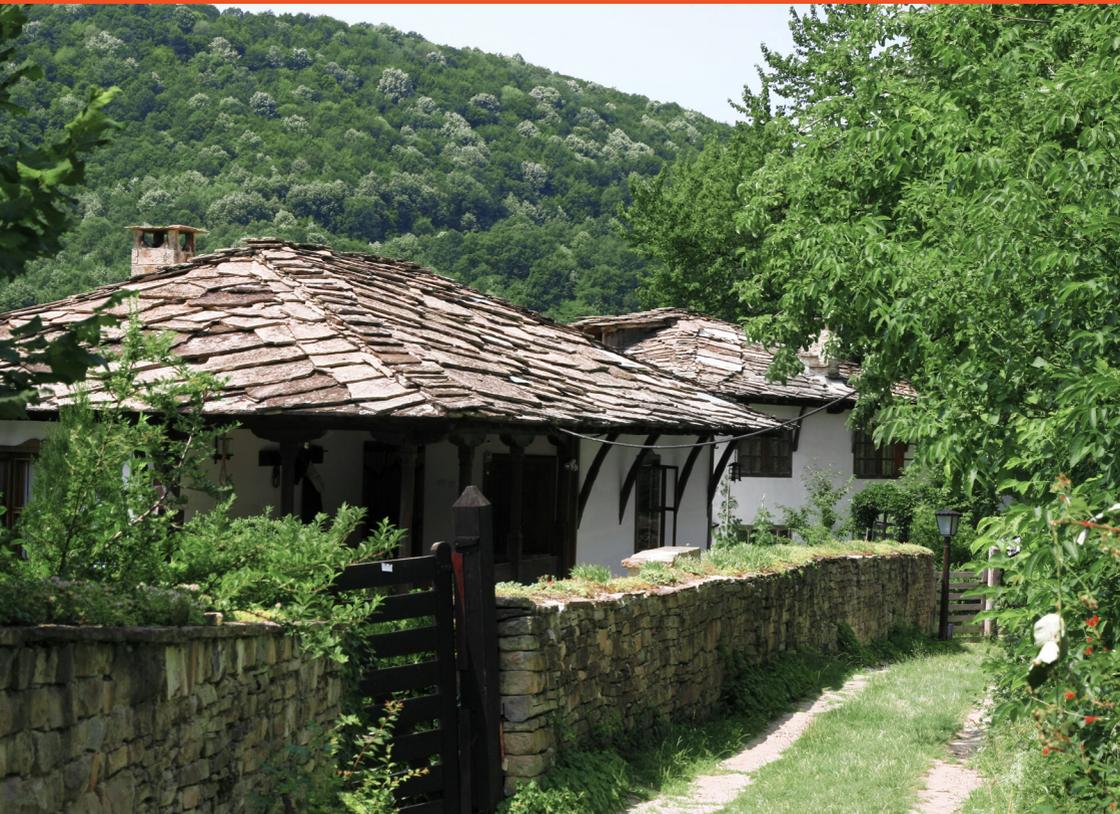




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BALKAN MOUNTAIN SETTLEMENTS

multimedia



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GENERAL INFORMATION



Stara Planina, or the Balkan Mountain, which lie along the whole length of Bulgaria, has given its name to the whole Balkan Peninsula. Some of the most picturesque towns and villages, many of which were declared architectural reserves for their preserved authentic appearance, lie in the bowels of the mountain.



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The Balkan Mountain settlements, as well as the Balkan nature in its different areas, are various. Many of the settlements have a long history; many of them were founded as an attempt to preserve the Bulgarian people's life and culture in less accessible areas at the times, when the Ottoman army conquered Bulgaria.

Local crafts were born here over the centuries of Ottoman Dominion – they made the craftsmen famous in Bulgaria and abroad. Besides cattle and agriculture, the local people earned their living from copper crafts, braiding and gold crafts. Unique examples of woodcarving and icon paintings have been preserved to the present day.

The Balkan villages have brought a rich legacy of architectural monuments, authentic crafts, rich folklore, local traditions and customs to the present day. Some of the most popular tourist destinations are the towns of Teteven, Gabrovo, Dryanovo, Tryavna, Troyan, Apriltsi, Elena, Kotel, the villages of Ribaritsa, Bozhentsi, Shipkovo, Oreshak, Medven, Zheravna, Ichera.



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TOWN OF CHIPROVTSI

The town of Chiprovtsi is located at the western slopes of the Balkan Mountain, near the border between Bulgaria and Serbia. The region of the town has been populated since antiquity, and during the centuries of its development, Chiprovtsi has established itself as a craftsmen

center. From the past to the present day the town has preserved its fame of a center of carpets manufacturing. In the manufacturing of carpets the local craftsmen were putting imagination and experience. In the History Museum of the town there is a special exposition, dedicated to the





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region. In the monastery complex there is also an ossuary tower, where the bones of the rebels who died in the Chiprovtsi Uprising in 1688 are preserved. The region of Chiprovtsi and the Western Balkan Mountain is exceptionally picturesque and it is also a pleasant place for relaxation and hiking during the weekends.

Chiprovtsi carpets and their typical elements.

The Chiprovtsi Monastery "St. John of Rila" is located very close to Chiprovtsi, at a distance of about 7 km from the town. It was established in the 10th century, and at that time the monastery was a center of Bulgarian spirit, and it assisted the literature, education and revolutionary activities in the





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TOWN OF BERKOVITSA



The town of Berkovitsa is situated at a distance of about 86 km from Sofia, in the folds of the Western Balkan Mountain. In the past the Balkan town was an important administrative center, and presently it attracts visitors with its incredible clean nature and its fresh air. In the town

there are interesting cultural and historical landmarks – the Ethnographic Museum is housed in a typical Revival house and presents traditional clothes and carpets typical for the region. It presents the town population style of life during the Age of Revival.



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The museum house of Ivan Vazov is also located in Berkovitsa, where the patriarch of Bulgarian literature resided for a short time (1850 – 1921).

Some of the most interesting temples in the town are the churches “Nativity of Holy Mary” and “St. Nikolas the Miracle Maker”. At a distance of about 10 km from Berkovitsa lies the Klisura

Monastery – one of the centers of Bulgarian education and literature. Month Kom is located near Berkovitsa, at a distance of about 16 km. It is a starting point for many hiking routes in this part of the mountain. During the winter, the place is a preferred site for the admirers of winter sports because of the good conditions for skiing and snowboarding, which it offers.





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TOWN OF VRATSA

The town of Vratsa is located at a distance of about 110 km from Sofia, in North-west Bulgaria. The region has been inhabited since antiquity, and during the centuries the town had an important strategic, economical and

cultural significance. You can learn more about the rich and ancient history of Vratsa in the History Museum of the town. Some of the most important treasures of Bulgaria are kept here. A special hall presents the 165 silver vessels of the





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Rogozen treasure, dating back to the 4th century BC.

Other exceptionally valuable articles of the museum are the golden crown and the golden earrings from the Mogilanska mound. The Ethnographic Complex in Vratsa houses the Museum of Phaeton, in which visitors can learn more about the technology of making the

vehicles of the past.

Vratsa is also an interesting place for visiting because of the incredible opportunities for ecological tourism and the hiking tours, which the Vratsa Balkan offers. In the natural park "Vratsa Balkan" there are multiple marked routes, which lead to interesting natural phenomena and beautiful localities. On the territory of the natural park and very close to Vratsa lies the Ledenica cave. On the mount Okolchitsa in the Vratsa Balkan raises a stone cross, by which the deed of the poet and revolutionary Hristo Botev (1848 – 1876) and the rebels of his detachment is immortalized.



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TOWN OF ETROPOLE



The town of Etropole is located at the foot of the northern slopes of the Balkan Mountain, at a distance of about 80 km from Sofia. During the centuries of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdom the town was an important center of processing iron, copper and gold. During the Age of Revival,

Etropole preserved its leading position as a center of crafts and commerce. You can learn more about the history of Etropole from the exposition of the History Museum. The building in which the museum is housed, was built for a Turkish police station in 1853 – 1870 by local builders.



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One of the most valuable monuments of culture in Etropole is the Clock Tower, built in 1710. It is considered one of the oldest in Bulgaria. The Arnaudova house recreates the style of life in Etropole in the middle of the 19th century. The



house was built in 1850 – 1860 and it is one of the monuments of culture in the town.

The Etropole Monastery “Holy Trinity” is located at a distance of only 5 km from the town. The holy monastery was established in the 12th century. The beautiful waterfall Varovitets is located near the monastery. Etropole is a pleasant place for hiking and relaxation; the region around it also offers options for ecological and country tourism and hiking routes. The village of Ribaritsa is also located in the vicinity, where tourists can enjoy the typical Bulgarian hospitality.



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TOWN OF TETEVEN

The town of Teteven is situated in the western part of the Middle Balkan Mountain, about 110 kilometers northeast of Sofia. The town is small and picturesque, the local people are proud of its long history and the beautiful nature of the

Balkan Mountain in Teteven area. Founded centuries ago, Teteven was famous during the Bulgarian Revival with its many craftsmen, who sold their goods from Vienna to Istanbul. The town was also known as "Altan Teteven" (Golden Teteven).





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However in 1801 the town was demolished to the ground during an attack and needed a several decades to regain its former glory. Nowadays it is a small, picturesque town with hospitable people and interesting landmarks. The history of Teteven is kept in

the History Museum of the town. The fresh Balkan nature attracts many eco tourism lovers and people, who want to spend a peaceful holiday. The village of Ribaritsa is located in the vicinity – it is one of the most popular country tourism destinations in the country.



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VILLAGE OF RIBARITSA



The village is located 12 kilometers southeast of Teteven. It lies along Beli Vit river and is 10 kilometers long. The village is known among the admirers

of pastoral landscapes and is a mountain climatic resort due to its fresh air and beautiful nature. Accommodation is offered in many of the houses here.



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Room and house rental is available. There are also several hotels and restaurants in the village. The vicinity of

Ribaritsa offers several tourist routes as well as opportunities for mountain biking and fishing.





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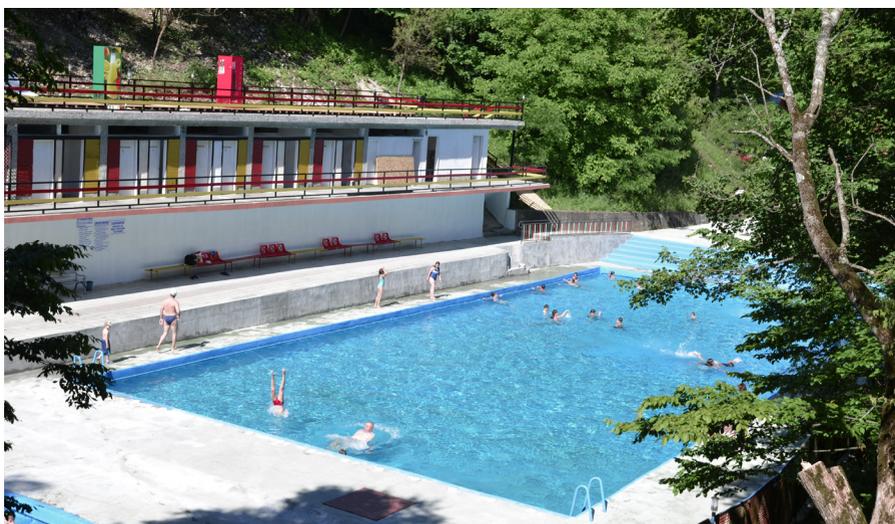
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VILLAGE OF SHIPKOVO

The village of Shipkovo is located only 30 kilometers away from Ribaritsa, on the road to the town of Troyan. The village is quite crowded due to the numerous tourists, who spend their holidays

there throughout the year. The proximity of Troyan (18 kilometers) is also an advantage for those, who want to be near a larger town.

The SPA resort of Shipchenski





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Mineralni Bani is located at a distance of 2 kilometers from the center of the village and has three mineral springs. The healing mineral waters, combined with the fresh mountain air, have earned Shipkovo the fame of one of the most renowned climatic SPA resorts in the Balkan Mountain.





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TOWN OF TROYAN



Troyan is located 18 kilometers east of Shipkovo. The picturesque mountain town gave its name to this part of the Balkan Mountain, also known as Troyan Balkan Mountain. The town was founded in the 15th century by settlers from western

Bulgaria. During the Bulgarian Revival Troyan became famous for its master potters and the Troyan ceramic and pottery school. The Troyan monastery is located near the town – it is one of the largest monasteries in the Balkan Mountain.



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It is often visited by tourists and pilgrims. The town is also of great interest for tourists. The famous unique Museum of traditional crafts and applied arts is also located in the town. The National Exhibition of crafts and arts is situated in the nearby village Oreshak.





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TOWN OF APRILTSI

The town of Apriltsi is located 26 kilometers southeast of Troyan. It is also popular among tourists for its beautiful nature and good tourism conditions. Several walking routes in the Balkan Mountain start in this town. The town is a popular place for active holidays. It offers good conditions for horse riding, mountain biking, rope courses as well as many hotels and guest houses. Apriltsi has recently become a town. In 1976, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the April Uprising the four villages – Novo Selo, Vidima, Ostrets and Zla Reka, united and become the town of Apriltsi.





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TOWN OF GABROVO



After Apriltsi, the tour of the Balkan settlements continues to the town of Gabrovo. It is located 52 kilometers northeast of Apriltsi, at the foot of the Balkan Mountain. Gabrovo was founded as a settlement,

protecting the Shipka pass in the 12th century. During the Revival age Gabrovo became famous throughout the whole Ottoman Empire for its skilled craftsmen and bright citizens. There are three unique



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museums in Gabrovo – the outdoor museum Etara, the Museum of Education and the House of Humor and Satire. The Sokolski Monastery is located in the vicinity of the town. The Shipka pass starts from Gabrovo and leads to southern Bulgaria, passing through the National Museum Park Shipka.





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VILLAGE OF BOZHENTSI

Bozhentsi is a beautiful village, located 15 kilometers east of the town of Gabrovo. According to an ancient legend, the village was founded by a noblewoman from Tarnovo, called Bozhana, who settled here with her

children, after her husband died in the seizure of the capital Tarnovo by the Ottoman Turks. Due to its many houses, preserved from the times of the Bulgarian Revival, the village was declared an architectural reserve.





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Bozhentsi is quite popular among the admirers of country tourism and the people, who want to spend a peaceful holiday. The famous white sweet is also among the local attractions. The people from the village often organize reproductions of Bulgarian traditional festivals, such as the Day of St. George, Christmas, the Day of St. Lazarus.





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TOWN OF DRYANOVO



The picturesque town of Dryanovo is located 21 kilometers north of Bozhentsi. Although small, Dryanovo has many landmarks – old Revival houses, History Museum, Museum dedicated to the famous Revival builder -

Kolyo Ficheto, the Dryanovski monastery, the cave Bach Kiro, etc. Due to its wonderful climate, Dryanovo was declared a climatic resort. There are several eco paths in the region, which reveal the beautiful nature of the Balkan Mountains to visitors.



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TOWN OF TRYAVNA



The town of Tryavna is located 16 kilometers south of Dryanovo. Like many other Balkan settlements, Tryavna has a rich history. There are many museums here, showing various aspects of the town. The most interesting of all is the Daskalova house, which has exhibitions, dedicated to the





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Tryavna school of arts and the famous Tryavna woodcarvings. Another interesting museum is the one of African and Asian arts. The third museum in Tryavna is dedicated to icon painting and its magnificent specimens. The clock tower is a symbol of the town – an interesting legend is told about the process of its building.





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TOWN OF ELENA



The beautiful mountain town of Elena is located 60 kilometers east of Tryavna. It is famous for its wonderful nature as well as with its

preserved architecture since the times of the Bulgarian Revival, the various monuments of culture and the Elena pork legs – a local



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meal, prepared from salted pork.

You can spend the whole day in Elena and still want more. Each house and street brings the history and spirit of the Bulgarian Revival. Some of the most interesting landmarks are the Daskalolivnitsa, the architectural ensemble Razsukanovi houses and the Paleontology Museum.





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TOWN OF KOTEL

On the mountain roads from Elena to the west, in about 60 kilometers, you will reach the town of Kotel, which is located in a small valley in the eastern Balkan Mountain. The town has preserved many of

its monuments of history. The Galatansko school is located in the area of Galata. The school is a magnificent monument of architecture. It contains the exhibition, dedicated to the famous Kotel carpets and fabrics.





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Another famous local landmark is the Pantheon of George St. Rakovski. There is a museum of natural history in Kotel, which has a large exhibition, representing the animal species in the Kotel area of the Balkan Mountain. The nature near the town is also rich in landmarks – caves, waterfalls and cave formations.





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VILLAGE OF ZHERAVNA



The village of Zheravna is located 16 kilometers south of Kotel. Due to its many monuments of culture, Zheravna was declared an architectural reserve. Some of the houses are older than 300 years. The houses of Rusi Chorbadzhi, the home of the writer Yordan Yovkov,

the home of Sava Filaretov and the church "St. Nicolas" are of great interest for tourists. Each summer in the town is held a traditional festival of the national costumes. The village is quite popular among tourists, who prefer to stay in old Revival houses.



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VILLAGE OF MEDVEN

The village of Medven is located at about 15 kilometers east of Zheravna. This small charming village impresses every visitor with its preserved houses since the ages of the Bulgarian Revival and with its wonderful Balkan Mountain nature. The fresh air, the cool and quiet summers attract people who





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want to relax from the city noise.

Medven is the hometown of the Bulgarian writer and revolutionary Zahari Stoyanov. His home is nowadays turned into a museum. The village is popular among hunters as well – there is a hunting area nearby. Several restored old houses in Medven offer accommodation.





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VILLAGE OF ICHERA



Another picturesque Balkan village is located 17 kilometers southwest of Medven – Ichera. Although it is not an architectural reserve, the village has preserved its authentic appearance.

The well-developed country tourism attracts many people during the summer season. The village has several hotels and

restaurants, which are built in authentic Balkan architectural style. The old houses are not the only landmarks in the village. The nature of the area and the possibilities, which it offers – fishing, tours, crab hunting in the river, picking herbs and mushrooms – are also interesting.



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