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Bulgaria - Turkey



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CB005.2.21.103 “THE TREE OF LIFE”

JOINT GUIDE OF THE CROSS-BORDER PHOTO HUNTER



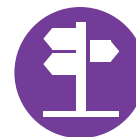
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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>page 4</i> |
| <i>What is photo hunting?</i> | <i>page 5</i> |
| <i>General map of cross-border region with districts Haskovo, Yambol, Burgas, Kirklareli and Odrin</i> | <i>page 8</i> |
| <i>Haskovo district</i> | <i>page 10</i> |
| <i>Yambol district</i> | <i>page 38</i> |
| <i>Burgas district</i> | <i>page 46</i> |
| <i>Kirklareli Province</i> | <i>page 66</i> |
| <i>Odrin Province</i> | <i>page 84</i> |
| <i>Concluding remarks</i> | <i>page 102</i> |

INTRODUCTION

Hello travelers, photographers and nature lovers. In this edition an attempt will be made to present some of the most attractive and interesting places for photo hunting on the Bulgarian-Turkish border. Five districts are included - three in Bulgaria and two in Turkey. All of them are rich in history and nature and for this reason a route has been developed that allows both photo hunting and visiting nearby and interesting cultural and historical sites. Within this route, fall two of the most beautiful rivers on the Balkan Peninsula - Arda and Maritsa. Along the rivers there are different species of animals and birds, and the views are wonderful. The Strandzha and Sakar mountains are also located within these five districts. They are low mountains, but on the other hand they captivate with their beauty, landscapes and rich flora and fauna. Strandja and Sakar are home to some of the rarest representatives of flora and fauna in Europe and the world.



The route starts from Haskovo district with the starting point in the town of Harmanli, and the end of the trip will be in the province of Odrin and the town of the same name. Before that, a little more information will be presented about photo hunting as an alternative type of tourism, for which there is a huge potential in the considered areas.

Have a nice trip!



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WHAT IS A PHOTO HUNTING?

Photo hunting in Bulgaria and Turkey is a relatively new sport. Both countries are considered good photo hunting destinations due to their rich biodiversity. Along the border between the two countries are places where some of the rarest species in Europe and also in the world have found a home. Such species are the bald eagle and the otter. But what exactly is photo hunting and why is it so popular in Western Europe and America? Basically, photo hunting is studying and searching of animal species. They are often rare and endangered species, and the aim here is capturing them. Sometimes the term "photo hunt" is used in a more general sense - photography in nature. With the advancement of technology, underwater photo hunting is becoming more and more popular.

The advantage over traditional hunting is that the animal species found by the "hunter" remain alive. This is an extremely sparing approach to the nature and biodiversity of the planet. At the same time, it is a great response to the many restrictions imposed mainly in Western Europe on traditional hunting. The ban on arms hunting is being introduced in many Central and Western European countries due to the fact that the number of many animal species is declining too fast. Deforestation, global warming, drought, overdevelopment and other human activities are just some of the problems leading to population decline. Given the need for serious efforts to protect flora and fauna, standard hunting is increasingly restricted or completely banned as one of the measures to protect biodiversity.

In most cases, wildlife photography requires basic equipment. However, this is not the case when it comes to capturing certain species of birds and mammals. Sometimes it takes a long preparation, equipment and free time to lurk on the site. It often happens that the "hunter" returns empty-handed, as is the case with standard hunting, but the satisfaction with nature remains.

In the early days of photography, it was very difficult to capture wild animals in their natural habitat. This was due to the still young photographic technique and the slow lenses, as well as the low sensitivity of the photographic media.

In 1880, photographic technology developed, and with it the shutters of the cameras became faster. This makes capturing animals in their natural environment more accessible. A development like this led to the fact that in 1884 the German Ottoman Anschunz took the first photograph of wild birds in flight. In 1906, National Geographic published its first photography of wild life. It was made by the American George Shiris III.

The equipment for taking quality photos in the wild is specific. Lenses with very long focal lengths - from 150 mm to 600 mm - are often used. This technique allows the photographer to take a good picture, and the subject of his photography can easily fill the frame. However, while much of the wild life is captured with telephoto lenses, wide-angle lenses are also suitable and can take striking pictures of wild life in their natural habitat. Specific photo-hunting equipment often includes various camouflage equipment, skins, covers, flash extensions and more.

Birds are often hunted. However, they have good eyesight, recognize many colors, and also remember objects. That is why it is good to choose appropriate camouflage when shooting birds in the wild. Also, stay in a secluded place long enough for the bird to get used to your presence and make sure you are not a threat. When shooting birds, it is desirable that the technique itself be covered by camouflage. There are also various devices for muffling the sound that the camera emits when shooting. It should not be forgotten that birds, as well as many wild animals, have more than a great sense of smell. Which means the photographer should not use any kind of perfume or deodorant.

The photo hunter is mostly an observer of what is happening in the wild. He should not interfere in any way in the behavior of his "model", nor should he make shots that could put the animal in an excessively stressful situation.

Practicing photo hunting requires soul, sense, patience and respect for nature. In the next part of this joint guide, the objects included in the prepared route will be presented, together with detailed maps, photos and information about them.



SLIVEN

STARA ZAGORA

YAMBOL

BURGAS

HASKOVO

КЪРДЖАЛИ

ODRIN

KIRKLARELI



BLACK SEA

MARMARA SEA

ISTANBUL



- ★ DISTRICT TOWN
- TOWN
- 📍 SITE/OBJECT
- HIGHWAY
- ROAD
- - - DISTRICT BORDER
- - - STATE BORDER
- RIVER
- 🌊 WATER BASAIN
- 📍 DISTRICT OF HASKOVO
- 📍 DISTRICT OF YAMBOL
- 📍 DISTRICT OF BOURGAS
- 📍 PROVINCE OF KIRKLARELI
- 📍 PROVINCE OF EDIRNE
- 📍 CULTURAL SITE
- 📍 BORDER POINT



KIRKLARELI

ODRIN



DISTRICT TOWN



TOWN



SITE/OBJECT



HIGHWAY



ROAD



DISTRICT BORDER



STATE BORDER



RIVER



WATER BASAIN



DISTRICT OF HASKOVO



DISTRICT OF YAMBOL



DISTRICT OF BOURGAS



PROVINCE OF KIRKLARELI



PROVINCE OF EDIRNE



CULTURAL SITE



BORDER POINT

DISTRICT OF HASKOVO





MARITSA RIVER

DIMITROVGRAD

SIMEONOVGRAD

HASKOVO

HARMANLI

LYUBIMETS

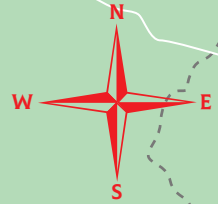
SVILENGRAD

ODRIN

ARDA RIVER

IVAYLOVGRAD

MARITSA RIVER



- I - The Arch Bridge / The park/ The Historical Museum/ The "Izvorat na Belongata" Monument**
- 1 - "The Harmanli River" Protected Area and Protected Area "Defileto"**
- 2 - The Maritsa river valley and the Harmanli ravine**
- 3 - "Sakar" Protected Area**
- 4 - The Meander of Arda near the town of Madzharovo**
- II - The Mezek Fortress/The Mezek Tomb**
- 5 - The old bridge over the river Maritsa, Svilengrad**
- III - The "Nachevi Chairi" Dolmen**
- IV - The Paleokastro, near the town of Topolovgrad**
- 6 - The Koriata area near the town of Topolovgrad**

I - The Arch Bridge (The Humpback Bridge), Harmanli

We start our journey from the Haskovo region and more precisely from the town of Harmanli. Before moving on to the unique natural sites, however, it is mandatory to visit several historical, cultural and urban natural landmarks. In the first place is the restored architectural jewel of the town of Harmanli - the Arch Bridge. The bridge was built in 1585 by the Ottoman authorities and was restored in 2021 as an immovable cultural property of local significance. The purpose of the bridge was to facilitate the caravans that crossed the Olu Dere River (today's Harmanliyska river). Today there is no river under the Humpback Bridge. It is built with typical Ottoman architecture. There is also a Stella on the bridge, written in Old Turkish with a message for centuries, part of which reads:

"The world is a bridge walked by the King and the Pauper."





I - The “Dimana Daneva” Park, Harmanli

Next to the emblematic for the city "Humpback Bridge" is the park "Dimana Daneva".The park is a public recreation area and can be easily visited - it is suitable for walking and photography.



I - The Historical Museum, Harmanli

The Historical Museum in Harmanli was established in 2000. The building also houses a library with nearly 1 500 volumes of literature. The museum has three departments - "Archeology", "Ethnography" and "New and Recent History", with almost entirely digitalized funds. The building itself was built after 1884 by Italian architect Pietro Montani, the chief architect of Eastern Rumelia, around 1884.





I - The "Izvorat na Belongata" Monument near the town of Harmanli

Great place to visit near the town of Harmanli, but at the same time isolated in nature. This is the monument "Izvorat na Belongata" named after the poem of the same name by Petko Slaveykov. Here is an old fountain, a monument and benches for relaxation. They are all very close to the city and far from it, nestled in the woods. The site is suitable for both recreation relaxing and photography in nature.

1 - "The Harmanli River" Protected Area

149 species of birds have been identified in the area of the Harmanli River. Of the species found there, 35 are of European conservation importance (SPEC) (BirdLife International, 2004). As a globally endangered in category SPEC1 is included 1 species - the small cormorant, and as endangered in Europe respectively in category SPEC2 - 20 species and in SPEC3 - 42 species.

The Harmanli River area is black hornbeam with the participation of Mediterranean elements. Along the Harmanli River, the riverside vegetation is represented by willow, elm and alder.

1 - Protected Area "Defileto"

It covers the defile of the river Harmanliyska in the area between the village of Bryagovo and the town of Harmanli. There are 252 species of plants on this area of over 1,200 hectares, 33 of which are protected by law. The beautiful Defileto area is inhabited by 149 species of birds, 49 of which are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. The region is part of the European Natura 2000 network. Harmanliyska River Protected Area and Defileto Protected Area are rated as extremely suitable for photo hunting.





2 - The Maritsa river valley and the Harmanli ravine

The ravine of the Maritsa River starts northeast of the town of Harmanli at the mouth of the Harmanliyska River and is directed to the southeast, in this section the ravine is the narrowest. The end of the ravine is north of the town of Lyubimets, at the mouth of the Biserska River. Here the Maritsa River separates Sakar from the Rhodopes. The ravine is cut into stable rocks. Its slopes are sloping, overgrown mainly with shrubs and small forest areas of hairy oak, virgil oak, hornbeam, dogwood, ash and other species. The diversity of birds in the area is also great.



3 - "Sakar" Protected Area

Sakar is a protected area of Natura 2000. The ridge of the mountain and the slopes over 400 m are overgrown with mixed forests of oak, linden, hornbeam, there are large areas of artificially planted pine forests. The lower parts of the protected area are occupied by agricultural areas and small forest areas of hornbeam, cer, hairy and virgil oak, hornbeam. On about 15% of the total area are scattered grass communities with a predominance of white, bulbous meadow and black garden. There are bush communities of dracaena and smin. The fauna of the area is extremely rich and diverse. 220 species of birds have been identified here, 91 of which are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. The protected area is important for the protection of the little bald eagle. The region maintains the most numerous populations in Bulgaria of the Imperial Eagle, the Lesser Spotted Eagle, the White-tailed Eagle, the Lesser Eagle and the Black Kite.





Photo: Stoyan Nikolov – BSPB

4 - The Meander of Arda near the town of Madzharovo

Probably, many of you associate Madzharovo with the beautiful meander of the Arda River, which in recent years has become a real emblem of the town. There is a good reason for that! The view of the meander is fascinating. After its meander near Madzharovo, the Arda River forms a picturesque ravine in the direction of Borislavtsi. At the beginning of the ravine on the left bank of the river rises a massive rock - Kovan Kaya. The area around it bears the same name and has been declared a protected area in order to protect nesting sites of rare and endangered bird species. Shortly after passing the meander, to the right of the road there is a convenient place to stop and have some rest with a small relaxing area. From there you can watch the black vultures circling up to the rock.







II - The Mezek Fortress

Mezeska Fortress (Neuzetikon or Neutzikon) is one of the historical stops on our route. It is a medieval Byzantine fortress built in the 11th - 12th century west of the present-day village of Mezek, Svilengrad municipality. The locals call the fortress "Kaletó". The fortification had the functions of a border guard fortress. It guarded areas between the Maritsa and Arda rivers. It is curious that it is located at an equal distance from Sofia and Istanbul. It can be reached by road from the western end of the village leading to Sheynovets peak. As many as three of the walls of the fortress are preserved almost in its entirety to this day, which is a huge rarity for a facility from those times. Despite its size and strategic importance, to this day the exact name of the fortress is not known to scientists. Some historians believe that its name is "Neocikon", but there is no definite evidence of this.





II - The Mezek Tomb

The Mezeszka tomb is a Thracian domed tomb of the Mycenaean type dating from the 4th - 3rd century BC and is also among our stops. It is located on the outskirts of the village of Mezek, Svilengrad municipality, in the "Meltepe" mound. The tomb at Mezek is the largest and one of the most interesting and impressive domed tombs of the Mycenaean type in Thrace. It is preserved entirely in its original form. The outside is covered with an impressive mound. A large number of objects made of gold, bronze, iron, glass and ceramics were found in the tomb, which are exhibited in the museums in Sofia and Haskovo. A full-length bronze statue of a wild boar was found near the mound. It is believed that it is only part of a whole ensemble of figures, consisting of a dog and a man on a horse hunting a boar. It is assumed that they are also made in real size. The study continues.



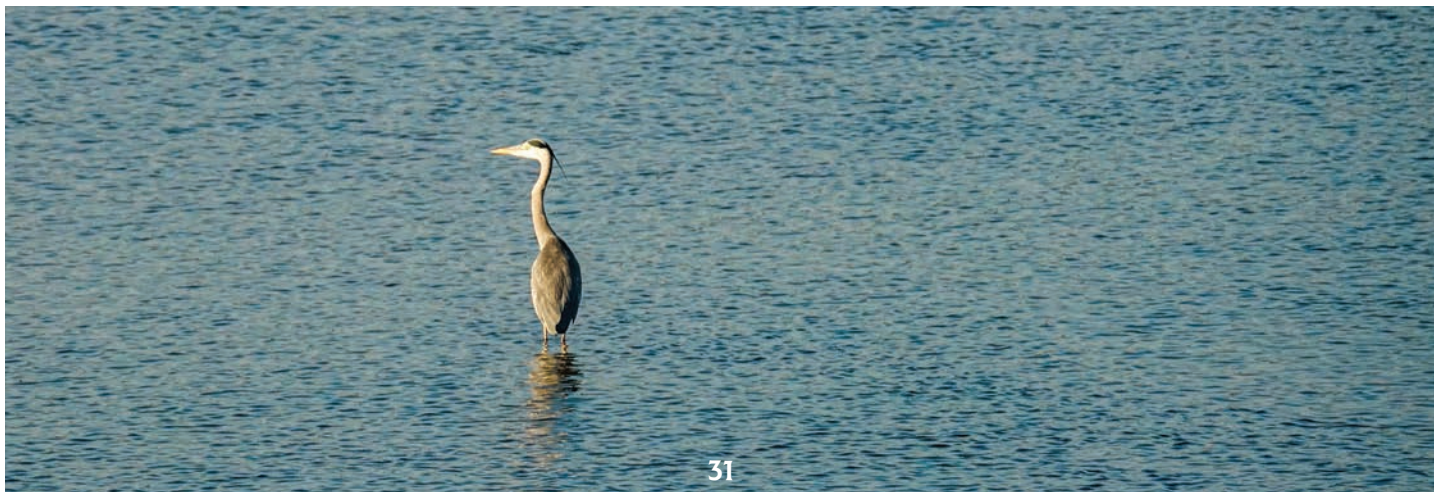


5 – The old bridge over the river Maritsa, Svilengrad

The bridge of Mustafa Pasha (also called the Old Bridge) connects the two banks of the Maritsa River in the town of Svilengrad. The old bridge is a great place for watching and photo-hunting of many birds that often fly around or land in the Maritsa River in search of food, water and rest. The old bridge has a masonry stone structure consisting of 21 arches with the largest opening of 18 m. The bridge was built in the period 1512 - 1529. It is the work of the Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan and is part of a waqf complex, including a caravanserai, mosque, bazaar and hammam, funded by the Sultan Vizier Damad Mustafa Pasha. In the middle of the bridge is a marble bas-relief plate with an Ottoman inscription, which reads:

"This bridge was built when he was caliph, the greatest of the sultans, Sultan Suleiman Khan, son of Selim Khan, to be a continuation of his safety and security, their vizier Mustafa Pasha - may God protect him for what he creates. And it was his most enduring good deed during the year, the date on which an eternal good deed took place."









III - The "Nachevi Chairi" Dolmen, Topolovgrad municipality

The dolmen in the area of Nachevi Chairi (Golyam Rat) is located about 1.5 km west of the village of Hlyabovo, Topolovgrad municipality. The megalithic site was originally documented by Prof. Alexander Fol's expedition in 1973. During drilling in 1974, the interior of both chambers and parts of the dromos were cleared. In 1976 the space in front of the dolmen was excavated; In addition to finding relatively rich archaeological material, previously unknown details of the dolmen were discovered - the facade wall and the second dolmen attached to the side, in which preserved burial remains were documented for the first time.



IV - The Paleokastro, near the town of Topolovgrad

The Paleokastro cultural and historical site was first discovered and described in 1888 by the brothers Karel and Herman Shkorpil - founders of scientific archeology and museum work in Bulgaria. Here, on a rock cornice built on rocks of Triassic age, an interesting, inaccessible view of the entire Sakar to the south, north to the Monastery Hills, a strategically independent site with a height of 422 m has formed. Probably the cult site was on two levels.





6 - The Koriata area near the town of Topolovgrad

The Koriya area is located above Topolovgrad in its high southern part. The word "koria" means a small forest, usually in a flat place. The Koriya area is part of a larger area called Plochest. Koriya is a starting point for excursions in the Sakar Mountains. Centuries-old trees rose in the oak bark above Kavakli (Topolovgrad), some of which are still here today. Nearby and in the area were built the chapels "St. Marco", "St. Haralambi" and "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". "Koriya" has a recreation area and is the starting point of four eco-routes and it itself provides suitable conditions for photo hunting.





DISTRICT OF YAMBOL





★ SLIVEN

○ AYDOS

○ KARNOBAT

○ STRALDZHA

★ BURGAS

○ NOVA ZAGORA

VI
★ YAMBOL

○ SIMEONOVO

○ SREDETS

3

2
V

○ ELHOVO

V - The "St. Dimitar" Church and Ethnographic-Archaeological Museum, Elhovo
2 - "Dolna Topchia" Reserve
3 - The Gorna Topchia Reserve
VI - The Turkish Bezisten and Eski Mosque, Yambol

○ TOPOLOVGRAD

○ LESOVO



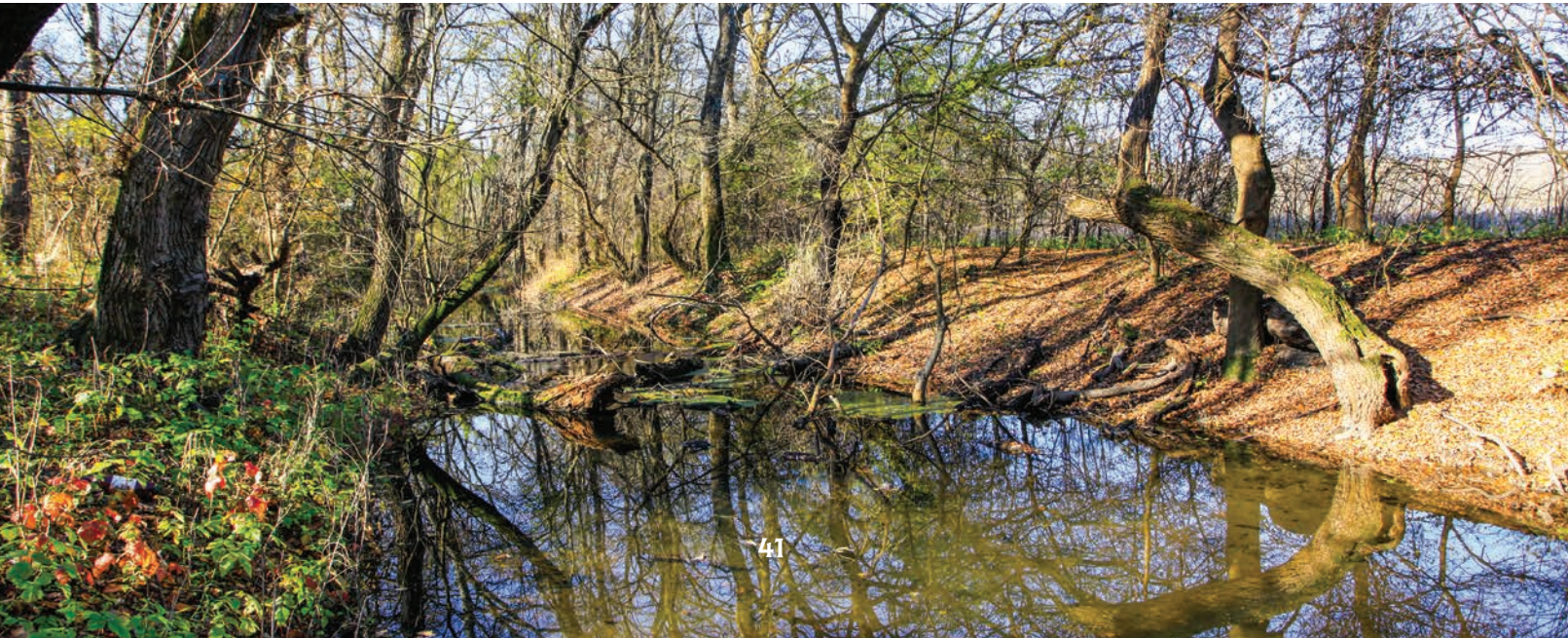
V - The "St. Dimitar " Church and Ethnographic-Archaeological Museum, Elhovo

We continue our journey in the district of Yambol and in particular in the town of Elhovo. The church "St. Dimitar " has a very interesting architecture - from the outside it looks more like a Revival rich man house than a church. According to the plan, it is a three-nave single-apse pseudo-basilica with a narthex. Inside the church is also very interesting. Impressive is its lavish altar, with the lower row of the Old Testament. The church was built in the period 1874-1878. Ethnographic and Archaeological Museum - Elhovo was established in 1958 in the city center and presents one of the most interesting and original ethnographic exhibitions in the country. The fund of the museum stores over 22,000 exhibits and more than 8,000 original documents and photographs from the diverse ethnographic heritage of the Strandzha-Sakar region. After our cultural and historical stop in the town of Elhovo, it is time to continue our photo-hunting journey.



1 - "Dolna Topchia" Reserve, near the town of Elhovo

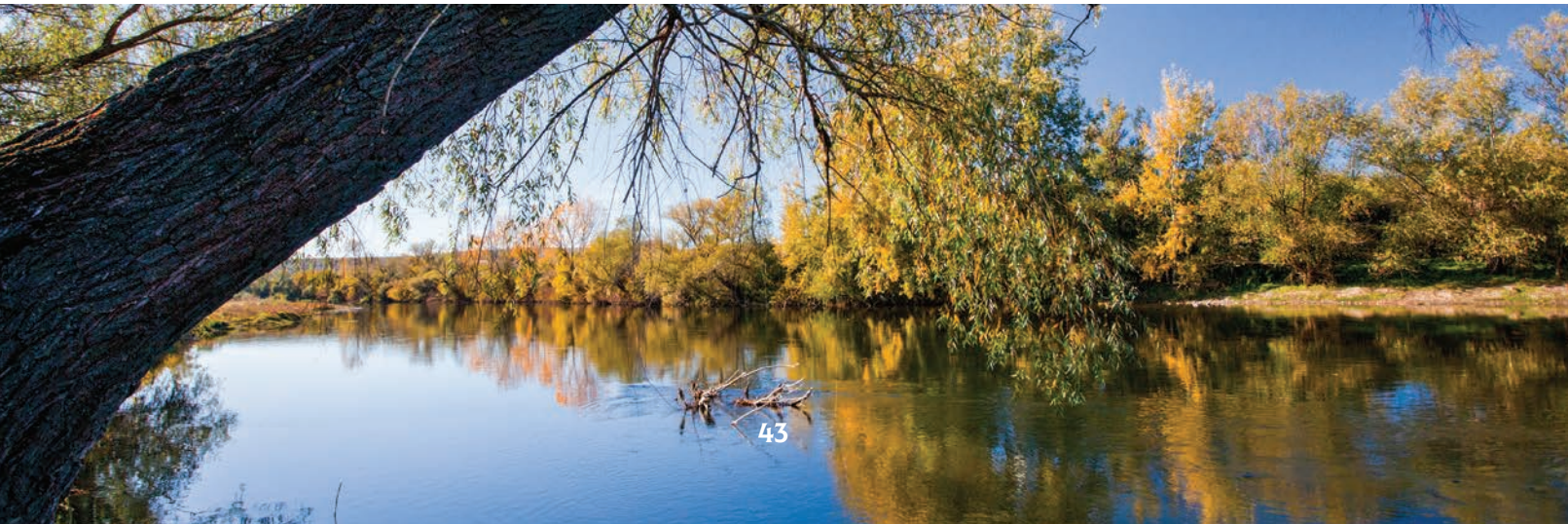
Dolna Topchia is a maintained reserve in southeastern Bulgaria. It was established by order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in 1960 in order to protect the natural habitat of Colchis pheasant. This is the only locality of this species of pheasant in Bulgaria and only the second one on the Balkan Peninsula. Dolna Topchia Reserve is located next to the town of Elhovo on the banks of the Tundzha River, and covers the land of the nearby village of Trankovo. Much of the reserve is occupied by centuries-old forests, mostly ash forests. There are a number of protected plant species, such as those included in the Red Book of Bulgaria - Stribernova bucket, Bitin bluebell and elvesian snowdrop. The largest heron colony in the interior of Bulgaria also nests in the Dolna Topchia reserve. Three species of herons have been identified - gray, night and small white. A tower has been built in the reserve, which allows the observation of birds in their natural environment.





2 - The Gorna Topchia Reserve, near the town of Elhovo

It is located on the land of the village of Konevets, Toundzha municipality, Yambol district. The reserve area is occupied by riverside floodplain forests - longos. The dominant tree species is the summer oak, which forms mixed communities with field elm, field ash, field maple, white poplar and other tree species. The lianas, which are a very characteristic species for the long forests, are represented by ivy, wild vine, county, as well as the rare for the country southern species of violin and humpback whale. The shrub and grass vegetation here is also very developed. Of the invertebrates, three rare species have been identified - the caterpillar beetle, the red forest ant and the large night peacock eye butterfly. The amphibians here are yellow-bellied toad, brown and green toad and tree. The variety of reptiles is also great. There are common marsh turtle, yellow-eared and gray marsh snake, great archer, colorful dragon, green and Crimean lizard and others. During migration, various species of birds feed and rest here, such as gray, great white and night herons, small divers, mute and swans, and about 10 % of the population of the globally endangered species of small cormorant. There are also tits, woodpeckers, cuckoos, owls and others. Mammals are represented by as many as 35 species. 20 of them are included in the Berne Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife. The globally endangered otter is also found here.





VI - The Turkish Bezisten and Eski Mosque, Yambol

While relaxing and trying the local cuisine in the town of Yambol, you can enjoy the two sights there - the mosque and the Turkish bezisten. Yambol Bezisten, once built as a covered market, is the only preserved building of this type in Bulgaria since the Ottoman era. Built in 1509-1510, the bezisten is preserved to this day and turned into an interactive museum.

Eski Mosque in Yambol has been restored in its original form and is the second largest mosque in Bulgaria. It was built with the remains of the Yambol fortress after the fall of the city under Ottoman rule in the summer of 1373. The interior frescoes of the mosque date from the 17th century. Four acoustic pots are built into the four corners of the dome. They make the acoustics in the building very good, which gives rise to the idea of turning the Eski Mosque into a concert building.



DISTRICT OF BURGAS



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- 1 - "Poda" Protected Area and the three lakes: Mandre, Atanasov and Vaya
 - VII - The Old Sozopol
 - 3 - The lake near Aleppo
 - 4 - The valley of the river Ropotamo
 - 5 - "Veleka" Protected Area
 - 6 - Strandza Nature Park

★ SLIVEN

★ YAMBOL

★ BURGAS

○ SUNNY BEACH

○ POMORIE

BLACK SEA

○ SOZOPOL

○ SREDETS

○ PRIMORSKO

○ KITEN

○ ELHOVO

○ TSAREVO

○ TOPOLOVGRAD

○ AHTOPOL

○ SINEMORETS

○ MALKO TARNOVO

○ REZOVO

1 - "Poda" Protected Area and the three lakes: Mandre, Atanasov and Vaya

We are already in the Burgas region. In the immediate vicinity of the town is the area "Poda". It is a wetland with the outflow of Lake Mandre to the Black Sea in the land of Burgas. Here is the only mixed heron colony near a big city. This is the only place in Europe where 315 species of birds have been found on an area of only 1 sq. Km - ¼ of all species in Europe! Here is the only, on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, mixed colony of white sparrowhawk, brilliant ibis, small cormorant, night, red, maned, small white and gray heron. There are 46 species nesting in the protected area. At the end of the summer, river fishermen, rain whistlers, shore runners, water runners, stilt walkers, seagulls, oystercatchers can be observed. The second largest migration route of birds in Europe, Via Pontica, passes over Poda Protected Area, 75 % of the European white stork population (over 250 000 specimens) and 100 % of the pink pelican population fly over it annually (more than 40 000 specimens) and over 100,000 individuals from over 32 species of birds of prey, a significant number of waterfowl and millions of songbirds.

The lakes around Bourgas are no less beautiful and rich in flora and fauna. Unlike other lakes, the shore of Mandre Lake includes the northernmost slopes of Strandzha. They are characterized by characteristic forest vegetation - cyclamen, wild peony, snowdrop, crocus and others.

Atanasovsko Lake is coastal and offers a great diversity of flora and fauna, some of which are protected by the Biodiversity Act and are globally endangered. There are many mammals: otter, wild cat, vole and others. There is also an Etruscan shrew, which is the smallest mammal in the world.

The shores of Lake Vaya (Burgas Lake) are overgrown with a green belt of water-loving vegetation, mainly reeds, narrow-leaved rushes, deciduous rushes and others. Burgas Lake is the only place in Bulgaria where up to 7 % of the Black Sea population of white-headed duck is concentrated. The globally endangered Dalmatian Pelican and Red-breasted Goose have also been observed in winter. The lake is one of the most important places in the country, important for the European Union for the protection of the small water bull nesting here. Pelican-like, goose-like, stork-like and heron birds are especially numerous. Burgas Lake is especially important as a resting place for the Dalmatian and Pink Pelican, as well as the little cormorant. As a migratory species in the area is found and meadow woodpecker.







VII - The Old Sozopol

The city was founded around 610 BC with the name Anthea (later renamed "Apollonia") by Greek settlers from Miletus, who erected a majestic bronze statue of the God of Health, Sun and Beauty "Apollo" in the city. The city established itself as a commercial and maritime center in the following centuries. Today, the City Museum of Ancient Art in Sozopol exhibits many figural vases, colored glass vessels, jewelry, amphorae, anchors, and others dating from its various heydays. The Bulgarian Revival has also left a bright mark on the appearance of the city. To this day, in Old Sozopol are preserved and restored buildings, sites and houses with typical Renaissance architecture, which give a special charm to the city and attract many tourists.





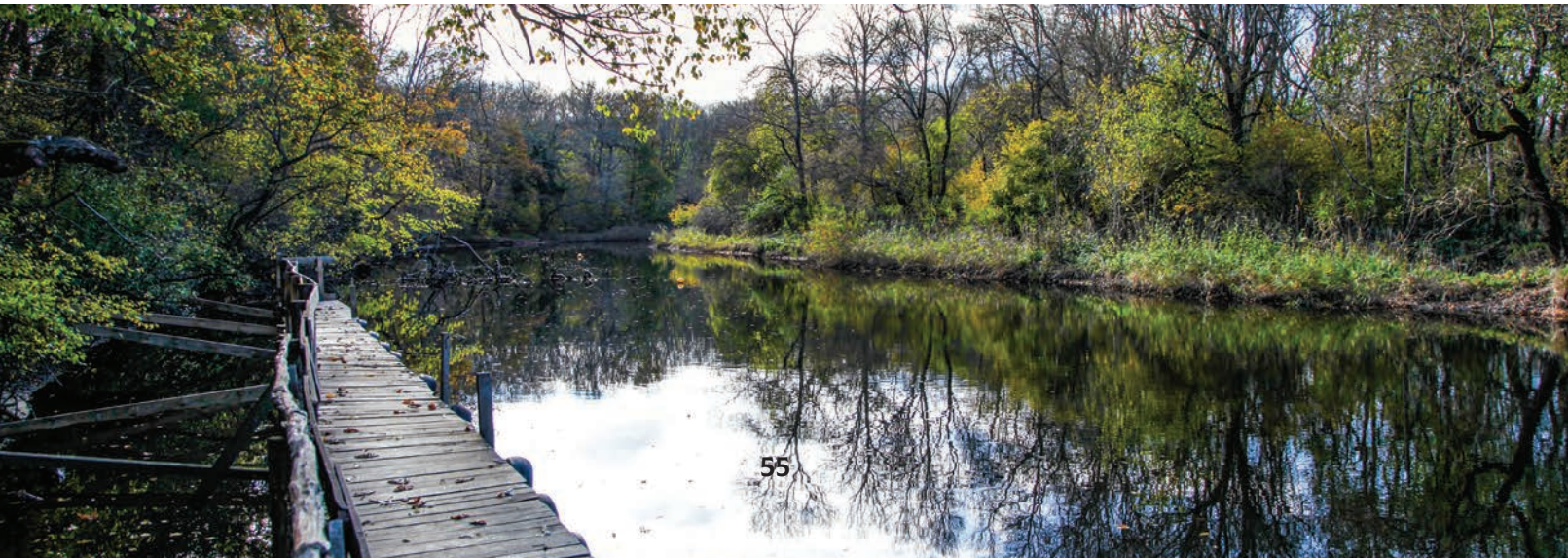
2 - The lake near Aleppo

It is located 6.5 km south of the town of Sozopol. Here are the highest dunes on the Balkan Peninsula. There is a sand lily on them. The place is of special importance as a habitat for many protected species of waterfowl. The problem is the unregulated hunting and fishing in the protected area, as well as the newly built resort complex "St. Thomas " next to the area.



3 - The valley of the river Ropotamo

Ropotamo is a reserve located about 50 km south of Burgas. On the territory of the reserve there are many interesting and unique natural sites, such as the estuary of the Ropotamo River, Arkutino Swamp and long forests, which are very rare in this latitude, as well as various rock phenomena, swamps, marshes and others. The estuary of the Ropotamo River is one of the main tourist attractions in the reserve. In the area of the estuary, the river is calm and deep. Of particular importance for the reserve is the wormwood deposit, which is located in the Ropotamo reserve. This is because it is one of the largest localities of the plant in Bulgaria. There are 21 species of mammals in the reserve, of which 10 species of bats. Characteristic are red deer, wild boar, roe deer, jackal, fox, goldfinch, otter. The bird diversity is represented by over 260 species. Here is one of the few nesting sites in Bulgaria of the sea eagle and the semicollared flycatcher. This is a place for wintering different species of herons, ducks, small cormorants. Here is the only habitat in the country of the red whip snake. The leopard snake, Aesculapian snake and water snakes are found. There are over 50 species of fish such as caucasian dwarf goby, danube bleak, mullet, atherina, stickleback.







4 - “Veleva” Protected Area

Veleva is the largest and longest Strandzha river (147 km). It springs from Demirkapu Peak in Turkey and enters Bulgaria with beautiful ravines. A branch of the largest bird migration route in Eastern Europe - Via Pontica - passes over Veleva. There are birds that either overwinter or simply rest during the flight, among the protected and endangered - devil (little cormorant), mute swan, red-footed falcon, red-breasted goose, and in the sea, near the shore - black-necked grebe, hooded cormorant, red-billed and thorny-tailed warbler, white-tailed deer, maned tern, little black-headed gull, petrel. Among the fish found in the Veleva River, 7 are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. Within the boundaries of the Veleva-Rezovska complex, the presence of one of the world's endangered mammal species, the monk seal, has been reported, and another globally endangered mammal, the lynx, has been found near the Veleva and Silistar floodplains in recent years.



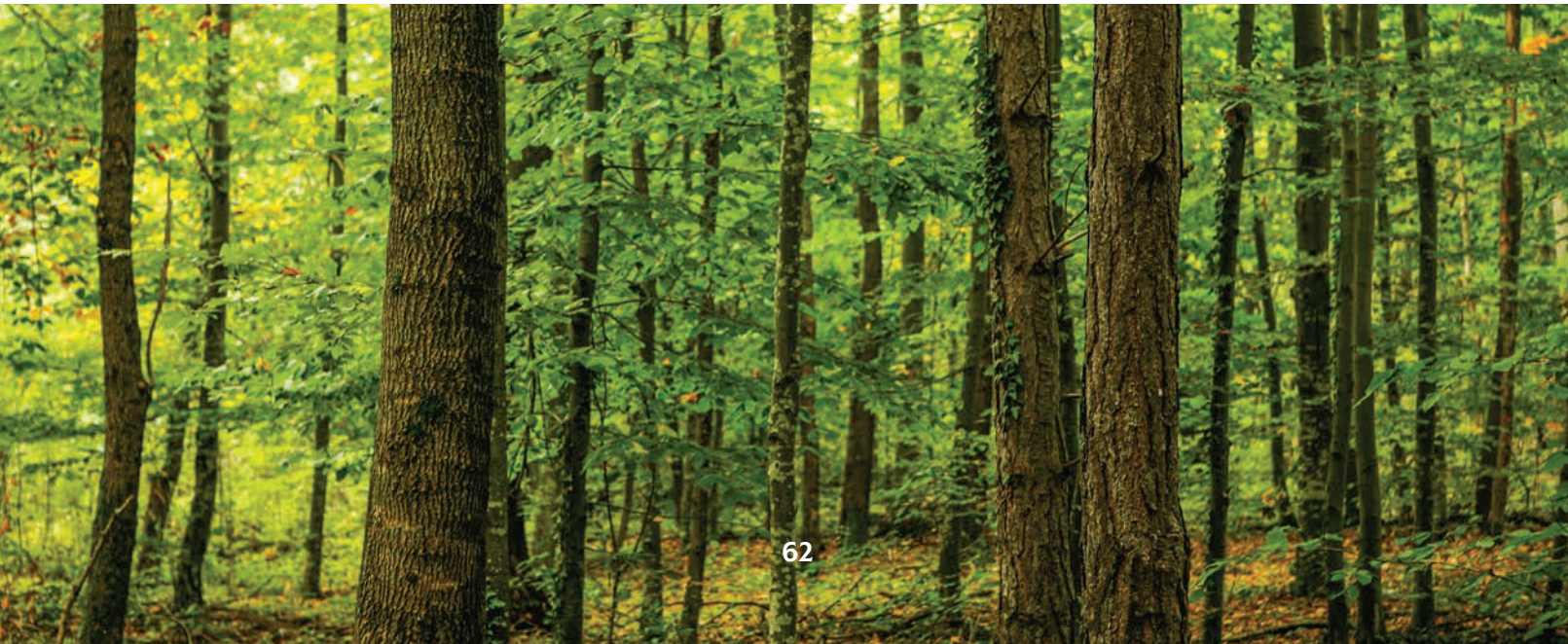






5 - Strandza Nature Park

After a walk along the mouth of the Veleka River, you can take in the Strandza Nature Park. Strandzha is the largest nature park in Bulgaria. Strandzha is the only Bulgarian territory included in the five priority areas for protection in Central and Eastern Europe. The total number of habitat types is 121, and according to this indicator the park ranks first among the protected areas in Europe. In Strandzha the flora is on the border of the Mediterranean and Central European vegetation. The flora of Strandzha is a complex conglomeration of different in origin, biological features and degree of evolution of plant species with high conservation value. Strandzha is the Bulgarian protected area with the richest vertebrate fauna - 261 species. The ichthyofauna includes 40 freshwater and transient fish species. The national Red Book includes the goldfinch, the wolf, the variegated ferret, the otter and two species of bats.





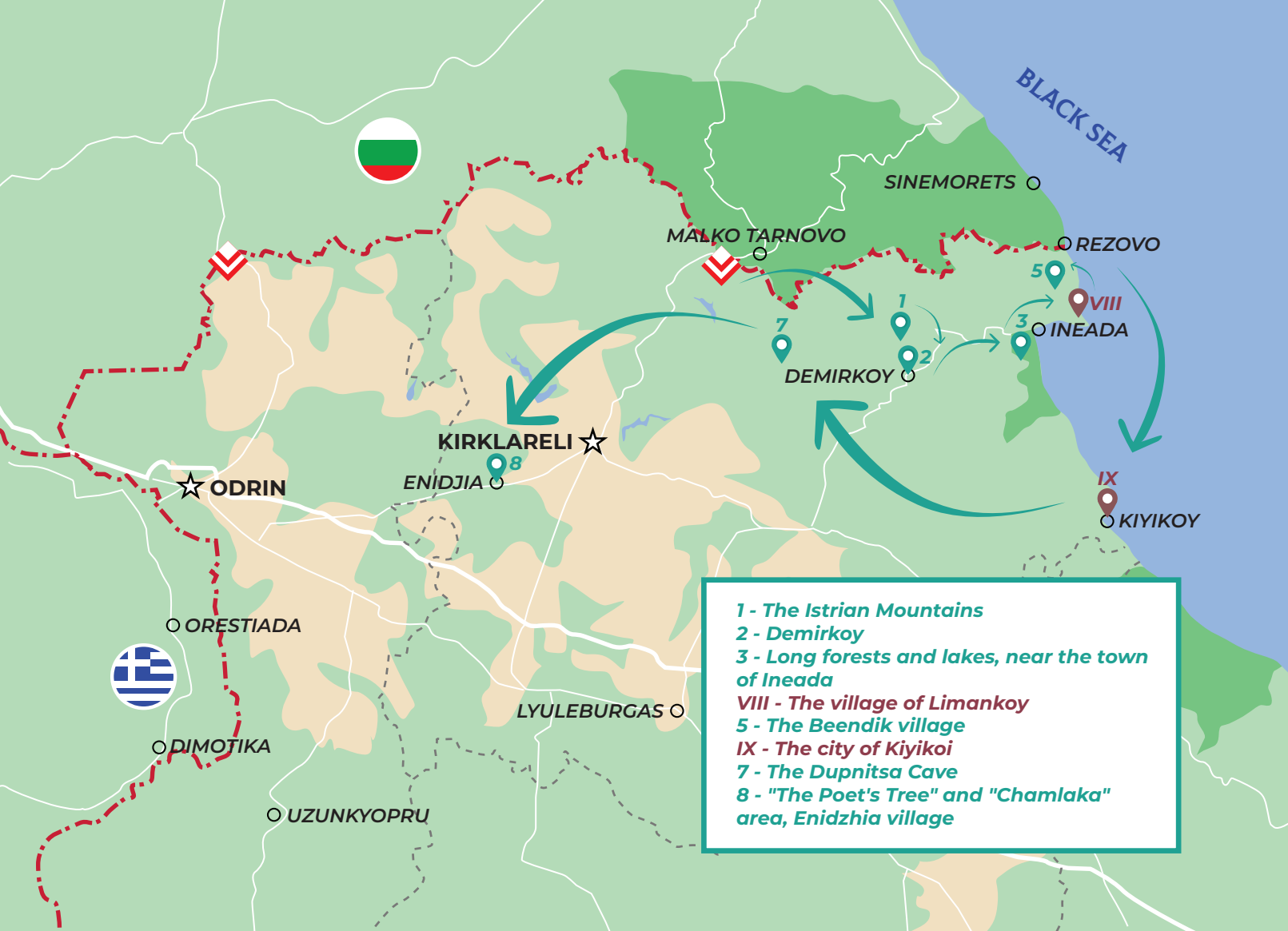




PROVINCE OF KIRKLARELI



Photo: Milen Dimitrov



- 1 - The Istrian Mountains
- 2 - Demirkoy
- 3 - Long forests and lakes, near the town of Ineada
- VIII - The village of Limankoy
- 5 - The Beendik village
- IX - The city of Kiyikoi
- 7 - The Dupnitsa Cave
- 8 - "The Poet's Tree" and "Chamlaka" area, Enidzhia village

1 - The Istrian Mountains

After entering Turkey through the Malko Tarnovo - Derekoj border checkpoint, our journey continues to the Istrian Mountains. They are located within the province of Kirklareli. This place is important from a conservation point of view because it has a rich biodiversity. The flora and fauna here is very rich, and each season here is charming in its own way.







2 - Demirkey

Demirkey is located 400 meters above sea level among the forests of Strandzha, in the Yildiz Mountains. Demirkey attracts attention with its natural beauty. Biodiversity is great here. With its beautiful landscapes, it is an attraction for many photographers in all seasons of the year.





3- Long forests and lakes, near the town of Ineada

It is the largest long forest ecosystem in Turkey and the second largest in Europe. The soils here are rich in organic plants. The trees are centuries old, and the lakes near the town of Ineada change their shores according to the season. The forest is part of the "Green Belt" on the Bulgarian-Turkish border. There are six lakes around Ineada. Lakes Mert, Erikli, Saka, Hamam, Pedina and Aypoloz are located in the long forests of Ineada and are protected areas. They, like the river that flows through the forest, are connected to the Black Sea. About 350 species of birds can be found here. There are also species that cannot be found anywhere else - such as the black woodpecker. Another species that is specific to this area is the sea eagle. It is both a resting place for migratory birds and a home for many species in winter.





Photo: Milen Dimitrov



VIII - The village of Limankoy

The village is located in the historical-geographical region of Eastern Thrace, on the Black Sea coast, near the Bulgarian-Turkish border near the village of Rezovo, located 10 kilometers south of the mouth of the river Rezovska. The village has a 150-year history.



4 - The Beendik village

It is located on the Bulgarian-Turkish border near the Rezovo River. Apart from relaxation, Beendik also offers the opportunity to enjoy the valley of the Rezovska River. The slopes to Rezovska River are overgrown with dense oak and beech forests. On the rocky slopes are common Mediterranean maquis, rare species of orchids, ivy, county, asparagus, humpback, hops and wild vines. There also live some amphibians, such as the Caspian tortoise, the legless lizard (yellow-bellied lizard), the concave dragon, which is one of the two species of poisonous dragon in Europe, the great archer, the cinderella and the rare black-headed arrow. The river is home to river trout and cut trout.





IX – The city of Kiyikoi

This is a place where you can relax, enjoy delicious food and seafood, as well as explore the unique nature of the area. Kiyikoi (Media) was home to civilizations such as the Thracians, Persians, Scythians, Genoese. There are many rocks and caves on the shore, which are formed by sea waves. A landmark is the city gate, which was built during the Byzantine Empire, as well as carved into the rocks monastery of St. Nicholas.





5 - The Dupnitsa Cave

The Dupnitsa Cave is on two floors and consists of three caves: Kuru Cave, Girl's Cave and Sulu Cave. Its total length is 2720 meters and is among the longest caves in Turkey. The first entrance is Dupnisa Dolin, and the first 1000 meters are under water - the river that springs from the cave is the Rezovska River (according to another view, the beginning of the Rezovska River is the Paspalderesi River). The second entrance is a dry cave with two separate entrances - one is 363 m and the other - 456 m. The third entrance - Kuz Cave - starts with a slope of 60 degrees. In the cave there is a hall measuring 150 by 60 m. It also attracts attention with its stalactites and stalagmites.



8 - "The Poet's Tree" and "Chamlaka" area, Enidzhia village

The presence of at least 600-year-old oak trees shows the diversity of flora and fauna in the region. The "Poet's Tree" in Enidzhia is a monumental landmark. The village is located in an important migratory corridor of birds and has great potential for observation and photo hunting.

One of the recreation areas near the village of Enidzhia is located in the area of Chamlak. It can be reached on the Edirne-Kirklareli road. They are a starting point for cycling routes, and also has a designated picnic area in nature. Annual festivals and celebrations are regularly held in Chamlaka.

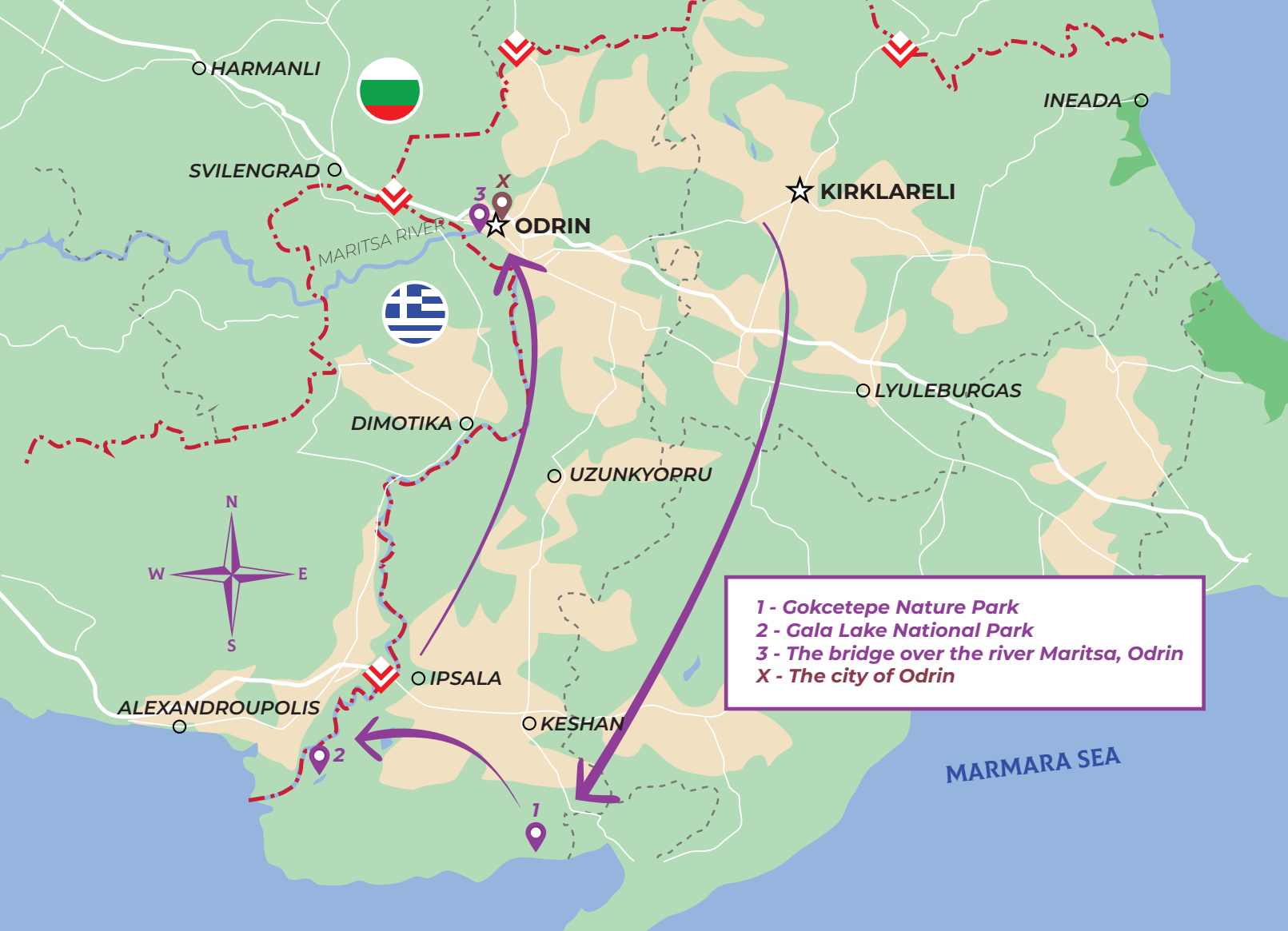




PROVINCE OF EDIRNE



Photo: Milen Dimitrov



HARMANLI



SVILENGRAD

MARITSA RIVER



DIMOTIKA

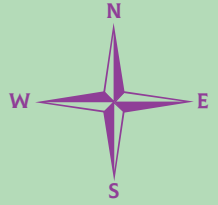
ODRIN

KIRKLARELI

INEADA

LYULEBURGAS

UZUNKYORRU



IPSALA

ALEXANDROUPOLIS

KESHAN

1 - Gokcetepe Nature Park
2 - Gala Lake National Park
3 - The bridge over the river Maritsa, Odrin
X - The city of Odrin

MARMARA SEA

1 - Gokcetepe Nature Park

We continue in the province of Odrin. Gokcetepe Nature Park is located on the northern shore of Saros Bay. Near the metropolis of Istanbul, it offers a variety of entertainment. Here the sea is unique because it manages to self-purify. This is due to the bottom currents of the bay. In addition, diving in the Gulf of Saros allows for the creation of unique underwater shots, respectively, the location is suitable for spearfishing.





2 – Gala Lake National Park

Described as the second largest bird paradise in Turkey, Lake Gala was declared the 36th National Park in 2005. The lake is approximately 6,000 hectares wide. Gala has a rich habitat diversity. Due to its proximity to the sea, forests and mountainous environment, it is one of the most important wetlands in Turkey. 163 bird species can be found and observed in Lake Gala National Park, 46 of which are native and 117 migratory.

There are about 16 species of fish in the lake.

311 plant species have been identified in the park, 5 of which are endemic. There is a bird watching tower in the park. The location is especially suitable for photo hunting and recreation.









3 - The bridge over the river Maritsa, Odrin

Our journey ends in the city of Odrin. Ancient and unique with its culture, history and sights. One of them is the bridge over the Maritsa River.

The bridge over Maritsa is located near the junction of the rivers Maritsa and Arda. Construction of the bridge began by order of Sultan Mahmut II in 1837 and was completed during the reign of Sultan Abdul Majid I in 1847. Today, the bridge offers a unique view of the Maritsa River, as well as all the birds that pass from there. The bridge over Maritsa in Odrin has become a kind of observatory for many species of birds. Like the Old Bridge in Svilengrad, the bridge over Maritsa in Odrin is both a cultural and historical site and a suitable location for photo hunting.





Photo: Milen Dimitrov







X - Selimiye Mosque, Odrin

You can continue the walk in Odrin by visiting the largest mosque in the city - Selimiye. Her story is rich. It took 6 years to build. It was commissioned by Sultan Selim I. It was built by the famous architect Mimar Sinan, and is considered a masterpiece in his career. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011. The mosque is visible from all over Odrin, and even from Greece. Its capacity is about 6 000 people. It has 999 windows. Selimiye's minarets are four with three balconies, each 70 meters high. The Selimiye Mosque, apart from being impressive on the outside due to its huge size, is also beautiful on the inside. The workmanship and decoration of stone, marble, tiles, wood and mother-of-pearl makes the building unique.





X - The city of Odrin

While you are in the city, don't forget to enjoy the Sultan Bayezid II Health Complex and Museum. It is located near the city. Also visit the largest synagogue on the Balkan Peninsula, the other old mosques in the city, parks, the Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum of Odrin, as well as the Old Station of the city.









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With this our journey is over. We have presented some of the unique places, nature and cultural landmarks that the cross-border region of Bulgaria and Turkey has. This guide was created within the framework of Activity 7 “Development of a” Joint Guide to the Cross-Border Photo Hunter”, implemented under project CB005.2.21.103 "The Tree of Life ". The project is co-financed by the EU through the Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria - Turkey Program and is implemented in partnership between the Municipality of Ineje, Turkey and the Municipality of Harmanli, Bulgaria.

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