark to this region. The game lasts for days, and Strumica is filled with thousands of curious visitors from the country and abroad. If you would like to feel





the magic of the carnival, join the procession, mask yourself and try to be part of the tradition. Maybe this year you would be the one to win, because of your imagination and creativity, in the selection of the best mask. During the days of the carnival the city offers a unique opportunity to enjoy and try the famous papers and tasty "ajvar" from Strumica, and as an aperitif try "stumica liquer".

If you like home made pies and baked beans, then you must visit the village "Lesok" in Tetovo, at the foot of Shara mountain. Here, at 550 meters above the sea level, you may start with sausages and tasty wine, but also with baked beans from Leshok, "komat" and "turi-potpeci" specialty. You can enjoy the local food while sitting in the beautiful nature and the wide oak forest or in the yard of the Leshok monastery, one of the most beautiful in the region.

In the mountain village Berovo, in the eastern part of the country, you would be welcome with specialties made of local potatoes and liq-

uor made of special plums. While you are in one of the highest mountain villages don't miss to try the famous Berovo broth, special meat-pie and "komitsko" lamb. Those who easily get colds or have problems with the respiratory system will find their cure in Berovo region. The locals prepare pine honey-syrup from the young pine cones, used for healing colds, but also tasty as a desert. From the local customs, the most famous are the celebrations devoted to the day of the "Dormition of the Virgin Mary", when big cauldrons with food are prepared as a sacrifice for health and fertility, as well as the traditional masquerade "Bamburci". Especially attractive for visit is the lake "Mladost", surrounded by pine forests and the unbelievably clean air.

The inhabitants of the highest settlement on the Balkans-Krushevo may be proud of the sweet "celuvki" and the famous Turkish delight from Krushevo. This small but revolutionary city, famous as a centre of the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 and the first Republic on the Balkan, for liberation from the Ottoman rule, still treas-

ures the memories of the famous past. Witness to this are the monuments: "Makedonium", "Meckin Kamen", "Sliva" and "Kale", which beside their huge historical value, have also natural and cultural importance. In summer, attractive for the visitors are the walks in the forest and in winter the city is full with winter sports fans. Krusevo is also a favorite place for the paragliders, due to the excellent conditions that the mountain offers for this adventure.

If you search for undiscovered beauties and places, visit the mountain Plackovica, where the villages of Yurutsi, are located. These people nourish very specific and for many, unknown culture and tradition. The patriarchal way of life is one of the basic features for the inhabitants of these villages in the municipality of Karbinci. They are recognizable also for their traditional architecture, way of life and costumes. The younger women and the girls wear colorful and picturesque costumes. In the villages one can try tasty dishes such as "alva", "madzun", "kus-kus".

THE WINE ROAD

THE HEADY POWER OF THE MACEDONIAN WINE

Each wine has its own secret story. It soaks the magic of the region where the grapes were cultivated, the warmth of the hand that gathered it, the skill of the wine maker that made the miraculous drink. The story of the Macedonian wines is cordial, friendly and colorful, since they have been cultivated in the most fertile regions bathed in the heat of the sun, in the flow of the Vardar River. Although Macedonian wines live their renaissance in the last ten years, the grapes have set their roots on this land a long time ago. The wines have slowly

but surely started their break through on the foreign markets and conquer the Europeans' sophisticated taste.

The archeological findings show that here wine was produced as early as in the 4th century B.C. In the area of Disan, a village 10 km from Negotino, ancient stone vessels for making wine were found, which were later replaced by wooden barrels that until today spread heady odour of the home-made wine. Whole families, in several regions in the country, taken by the power of wine, for generations now, from father to son, have conveyed the story of the healing power of the God's drink and continue the tradition of grapes cultivation.

The Macedonian tame climate has attracted the Serbian king Alexander Karadzordzevic, who in 1929 has chosen Demir Kapija for construction of a wine cellar, still existing as a wit-

ness of the past. Close to the wine cellar of the King Karadzordzevic is the royal villa, still splendid and magnificent in its appearance and architecture.

The wine map of Macedonia has two roads that invite you to visit them and research-southern and northern wine road. Both have their own stories to tell and tastes to be discovered. You should only carefully listen and moderately drink, because the wine has something to tell you. There is something in the saying: "Truth in wine" - "IN VINO VERITAS".

WINE REGIONS

While you travel down the flow of the Vardar River the grape fields follow you at you every step. There are grape fields in the regions of Skopje, Veles, Vinica, Ohrid, Tetovo



and Gevgelija. But the most recognizable and famous is the Tikvesh region, and in its centre – Kavadarci and Negotino, as the biggest producers of the heady liquid.

Macedonia is divided in three wine regions and about 20 wine lands. "Povardarie" is the central, the most famous and the biggest grape region, where 85% of the Macedonian wine is produced. This region covers Skopje, Veles, Tikvesh, Gevgelija-Vlandovo, Strumica, Ovcepolie and Kocani-Vinica wine lands. The grapes grow at 50 to 500 meters above the sea level, and the quality of wine is enriched by the Mediterranean and continental climate, filled with sunny days and mild winters. The Plagonija-Polog region covers the Prilep, Bitola, Prespa, Ohrid, Kicevo and Tetovo wine lands. Here, the grapes grow at 600 to 700 meters above the sea level, where in winter the climate is humid and cold, and the summers are dry and hot.

Pcinja-Osogovo is the third region marked on the wine map of Macedonia.

Today, hundreds of small, but also big wineries, scattered almost everywhere around the country, in autumn invest their knowledge, energy and love, with one aim-to overcome the quality of the last-year wine and produce new one that would be as tasty as possible, as the famous wine of the French region of Alsace.

The Tikvesh region, the main grape region in the country, where almost two thirds of the Macedonian grape fields are located, covers two big centers-the cities of Kavadarci and Negotino. This region got its name from the old ancient settlement of Tikvesh. The long and rich tradition of this area started in the period of Ancient Macedonia, when in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine, Dionysus days were held, feasts that lasted for days when wine was drank in big quantities.

In Roman times, in honor of the god Bacchus, twice a year, in this region, "Bahinari" were held, days of grape and wine, which were later prohibited. Ancient Macedonians and Romans nourished the tradition of grape cultivation, witnesses of which are the numerous mosaics discovered at the archeological sites in Tikvesh region. Grape cultivation, as an important economy branch in agriculture, continued to develop in the Middle Ages. Main centers were the monasteries and church lands where the best wine was prepared.



Today Tikvesh wine region has 10.000 hectares of grapes. The climate conditions enable the concentration of sugar in the grape to be 17-26 per mill and it contains acids of 5-8 percents, which is an ideal factor for processing it into high-quality wines with 11-13 percent of alcohol. Of the total arable land on the territory of the municipality of Kavadarci, which is 18.523 hectares, 4.264 are grape lands.

The natural and geographic conditions as well as the Mediterranean climate make it possible to cultivate the following sorts of grape: "Belgradska rana", "Julski Muscat", "Cardinal", "Afus-ali", as well as the following sorts of wine: "Vranec-Kartoshija", "Chardonnay", "Black Burgundy", "Merlot", as well as the white wines: "Chardonnay", "Zilavka", "Semion", "Shouvignon", "Italian and Rhine Riesling".

The concentration of the wine cellars per square meter is biggest in Negotino, where the most rewarded wines are produced. This region has developed the grape production in the first half of the last century, when few famous families produced high-quality wines. This tradition lives even today.

The first week of September in the Tikvesh region there are crowds of people. Wine producers and lovers of the rich drink gather at the central event in Kavadarci, where since 1964 the "Tikvesh Grape-gathering" event is held. This economic-tourism event marks the beginning of the mass grape gathering. The biggest attraction is the carnival procession along the city streets. At that time Kavadarci grows into a big walking place, where beside the pleasant company, the visitors may enjoy the fresh wines, fresh grapes, fired fish and meat prepared on ember.

A day for remembrance in the wine regions is the celebration of St. Triphun, protector of the grapes and wine. According to the stories, the Holly Martyr Triphun was born in Campasada in Phrygia, close to the city of Apamea. Because of his healing capabilities he healed the ill and chased away the bad demons. His wonders were heard of around. The word came also to the Tsar Gordian of Rome, whose daughter suffered from mental illness. He called the saint to heal his daughter Gordiana, which St. Triphun succeeded in, after which he became very famous. He died young, at 21, during the reign of Tsar Decie. He was tortured without mercy after he refused to renounce Christ and make

sacrifice for the Roman Gods.

While the World celebrates St. Valentine- The Day of Lovers, in our country on February 14, the grapes are ritually pruned. The old customs for fertile and happy year start in the morning with liturgy in the churches, where ritual pruning of the grape trees is done, and then people take one piece of the consecrated grape trees. Some with the consecrated water spray the grapes, hoping for a richer harvest the next year. In honor of the holiday, home-made wine and liquor are drunk and traditionally made pies and meals are eaten.

In our country one may find almost all recognized sorts of grape in the world. The Macedonian wines are listed in the group of southern wines, where the wines of Spain, Italy, Greece and France are listed. The most cultivated sorts of red grape are: "Cabernet", "Game", "Merlot", "Pinot Noar", "Vranec" and "Prokupec", and from the white: "Riesling", "Sauvignon", "Zilavka" and "Smederevka". The grape of the "Smederevka" sort is mostly present in the country and is used for production of white

wine. The red wine is mainly produced from the "Vranec" sort. Most of the domestic and foreign experts consider "Vranec" the most quality grape for production of a top class red wine. "Vranec" is listed in the category of exotic wines, which are trend in Europe. These are mature wines that have been kept for at least three years in the wine cellars. This sort doesn't have an intensive aroma, with a dominating plum taste and low concentrations of cherry juice. This is the feature that separates this wine among the other quality sorts produced in our country. There are about 50 wineries in Macedonia, and the estimations are that 3% of the world wine production is Macedonian.

For those that have never visited Macedonia, the country offers a possibility to enjoy the oldest wine cellars on the Balkan, to taste the liquid, which with much love, capability and tradition is transfused in the most drinkable and aromatic wine. The wine road is not only a road where one may find numerous small and big wineries, which enchant you with their simplicity, natural touch and hospitality

of the hosts. This is also a road where you may find out all hidden secrets about Macedonian archeological sites that would take thousands of years back in time, Roman and Turkish baths where you would like to take a bath and feel the healing feature of the thermal waters. The wine road is the road that shows Macedonia in all its splendor and abundance of deep forests, untouched lakes and rivers, ecological food and incredibly clean air that stimulates all senses. What you'd remember the most is the wine tasting in the huge wine cellars, surrounded by thousands of barrels spreading heady smell of fermented grapes. The offer of accommodation capacities and restaurants for wine tasting, as well as village houses where you may spent the night and enjoy the traditional Macedonian cuisine, rounds up the story of the heady power of the Macedonian wine. The people that once tried it would like to constantly feel the sweet and tame taste of the region soaked in the grape liquid.





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