

# PHARE CBC PROGRAMME 2005 FOR ROMANIA - BULGARIA

EUROPEAN UNION



Project financed by Phare



ROMANIAN  
GOVERNMENT

*Project  
Development  
of the tourist harbours on Danube River  
starting from Mehedinti - Vidin to Olt - Pleven*

*Some of main  
Romanian and  
Bulgarian  
Danube related  
tourist attractions  
starting from  
Mehedinti - Vidin  
to Olt - Pleven*

*Project implemented by*

**CLIMM**  
Craiova



*We are pleased to present to you this brochure which promotes some Romanian and Bulgarian Danube related tourist attractions starting from Mehedinti- Vidin to Olt- Pleven.*

*The present brochure has been produced within the project "Development of the tourist harbours on Danube River, starting from Mehedinti- Vidin to Olt- Pleven" implemented by Local Council of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Craiova in partnership with Association of Danube River Municipalities "Danube" from Belene and financed by Phare CBC Programme 2005 Romania- Bulgaria, Priority 2 - Economic Development.*

*The guide includes a short geographical and historical presentation of the beautiful Romanian counties of Mehedinti, Dolj and Olt, respectively Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven from Bulgaria.*

*This guide is realized with the purpose to include new stops in the luxury cruises schedule both in Romania and Bulgaria by identifying and presenting the points of attraction in the Danube region of the two countries.*

*The guide is aiming to attract more tourists and passengers of the luxury cruises and enlighten some of the touristic opportunities offered by those regions which are for the moment insufficiently explored.*

*We would like to thank our partners and all the persons who helped us to produce this material.*

# Mehedinti

## Short history

The county of Mehedinti is located in south-west Romania and stretches over 4,900 sq.km. The Danube, the largest river in Europe, runs along the 192 km long southern county line. The historical vestiges at Drobeta Turnu Severin are telling proofs of the importance of this area along the centuries. Archaeological digs attest to human settlements in this expanse ever since the Palaeolithic (vestiges of a settlement dating back to the Palaeolithic have been unearthed and are still studied at Schela Cladovei). The first man-made dwellings, cemeteries, and the first proofs of stable farming activities in the European continent have been found in this area. According to the census of January 1992, the county of Mehedinti has a population of over 330,000 / 67.8 inhabitants/sq.km. The major urban localities in the county are: the municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin and the towns of Orsova, Vanju Mare, Strehaiia and Baia de Arama. The municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin is the administrative seat of the Mehedinti county, with a population of about 120,000 inhabitants. The settlement knew economically thriving periods during the Roman period and the Middle Ages, standing out as a strategic urban and trade centre. History-full vestiges the Pillar of Trajan's Bridge, the ruins of the Roman Camp of Drobeta, the Roman Baths, as well as all the other vestiges unearthed in the vast archaeological park included in the Portile de Fier Area Museum write the history of the Roman colonisation in Dacia and of the early formation of the Romanian people.

## Geographical Outline

Man moulded the county scenery by building constructions of wide proportions. At Portile de Fier, at the former Cazanele Dunarii Straits a real challenge to navigators, the Danube waters were harnessed by the construction of two large dams connecting Romania to Yugoslavia. Another two huge storage lakes were built at Portile de Fier I and Portile de Fier II (236 sq.km and 67 sq.km, respectively) that add to the hydro power system. The Topolovita Cave, one of the longest in the country (over 11 km of already explored galleries on several levels with millions of years old stalactites and stalagmites), a natural monument protected by law, is located 31 km away from Drobeta Turnu Severin).





*Portile de Fier (Iron Gates)*

*Stronghold of Tudor Vladimirescu-Cerneti, the memorial museum dedicated to Tudor Vladimirescu, the leader of the revolution from 1821. This house hosted the ammunition used during the revolution.*

*Portile de Fier I-built together with our Yugoslavian neighbors behind a concrete dam of maximum 60m height, it also reaches the county of Caras-Severin and even further, the Yugoslavian territory.*

*Portile de Fier II-Dam Lake is located in the area of Gogosul village, and it is built together with the ex-Yugoslavian countries, also. Beside the economic value, the lakes are points of tourist attraction also, due to the beauty of the surrounding landscape.*



*Cula Cerneti*



*Drobeta Turnu Severin, Traian's Bridge*



*Severin Medieval Fortress*



*Decabal's Bust*



*Trikule Fortress*

*Traian's Bridge-Drobeta Turnu Severin, was built by the famous architect of the ancient world, Apollodorus of Damascus across the Danube, at the order of Emperor Traian. It is a huge bridge, which facilitated the Roman march into Dacia. Today only the pillar on the Danube bank is preserved.*



*Cerna Valley*

The Cerna river flows into the Danube near the Orsova town, making its way through two calcareous massifs - Cerna Mountains to the north, Mehedinti Mountains to the south. Here is the best place to see numerous gorges such as waterfalls, caves and other typical phenomena for calcareous (karst) regions.

*Bulba Cave*

Bulba Cave is located 4 km south-west of Baia de Arama. It is formed by a network of galleries on 3 levels - difficult to reach. The total length of this cave is 4.860 meters.



*The Natural Bridge from Ponoare*



The Natural Bridge from Ponoare (5 km south-west of Baia de Arama), karst structure, unique in Romania, represented by a huge vault. This unique landscape was formed by the collapse of a huge cave. Together with the surrounding karst complex (caves, valleys), it forms an interesting geological preserve.

# CRAIOVA



*Bania House*

*National Theater*



*Art Museum*

*St. Dumitru Church*



*The church was built in 1652 by Matei Basarab. Entirely rebuilt between 1855-1889, the new construction followed the plans of the french architect Emile Decomte du Nory without respect to the original plans.*



*Romanescu Park*

*Probably the most-known attraction from Craiova is the Romanescu Park (People's Park) - one of the valuable monuments of landscape architecture in Romania and Europe. It consists in 96 ha of forests, 4 ha of lakes, a zoo, a cycling track, a racecourse, landing place, two restaurants, and over 250 species of trees and bushes.*



# CALAFAT

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*A settlement dating from ancient times, Calafat took its name from the operation called "calafatuire", meaning the covering with tar of river boats, providing that the existence of the population on these grounds was linked to the presence of the Danube, which will have marked its whole evolution throughout history.*

*From a harbour on the board of the Danube through which an important commercial activity was led and from a mainly agricultural settlement, Calafat became a modern city, industrialized, an important cultural and spiritual centre.*



# Olt

## Short history

Having participated in all the major events of the Romanian nation, Olt county preserves traces and vestiges of an outstanding material and spiritual culture. Archaeological diggings revealed the existence of human settlements in all ages, this illustrating the continuity of civilisation in this area. The finds unearthed belong to the pebble culture, the Cris culture, the Vadastra culture and the Salcuta culture (human settlements of the closed type). The capital of Dacia Malvensis was at Romula Malva near Caracal. The inhabitants of Olt county participated in 1821 in the revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu and in the 1848 revolution. The county even took part in the very first Union, under Michael the Brave, who had a princely court at Caracal and founded the Cloocociav Monastery at Slatina. Given its strategic position, Olt county backed the 1877 Independence War, the Third Regiment of Gendarmes from Slatina winning praise, while the sacrifice of the Third Olt Regiment in WW1 in 1916 entered the history of the Romanian army.

## Geographical Outline

Situated in southern Romania, on the lower Olt, the county belonged in the category of counties bordering on the river Danube. It is crossed by the meridian of 24° East longitude and by the parallel of 44° North latitude. Neighbors: in the north-west Valcea county, in the east Arges and Teleorman counties, in the west Dolj county and in the south, along a 47-km distance, the river Danube. The county's area is of 5,600 sq km. or 2.3 per cent of Romania's area. The climate is continental temperate, influenced by chilly north-easterly winds and by the dry westeries, which account for harsh winters and very dry summers. The average annual temperature ranges between 11.2°C in the south and 9.8°C in the north. The physical features comprise hills in the centre and north and plains in the south: the Caracal, Boian and Burnas plains. The capital of Olt county is the municipality of Slatina, a city situated in the centre-north, left of the river Olt. Slatina is crossed west to east by the European road E70 and lies 50 km from Craiova, 75 km from Pitesti and 220 km from the International Airport Otopeni Bucharest. Other urban centres are the municipality of Caracal, the towns of Corabia, Bals, Draganesti Olt, Scornicești and Piatra Olt. The rural population lives in 96 villages.



# SLATINA

*The original bridge was built between 1845-1847, using the Balzone from Milano's architecture plans. Thirty years later, the bridge was redesigned with an entirely new look. The total length of the bridge is 400 meters.*

## *Slatina, Metal Bridge*



## *Clocociov Monastery*

*Historical monument and religious piece of architecture, the Clocociov Monastery was built around the XVI-th century during the reign of Neagoe Basarab. The actual design dates since 1645. Nowadays, a collection of old traditional Romanian art containing icons, carved wood and decorative art pieces, old books, is hosted by this monastery.*

# CORABIA - Sucidava

*The Ruins of Sucidava Fortress - Corabia, ancient Geto-Dacian settlement, on the place of an older one, belonging to Cotofeni Culture, the 3rd millennium B.C. Later, the fortress became an important military and economical Roman centre. Based on archeological evidence, we know in 250 A.D this was a harbour town and an important urban centre in the Roman-Byzantine period, also.*



*Secret Well*

*The "Secret well" from Sucidava Fortress, unique monuments among the Roman-Byzantine architecture, was discovered in 1958. Today rebuilt, the "Secret well" is included in touristic circuits and represents one of the most-known archeological objective from Romania.*

*The construction was entirely underground and consists in two distinct parts: the well and the underground passage leading to it.*

*Sucidava Fortress*



OBOGA - Ethnography Centre



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# Vidin

## **Short history**

The Vidin district has a rich historical background. A great number of historical monuments, architectural sites, sculptures, and bronze and pottery artifacts are evidence of the advance of the ancient Roman cities of Ratiaria (Archar), Bononia (Vidin) and Castel "Castra Martes" (Kula). In the 13th and the 14th centuries Bain (present-day Vidin) used to be a political and economic center with well developed crafts and arts. It was also a literary center and an important cereal-growing area.

Over a period of two thousand years the region used to be an important military, transportation and commercial center.

The Vidin district has a number of unique natural and historical sites. The dam lakes and the Danube River provide favorable conditions for fishing. There are tourist facilities and a reserve of the labor force waiting to be tapped into the development of tourism. The district has well-established relations with the neighboring countries. One of the strategic objectives of regional development is tourism drawing on the cultural and historical heritage, as well as on the geographical location and the natural wealth of the region. The area of Chuprene is a natural reservation with a territory of 1,439 hectares. It is included in the UNESCO and UNO list of protected areas. There are also 3 other protected sites, 12 natural sites and 5 historical spots.

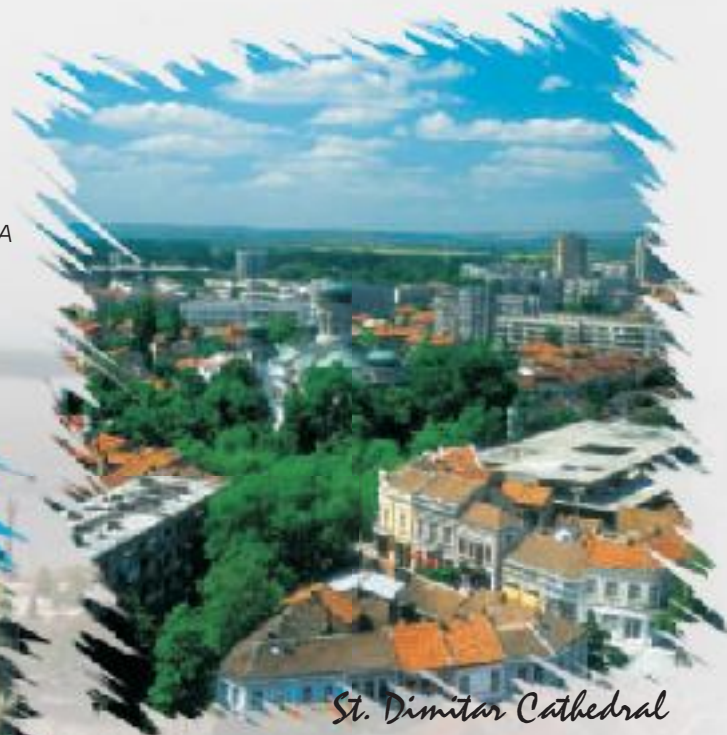
## **Geographical Outline**

The Vidin District is located in the northwestern part of Bulgaria. It covers the territory of 3022 square kilometers, which is 2,7 % of the country's total. Vidin District comprises of 141 settlements divided into 11 municipalities. The population of Vidin District is 131 215 people. To the west the district borders Yugoslavia where the borderline follows the ridges of the Balkan and the Pre-Balkan Mountains and, down the lower course of the Timok River, reaches the Danube. The district is a cross point of two trans European corridors N 4 (Budapest – Sofia – Kula – Thessaloniki and N 7 on the Danube river, international road E 79, which gives the possibilities for good transport relations with the Republic of Serbia. There are specialized terminals RO-RO and RO-LA, as well as an active Ferry of the relation Vidin – Calafat, which is the shortest way from West Europe through Bulgaria to the White Sea.



# VIDIN CITY

*Vidin has existed since the beginning of AD chronology. A first century BC tombstone lets us know that it is the only town in Bulgaria that has been standing where it is for 2000 years now. The Celts called it Bononia.*



*St. Dimitar Cathedral*

*Vidin is a complex mix of elements from all periods of its development. The antique Roman, mediaeval Bulgarian, Turkish, post-Liberation and new period of Vidin's development have all left their mark on buildings, monuments and on the look of the city as a whole.*



### *Baba Vida Castle*

*The Bulgarians conquered it during the reign of Khan Tervel. Mediaeval records mention it as Budin, Budun and Balin. Baba Vida is the mediaeval castle in the best state of preservation in Bulgaria, though there is hardly any other that has been besieged so many times. The castle dominates the big curve of the river; the upper defence platform commands a lovely view. As the castle was built and rebuilt time and again between the 3rd and the 19th century it could be a sort of a textbook of the history of fortification in Bulgarian lands.*



*The Baba Vida castle construction was initiated in the second half of the 10th century over the walls and the tower of the Roman fortress. The principal construction dates from the end of 12th century until the end of the 14th century. Together with the moat, the fortress served as the defence of the town. Today, Baba Vida is a national cultural memorial and tourist attraction.*

# BELOGRADCHIK

*Belogradchik is picturesquely spread over the western part of the Balkan Range, at 545 m above the sea level. Well laid out, and welcoming, Belogradchik is one of the most attractive national tourism sites of Bulgaria. The unique nature and rich history make it one of the most interesting and desirable tourist attraction.*



*Rabisha Lake*

*Next to the Magura Cave is the Rabisha Lake - the largest inland lake in Bulgaria. It is up to 35-40m deep. The Rabisha Lake is of tectonic origin. It offers perfect conditions for surfing and swimming. The lake is also an attractive place for hunting and fishing. Lake birds, carp and sheet-fish can be found in it.*



*Magura Cave*

*The so called "Pearl in the Crown" is the Magura Cave. It is near the village of Rabisha, 25km northwest of the town of Belogradchik. The cave is hollowed out in the Rabisha hill (461m above sea level). It is a small monocline, which is part of the Belogradchik anticline. The cave formation started 15 million years ago. The Torton River hollowed out in the limestone strata impressive halls and galleries. The total length of the galleries, discovered up to now, exceeds 2,000 m. There is a good asphalt road to the Magura Cave. It is one of the first well laid out caves in Bulgaria - with lighting, paths, and safeguard fittings. The cave and its surrounding area have been declared a National Tourist Sight.*

# Montana

## Short history

Montana was established during ancient times and has managed to survive through the ups and downs of its rich and tragic history.

In 29 BC. The area of Montana was occupied by the Romans and became part of a Roman province called Misia.

In 161 AD.- the settlement was given the status of a centre with municipal rights and was granted the name Montana, coming from "mons" - which means mountain.

In 9-11th - the artifacts found in the region indicate that the area continued as a growing settlement that adopted Christianity.

In 1877 - the liberation of Koutlovitsa from ottoman control.

In 1891 - the town became the centre of a district under the name Ferdinand, after the Bulgarian King Ferdinan.

In 1945 - the town was renamed Mihailovgrad at the beginning of the Communist regime in honour of the local Hristo Mihailov, leader of the 1923 Communist uprising.

After the fall of communism, the town adopted the ancient name Montana after an issue signed by the first Bulgarian democratic president. Today Montana is an important transport, cultural and educational centre.

## Geographical Outline

Region of Montana is situated in the central part of North Western Bulgaria with a total area of 3 618 sq. m, which is 3,2 % of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. To the north the region borders on the Danube-river, which creates natural conditions for direct contacts with Romania and the other countries along the basin of the Danube. To the West it borders on Serbia. The region of Montana consists of 7 towns and 102 villages, distributed in 11 municipalities. According to the data on 01. 03. 2001 population of the region is 183 350 people. The main administrative, economical and cultural center of the region is the town of Montana (49 300 people). It is situated in the central part of the region. Other larger towns are Lom (27000), Berkovitsa (15 000), Varsheztz (7 000). The climate in the region is temperate; the annual average temperature is about 10,9 degrees.



# MONTANA CITY

## The Museum of History

### Montana Municipality



The Historical Museum possesses over 50 thousand exhibits of various kinds and epochs. It takes part in scientific forums with announcements and publications.

Montana is the center of the administrative region. It is situated in northwestern Bulgaria along the Ogosta River. The town originates from the old Roman stronghold *Castra ad Montanezum* (a stronghold in the mountain), known also as Montana. The labor tools, ornaments, coins etc. found there reveal a long life of the village that was initially established on Calebair Hill on the left side of the river. It is from here that a blazing spring started and is now an integral factor for the town. The passing roads played a great role in the development of the town.



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## Razboishte Monastery "The Assumption of the Holy Mother"



The carpet industry in Chiprovtsi dates back to the 17th century. Those pieces of art have been made by hand all through their existence. During the 19th century the weavers implanted in their perfect handicraft wares all colors, geometric symbols, compositions of plants and animals. There is a belief that these symbols have magic power. Mystery and simplicity, order and harmony, past, present and future in the infinity; all these you perceive and receive with one of the Bulgarian miracles - the Chiprovtsi carpet.

Razboishte Monastery "The Assumption of the Holy Mother" is situated in the gorge of the Nishava river, about 5 km. southwest of the town of Godech, next to the village of Razboishte. The first information about the Monastery dates back to the 4th century. The church is situated on the right bank of the river in the rocks. It consists of two parts constructed in different time. Initially the eastern part of the present church was constructed. It is a small church. Some fresco fragments are preserved from this construction period, namely Celestial Regions composition on one of outside curves of the northern wall. They can be seen when one goes up to the church. This composition detail shows that a Doomsday composition had been situated outside on church's western wall. The colour is bright in okra and carmine tones. They date back to the second half of the 18th century.

Chiprovtsi is a very old town, settled at the foot of the Balkan Mountains, 30 km from Montana. The Ogosta river flows through the town, coming from the high parts of the mountains. The name Chiprovtsi comes after the Roman name of copper - kuprum. In Roman times Chiprovtsi was a major mining center. Excavations have uncovered a catholic monastery complex dating back to the 15th-17th centuries - a bishop's seat of the Sofia Catholic Eparchy during the time of Petur Solnat, a missionary from the Order of Franciscans who built and established the Catholic Church in Bulgaria. In the 16th-17th centuries the monastery was a cultural and educational center of the Bulgarian Catholics. The Uprising of Chiprovtsi in 1688 was organized by Catholic notables against Ottoman rule.



Chiprovtsi



# Vratsa



## Geographical Outline

City of Vratsa is one of the most picturesque cities in the Country. It is nestled in the foothills of "Vrachanski Balkan" (Vratsa Mountain), with the Leva River calmly crossing the city, enormous and fearful rocks overhanging the roofs. The city is only 116 km far from the Bulgarian capital Sofia. The area has diverse and attractive natural features, which together with the opportunities of recreation gives a special charm of the Eastern part of the Northwest Bulgaria. Several protected natural attractions and historical monuments are located on the territory of the Vratsa State Forestry.

## Short history

Vratsa is an ancient city found by ancient Thracians. Vratsa was called Valve ("door of a fortress") by the Romans due to narrow passage where the main Gate of the city fortress was located. Nowadays, this passage is the symbol of Vratsa and is presented on the Town's Coat of Arms. After the fall of Rome, Vratsa became part of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium). At the end of the 6th Century AD, Vratsa was populated by the South Slavic tribes. Even if they came from Pannonia and Dacia on the North, the town remained under Byzantine rule. In the 7th century, the Bulgarians and the Slavs found the Bulgarian State and the Slavic Vratsa became part of it. The city grew into important strategic location because of its proximity to the South State border. The name of the city was changed from Valve to the Slavic Vratitsa, which has the same meaning and is the source of the modern name. Vratsa became famous for its goldsmith's and silversmith's production and trade, high-quality earthenware and military significance.

In the 8th century, the Bulgarian army captured Sofia, which led to the decreasing of Vratsa's importance because of the better strategic position of Sofia, its more developed economy and larger size. But Vratsa was again key for the resistance against the Byzantine, Serbian and Magyar invasions in the Middle Ages.

*"Vratchansky Balkan" Natural Park, as a protected natural area, covers the Reserve "Vratchansky karst" - picturesque rocky formations, the cave "Ledenika" - tourist site of national importance and the gorge "Vratsata" near the river Leva.*



*Parshevitsa is a small ski resort, situated in Vratsa Balkan Mountain Range. Located 112 km away from the capital city, Vratsa, is a very popular destination, offering good opportunities for ski tourism, mountaineering, para - gliding and eco tourism. Parshevitsa ski resort offers one well- maintained ski- track, perfect for beginners or intermediates in skiing and snowboarding. The ski slope is situated at 1300 m above sea level. The length of the trace is 1100 metres and the drag lift can take up to 300 persons per hour.*



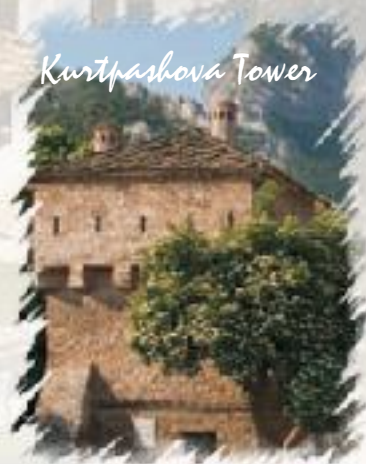
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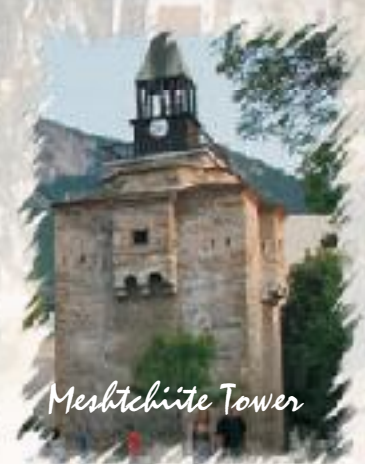
*Cherepish monastery*

*The Cherepish monastery "Assumption" (XIVc) – one of the oldest monasteries, preserved until the recent days, tucked away at the foot of the grand rocks in the Iskar defile and was connected with the battles of Tzar Ivan Shishman.*

*In the town Vratsa there are remarkable monuments of the cultural, historical and architectural heritage, which are of national importance, some of them are the Tower of Meshtchiite and Kurtpashova Tower, built in XIII century.*



*Kurtpashova Tower*



*Meshtchiite Tower*

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# Pleven

## Short history

Pleven is a town with millennium history. The earliest traces for man life and activities date to the end of New Stone Age when agricultural and animal-raising tribes inhabited these places. In III-II century A.C. Pleven was conquered by the Romans who turned it into a fortress under the name of "Storgozia". The Slavs came here at the end of VI century and the beginning of VII c. The archeological finds show that the life in the Kallika settlement continues during the Middle Age. The present name of the town is mentioned for the first time in a document, dated 1266.

The name of Pleven becomes world famous during the Russian-Turkish War in 1877-1878. The decisive outcome of this war and the liberation of Pleven is on 10 December, 1877. The press in the whole of Europe reflects the event.

The town has preserved till nowadays its cultural-historical inheritance and is well known as the town of the museums.

## Geographical Outline

Pleven municipality occupies the middle part of the Danube plateau. It is located in the heart of Mizia area, an agricultural region, fenced by medium in height lime hills. The central location in Northern Bulgaria determines its importance as a major administrative, political, cultural and transportation center. Pleven town is located 170 km from the capital Sofia, 320 km from the Black sea coast, 30 km from Danube river, 130 km from the "Danube Bridge" and around 70 km from the Balkan Range. The access to the town is by first class highway Sofia-Varna (E83), by second-class road Nikopol-Pleven (II-34), blacktop Lovech-Pleven (II-35). To reach the town on Danube River one has to pass Somovit harbor that is 31 km from Pleven. Presently construction works are going on to restore the airport in Dolna Mitropolia, which is 10 km away from the town. Pleven is in a zone of moderate-continental climate characterized by significant temperature amplitudes. Pleven municipality occupies an area of 812,098 square km. (18,74% from the territory of Pleven district and 0,73 from the territory of Bulgaria). There are 25 populated areas in the municipality in these number 2 towns Pleven and Slaviano.

# PLEVEN CITY



*Pleven Municipality*

Pleven is located in the very heart of Miziya, in an agricultural region, surrounded by low limestone hills. Its central location in Northern Bulgaria defines its importance as a large administrative, economic, political, cultural, and transport centre.



*Museum of History*



*Ivan Radev Theater*

The Pleven Epopee 1877  
Panorama depicts these events  
combining painting, plastics, and  
architecture in a whole artwork. A  
team of 11 Russian and 2  
Bulgarian artists painted it. The  
Panorama was officially unveiled  
on 10 December 1977.

The combination of the canvas  
(115/15m), the foreground (12m)  
and the illumination creates a  
feeling of authenticity and  
empathy to the battle fought on  
11 September 1877.

The illusion effect (perspective up  
to 12km) manages to tear off the  
visitor from his/her daily cares and  
to transfer the spectator "back in  
time", in another reality.

## Panorama



Nowadays there are 33 panoramas all over the world. One of them with  
the biggest dimensions is in Plevna. Plevna became internationally famous  
for the five-month battles during the Russian-Turkish war 1877-78 as a result  
of which Bulgaria was liberated from the 500 years of Ottoman rule.



*St. George - the Conqueror*

*Chapel-mausoleum "St. George - the Conqueror" was built in the period 1903 - 1907, with the help of Bulgarian people's donations. The bones of the perished Russian and Romanian soldiers near the town of Plevna are kept in the crypt. The project was made by P. Koichev - an architect. His project won the competition in 1903.*

*Iconostasis and icons were made by prominent Bulgarian masters.*

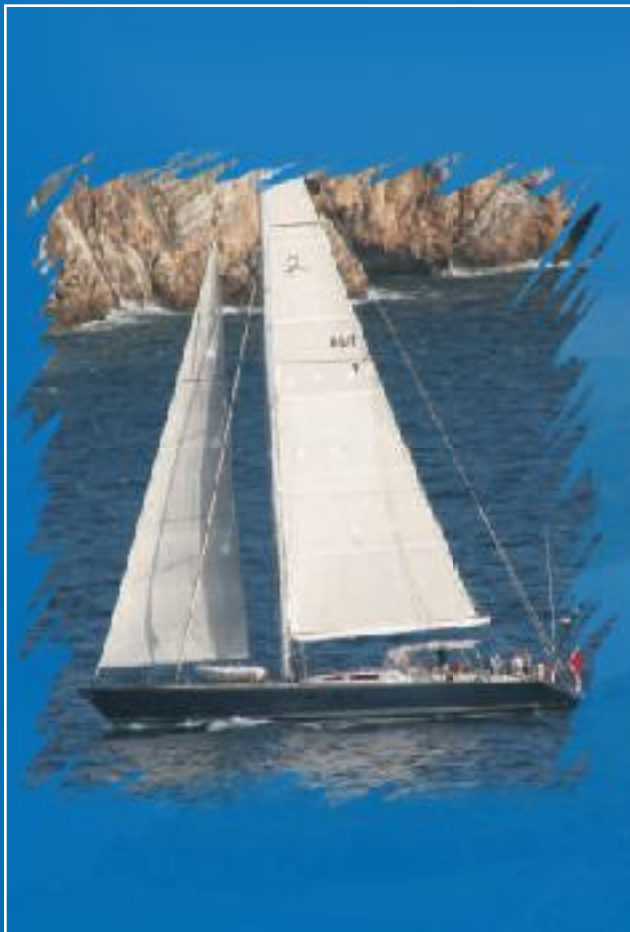
*Plevna has a rich history. It became widely known for the five-month battles during the Russian-Turkish war 1877-78 as a result of which Bulgaria was liberated from the 500 years of Ottoman domination. Of interest to the visitors is the Kailak fortress, the tumulus in the Skobelev Park, the Plevna Epopee Panoramic Exhibition, the old bridge on the Vit River, and many monuments.*





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Local Council of the Small and  
Medium Sized Enterprises Craiova

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Contact:

CLIMM Craiova

Romania, Craiova, 12 Stefan cel Mare St.

tel: +40 351 413 392 / 413 393

tel//fax: +40 251 599 459

e-mail: [immcv@sme.ro](mailto:immcv@sme.ro)

web: [www.sme.ro](http://www.sme.ro)

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