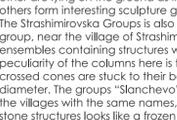
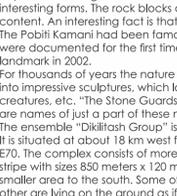
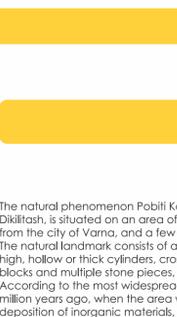




# LANDMARKS GUIDE



## Aladzha Monastery



Aladzha Monastery is one of the most famous Bulgarian rock monasteries and the largest on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. It is located in a beautiful area 14 km north of Varna, close to the Golden Sands resort and in the central part of the Golden Sands Nature Park amidst a magnificent forest.

There is no reliable historical record of the monastery, but it is known that it already existed in the XIII century. The history of Aladzha Monastery is based mostly on legends and conjectures. Probably as early as the 5th-6th centuries a religious center emerged at this place - one of the oldest Christian centers on the Balkan Peninsula. A century or two after the official adoption of Christianity in Bulgaria, hermit monks have sought an ascetic life among the cliffs and forests providing solitude, and it is believed that they have begun to use the caves as monastic cells.

During the Second Bulgarian State, in the XII-XIV centuries there was a great rise of Bulgarian Christianity and many churches and monasteries were reconstructed and renovated, including the Aladzha Monastery. It is proved that at that time he was re-painted with the support of the boyars of the Dobruzha despotism of that time, from settlers from the Ionian city-state of Mytili. In addition to the monastery gradually died out, which was eventually abandoned.

Aladzha Monastery is one of the few rock monasteries in Bulgaria, which clearly distinguishes the individual premises. The premises of the monastery are carved on two levels in almost 40 meters high limestone rock. On the first level are the monastery church, monastic cells, the dining room, the kitchen, a small cemetery church, the crypt and the farm premises. The second level is a natural rock niche at the eastern end of which is built the monastery chapel, 600 - 700 m west of the monastery is a group of caves known as the Catacombs. The discovered finds - ceramics, coins, graffiti, etc., indicate that the Catacombs were inhabited during the early Christian era (5th-6th centuries).

Today, Aladzha Monastery is a popular tourist attraction that is visited by thousands of tourists. The beautiful scenery around combined with historical and Christian landmarks make it a great place for cultural, pilgrimage and ecological tourism.

Since 2009 in Aladzha Monastery there is a unique audio-visual performance "Legends of Aladzha Monastery", which is a new tourist attraction for the guests of Varna and the Black Sea.

The monastery was declared an architectural and construction monument of national importance in 1968.



## Pobiti Kamani | The Stone Forest



The natural phenomenon Pobiti Kamani, also known as The Stone Forest and Diklitsah, is situated on an area of 7 square km at a distance of about 18-20 km from the city of Varna, and a few kilometers from the town of Beloslav. The natural landmark consists of an ensemble of stone columns, up to 10 meters high, hollow or thick cylinders, crossed cones, variously shaped, sized rock blocks and multiple stone pieces, spread around the entire complex.

According to the most widespread theory, Pobiti Kamani were formed about 50 million years ago, when the area was seismically active. The withdrawal of water led to the deposition of inorganic materials, which eroded and acquired their present-day interesting forms. The rock blocks are made of light gray limestone with carbonate content. An interesting fact is that this is also the only desert area in Bulgaria. The Pobiti Kamani had been famous as a sacred place since antiquity, but they were documented for the first time in 1829. They were declared a natural landmark in 2002.

For thousands of years the nature has carved stone pieces in order to turn them into impressive sculptures, which look like people, animals, monsters, mythical creatures, etc. "The Stone Guards", "The Camel", "The Throne", "The Stone Forest" are names of just a part of these natural pieces of art.

The ensemble "Diklitsah Group" is the most famous and attractive for the tourists. It is situated at about 18 km west from Varna and is easily accessible from Route 570. The complex consists of more than 300 different in size columns, situated in a strip with sizes 850 meters x 120 meters, and about 50 structures are located in a smaller area to the south. Some of the columns are broken in two or three parts, other are lying on the ground as if they had been propped from their places, and others form interesting sculpture groups.

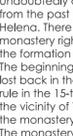
The Strashimirovka Groups is also impressive. It is situated to the south of the basic group, near the village of Strashimirovo, and consists of four closely situated ensembles containing structures with various sizes and shapes. A typical peculiarity of the columns here is that they are bulging in the middle, as if two crossed cones are stuck to their bases, as some of them reach up to 9 meters in diameter. The groups "Slanchevo" and "Barovo" are situated in the localities of the villages with the same names, and also have their own charm. One of the stone structures looks like a frozen fountain. A stone lion with basis diameter of 12 meters is lying in close proximity. Colossal mushrooms can also be seen nearby. If you have good imagination, you can differentiate other shapes as well. The rest of the groups are situated around the town of Beloslav and are also worth seeing.



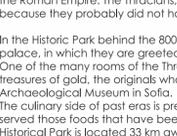
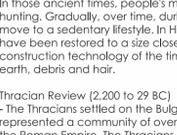
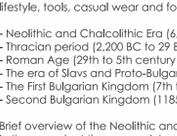
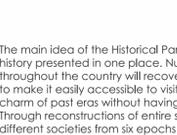
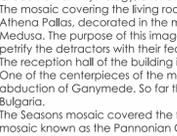
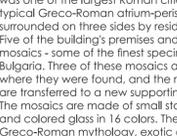
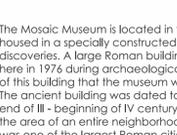
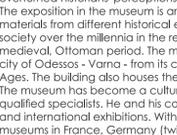
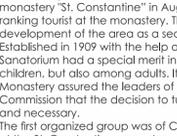
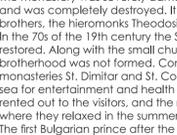
There are the archaeological remains of the former public baths of the ancient city of Odessos in Varna nowadays. This Pontic colony was founded around 570 BC, from settlers from the Ionian city-state of Mytili. In addition to the Hellenes, Thracians, Asians, Romans and celtic-sarmatian from many other ethnic groups lived here. The ruins rise in the older, seaside part of Varna.

Everywhere the Romans settled, they built baths. Their construction was preceded by the construction of water pipelines. Information about the construction of the Roman water pipeline was discovered as early as 1851. It is clear from the bilingual inscription in Greek and Latin that under the reign of Emperor Anthony Pius (138 - 161) the municipality of Odessos and the governor of the province and the deputy of the province of Lower Mizia Titus Vitrasii Polion was captured and brought to the city by water supply. Perhaps the largest urban bath in the Balkan provinces was erected in Odessos a little later. It occupied more than 7000 square meters and was oriented towards the directions of the world. The preserved site was 122 meters in height. The spa was not only a place for bathing but also a center of social life.

The actual bathing in the Roman bath took place in the hot water bath - caldarium (C). It is central to the term plan. The central semicircular basin - piscina (p) is located in the apse, which faces the south facade of the building. Below it is a hypocaustum. From here the bathing continued in the central tepidarium (T). Cold water was used in the central frigidarium. The three main bath rooms of the caldarium, tepidarium, frigidarium were richly decorated with granite columns, marble Roman-Corinthian capitals, with two-sided colonnades and columns shaped like the luffed rod of Hercules.



## Roman baths



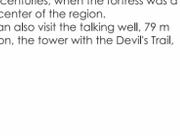
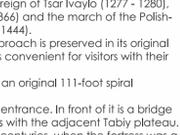
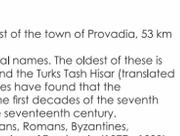
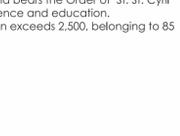
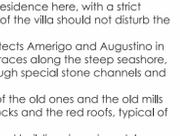
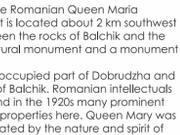
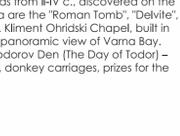
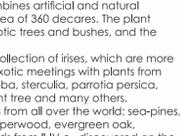
Undoubtedly one of the most popular cultural and historical sights of the resort from the past to the present days is the ancient monastery St. St. Constantine and Helena. There are different legends about who, when and for what reason built a monastery right here but undoubtedly its existence played a very important role in the formation of the place as a resort and favorite place for rest and recreation. The beginning of the forming of the St. St. Constantine and Helena Monastery is not back in the centuries. Legends tell us that during the early years of Ottoman rule in the 15th century, a group of monks reached the centuries-old woods of the vicinity of Varna and settled there, establishing several monasteries, including the monastery "St. Constantine".

The monastery was severely damaged during the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 and was completely destroyed. It was restored, thanks to the efforts of the two brothers, the hieromonks Theodosius and Agapulus Kantardjiev of Turnovo. In the 70s of the 19th century the St. Constantine Monastery was completely restored. Along with the small church, monastic cells were built, but monastic brotherhood was not formed. Contemporaries say that at that time in the monasteries St. Dimitar and St. Constantine was set up the beginning of using the sea for entertainment and health promotion. The monastic cells were being rented out to the visitors, and the rich Varna residents had their reserved cells, where they relaxed in the summer heat and spent a balneary.

The first Bulgarian prince after the Liberation - Alexander I Batenberg - visited the monastery "St. Constantine" in August 1880 and thus becoming the first high-ranking tourist at the monastery. This first royal visit helped a lot for the development of the area as a seaside resort.

Established in 1909 with the help of Queen Eleonora, the State Children's Marine Sanatorium had a special merit in popularizing sea treatment not only among children, but also among adults. Its construction near the St. Constantine Monastery assured the leaders of the District Council and the Regional Permanent Commission that the decision to turn St. Constantine into a beach resort was right and necessary.

The first organized group was of Czech tourists. Two more vessels were built for them at the St. Constantine monastery and the hotel was named "Prague". The foreigners' interest was caused by the remarkable nature, the warm and welcoming sea, the golden sand and crystal-clear air, and last, but not least - by the hospitable attitude of the personnel.



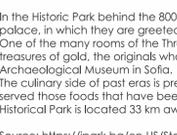
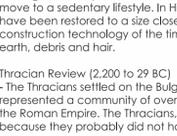
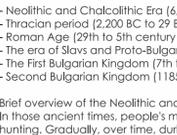
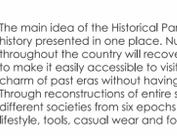
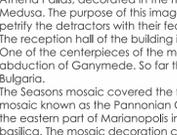
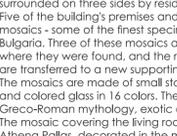
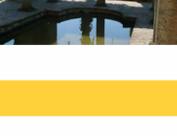
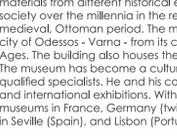
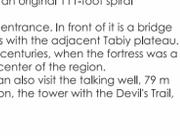
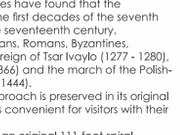
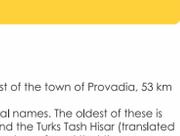
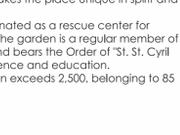
## Varna Archaeological Museum



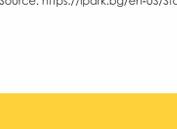
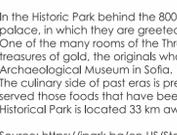
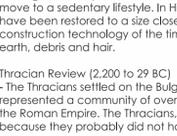
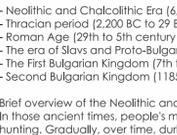
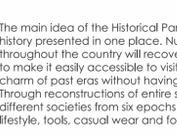
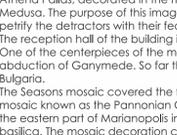
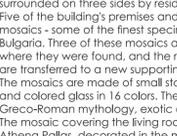
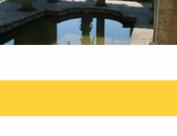
Varna Archaeological Museum is one of the largest museums in the country. It houses some of the most remarkable and valuable monuments of world culture. Here is the oldest gold treasure in the world. His age dates back to 4000 BC. It was discovered by chance in 1972 at construction works near Varna. It is difficult to imagine how much time they have spent underground in fine gold ornaments and objects until the time has come for historians and archaeologists from all over the world to talk about the treasure of the Chalcolithic necropolis. The find is about 2000 objects of almost pure 23.5 carat gold with a total weight of about 6 kg. It contains gold necklaces, bracelets, bangles, earrings, rings, pendants, and overturned historians' perceptions of the development of human civilization.

The exhibition in the museum is arranged chronologically, showing sequentially materials from different historical eras that trace the development of human society over the millennia in the region of Varna - prehistoric, Thracians, antiquity, medieval, Ottoman period. The main attention is paid to the development of the city of Odessos - Varna - from its creation in the Early Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages. The building also houses the only Learning Museum in the country.

The museum has become a cultural and scientific center with many highly qualified specialists. He and his collections present Bulgaria at dozens of national and international exhibitions. With his solo exhibitions, he has toured notable museums in France, Germany (twice), Japan, Israel, Italy and at world exhibitions in Seville (Spain), and Lisbon (Portugal).



## Balchik Palace



The Palace is the former summer residence of the Romanian Queen Maria Alexandrina Victoria de Edinburg (1875-1938). It is located about 2 km southwest of the town of Balchik, in a beautiful area between the rocks of Balchik and the sea. It has the status of an architectural and cultural monument and a monument of gardening and park art.

During the Inter-Allied War, the Romanian army occupied part of Dobruzha and within the boundaries of Romania fell the town of Balchik. Romanian intellectuals appreciate the beautiful nature of the region and in the 1920s many prominent Romanian aristocrats and people of art bought properties here. Queen Maria was brought by her friends to Balchik and was fascinated by the nature and spirit of the city. She decided to build her own summer residence here, with a strict requirement for the designers - the construction of the villa should not disturb the nature, but complement its beauty.

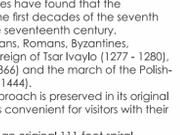
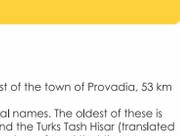
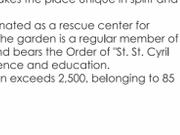
The residence was designed by the Italian architects Amerigo and Augustino in 1924. It is decorated with beautiful, powdery terraces along the steep seashore, through which water from two springs flows through special stone channels and overflows into water mirrors and waterfalls.

The style of the new buildings is in line with that of the old ones and the old mills have been restored. The contrast of the white rocks and the red roofs, typical of the city, is also preserved.

There are chapels, courtyards, parks, fountains and buildings in various styles - typical Bulgarian, Byzantine, Roman-Arab, Moorish, Transylvanian and others. The Park in the former summer residence of the Romanian Queen Maria. Today it is located on an area of about 65 acres and has the second largest collection after Monaco of large-sized cactus in Europe. The interesting history combined with the magnificent landscape architecture makes the place unique in spirit and atmosphere.

The Botanical Garden in Balchik has been designated as a rescue center for CITES-protected plant species on the border. The garden is a regular member of the World Council of Botanic Gardens (BCGI) and bears the Order of "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" II degree for contribution to science and education.

The number of plant species grown in the garden exceeds 2,500, belonging to 85 families and 800 genera.



## The Mosaic Museum



The Mosaic Museum is located in the town of Devnya. It is an in situ museum and housed in a specially constructed building designed to preserve archaeological discoveries. A large Roman building with magnificent mosaics was discovered here in 1976 during archaeological excavations. It is one of the foundations of this building that the museum was built.

The ancient building was dated to the reign of Emperor Constantine I the Great - end of III - beginning of IV century. The building was a town house and occupied the area of an entire neighborhood in the Roman city of Marcianopolis, which was one of the largest Roman cities in this part of the empire. The plan was a typical Greco-Roman atrium-peristyle dwelling, with the inner courtyard surrounded on three sides by residential buildings and a colonnade.

Five of the building's premises and the peristyle are covered with multi-colored floor mosaics - some of the finest specimens of Roman mosaic art of that time found in Bulgaria. Three of these mosaics are on display in the museum on the premises where they were found, and the rest, after conservation and partial restoration, are transferred to a new supporting base.

The mosaics are made of small stones - cubes of marble, limestone, baked clay and colored glass in 16 colors. They depict mainly characters and scenes from Greco-Roman mythology, exotic animals and birds, plant and geometric motifs. The mosaic covering the living room floor depicts the shield of the goddess Athena Pallas, decorated in the middle with the severed head of Gorgon Medusa. The purpose of this image was to protect the owners from evil and to petrify the detractors with their fearsome appearance and freezing look.

The reception hall of the building is the largest room in it, covered with mosaic. One of the centerpieces of the mosaic is the ancient Greek legend of the abduction of Ganymede. So far this is the only mosaic with this story, discovered in Bulgaria.

The Seasons mosaic covered the floor of the women's room of the house. Another mosaic known as the Pantheon. Characters are depicted during excavations in the eastern part of Marcianopolis in a building that was probably an Old Christian basilica. The mosaic decoration consists of repeating geometric motifs in four colors.

The museum's halls feature a variety of material related to the architecture of the building and the lifestyle of its occupants.

