

Healing Waters



Macedonia has an underground treasure the full potential of which is still to be developed. Large parts of the country have big thermal reservoirs of different geological origins hidden deep beneath the surface. The waters are products of different tectonic processes and have different composition which depends on the rift lines between different geological zones. Macedonian thermal waters differ in temperature and chemical composition, but they are all valued for their healing properties. They come to the surface as hot springs around which spa centres have existed at different times in history. Some historical spas have become modern hospitals or recreational facilities only in the second half of the 20th century. At present, there are seven

spas in Macedonia, all built between the 1960 and 1980. Many of them have been privatized, while some have remained part of the state health care system. But they all show great potential for further investments and attraction of users.

The use of thermal waters for healing purposes has been known since ancient times. There is almost no ancient town in Macedonia which did not have its own luxury bath for private or public use. The tradition was maintained through the Ottoman period. Many hamams have been preserved as jewels of secular architecture.

Bansko Spa near Strumica has extensive archaeological remains dating from the Roman era. Almost entire wonderfully preserved bath can be visited in the courtyard of the modern centre. The two spas near the magnificent Debar Lake set in a wonderful landscape have the

track record of 700 years of continuous use. They were very famous during the Ottoman times, and the remains reveal beautifully appointed baths. **Debar Spa** waters contain sulphur and iron. So they are beneficial for a whole range of conditions from rheumatism to gastric and anaemia illnesses. Near it, at the height of 550 meters above sea level is **Kosovrasti Spa**. Its waters are rich in sulphur and carbonates and have a high level of radioactivity, which makes them appropriate for treating rheumatism and female illnesses.

Kumanovo Spa waters are rich in calcium, magnesium and iron, which make them beneficial for all the intestinal illnesses. Kumanovo Spa also lies in beautiful surroundings, but it is still to develop its capacity to attract not only local but also foreign visitors, as it is just few kilometres away from the border with Serbia.

Katlanovo Spa dates back to Greek times. Thanks to its proximity to Skopje

it is one of the most visited. Its waters are highly mineralized making it a real rarity in Europe. The mild continental climate and the fresh mountain air make it very attractive for Skopje metropolitan population. The wonderful landscape created by the Pcinja River offers additional recreational activities, long walks and fishing.

Kezovica Spa is located on the outskirts of Stip. The waters have high mineralization and appropriate levels of radioactivity for inhalation, drinking and bathing. The accommodation facilities have been recently renovated. Another advantage of Kezovica Spa is the recreational path which goes up to the city centre, around the beautiful hill with the remnants of the medieval town and to the confluence of the Bregalnica and Otinja Rivers, which makes it a small natural and cultural wonder.

The Spa in **Kocani** is of the sulphur type but with low mineralisation and





radioactivity. It is ideal for skin and gastrointestinal diseases and rheumatism. Kocani is also looking at the possibility of developing other uses of thermal waters, such as agriculture and heating of residential and commercial facilities. In Bansko, hot spring water is already used for heating a big greenhouse complex of three hectares and many small ones. Bansko has other advantages over other the spa centres thanks to its Hotel "Tsar

Samuil" which is famous for its recreational swimming pool, night bar and restaurant, all built in the 1980s. The popularity of this hotel shows that the development of entertainment facilities and high standard in accommodation can attract not only balneological patients, but also other visitors, especially from among the youth and the upper-class clients.

The southernmost spa is at the village of **Negorci** at the foothills of the high





Kozuf Mountain. The centre was opened in 1903 by the local Turkish *pasha*, and since then it has been in continuous use without regard to wars and decomposition of states. Negorci Spa is the only spa in the country that also has thermal mud available a few hundred metres away from the thermal springs. The mud is almost black with light dark particles of organic origin, which make it ideal for different therapeutic purposes. Negorci Spa revived in recent years as the building

was renovated and new heating facilities were installed. This attracted many Greek tourists who regularly visit the border region for recreational and shopping purposes.

Macedonia has a huge potential in the field of spa tourism. There are more than 20 other thermal springs that can be transformed into therapeutic or recreational centres. This business has foreign investment potential and a capacity to attract foreign visitors.

