

Summer Cultural Hotspots



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Tour operators predict the success of the summer season by the indicators of the 1st of May holiday. If the weather is fine and tourists overcrowd their favourite destinations then the whole summer would be like this. And indeed, this was one of the hottest days in the

decade, and the tourist sites such as Ohrid, Dojran and Matka had record numbers of visitors. So, we are to expect a hot and long summer and lots of tourists. Indeed, more and more visitors, from many European countries, such as Germany, Holland and Czech Republic are visiting Macedonia. There are new visitors from distant lands like Russia and Finland, as well as regional connoisseurs from Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria. Judging by their satisfied faces in holiday snapshots, one might conclude that this year's tourist offer is good and that, finally, people working in the sector have learned their job. Part of the tourist programme is of course cultural, including visits to ancient sites, cultural heritage

spots, public institutions, museums, galleries and festivals.

In the three years of the existence of Macedonia Welcome Centre Magazine we have contributed to the process of tourist discovery and promotion of Macedonia identifying and recommending real gems of cultural sites and events: Skopje churches and mosques, Kratovo towers, Ohrid monasteries and fortress, Strumica waterfalls, our high mountains and beautiful rivers, Skopje Summer and Ohrid Summer festivals and Struga Poetry Evenings. We have welcomed YOU, our readers, to visit the cultural hotspots and to experience a real Macedonian atmosphere, the mastery of the crafts, the finest tunes of the violin or the zurla, the warmth of the nights, the buzzing of flies and mosquitoes, the freshness of the breeze and the noise of the people. But for those of you who have been following our magazine for some time we would like to suggest a few more spots and experiences off the beaten path. Visit these spots in the long dawns or the refreshing nights of this hot summer.

If you head to the north or north-east, towards Kumanovo, apart from the famous megalith observatory in Kokino, remember to see the fantastic frescoes of Staro



Dojran Lake



Megalith observatory in Kokino

Nagoricane Monastery, the old iconostasis of the Matejce Church of St. George and the beautiful scenery of Karpino Konaks, where summer visual arts colony takes place. Or arrange for a late-night bath in the semi-public thermal springs.

When visiting the Osogovo Mountains and their ancient villages and towns, do not miss the Rock Art Centre. Let its enthusiastic guides show you rock drawings from very ancient times. If you roam around the plateau of St. Nikole, go off-road for the legendary Villa Zora, Payonic capital. Visit the ancient fortress in Vinica, and identify the donjon above Stip. Climb down the canyon near the city of Veles and search for less known monastic spots. Taste of some good wine in the small wineries in Negotino and Kavadarci. Search for the ruins of the Presek Fortress above the cliffs of Demir Kapija. Spend a fresh afternoon at the mineral springs on the Kozuf Mountain. Take a look at the museum collection from the ancient site of Isar in Valandovo. Feel the mist of the Kolesino waterfalls. Taste the richness of the white sheep cheese in an authentic shepherd hut in the region of Malesevo. Look for the story of the Lesново watermill stone in Probistip. Enjoy tasty carp ribs in Dojran, buy a few slot-machine chips at a casino in Gevgelija. Go off-road in the unbeaten wilderness of Mariovo, climb up to the mysterious Alsar mines. See Pelagonia plain from the Treskavec Monastery. Explore the monastic caves and the untouched ancient village of Zrze.

Climb up to the Pelister glacial lake and go down on foot to the Prespa Lake. Visit the Snakes' Island and enjoy the ancient Golem Grad ruins. Do not miss the Festival of Monodrama on the lake shores. Leaf through the books of the smallest library in Babino near Demir Hisar. Go for paragliding from the Krusevo peaks. Admire the naked breast of the Holy Mother of God in St. Zaum Monastery, reachable only by boat. Take a donkey or jeep ride on the top of the Galicica Mountain for a splendid view of the two lakes. Stay in Velestovo for Poetry Nights. Attend the fair during the village day of Visni, high in the mountains above Struga. Take a tour around Vevcani Springs and listen to the local legends going back far into the pagan era. Relax in the sulphur thermal spa in Kosovrasti near Debar. Converse with the writers of the unique literary colony in Galicnik. Hike to the highest peak of Korab. Lie down in the pastures of the Shara Mountain. Enjoy the noise of the River Radika. Visit Bhabas' graves and the Blue Tower at the Tetovo Teke. When you enter the realm of Skopje, take a homemade lunch in a semi-official restaurant in the village of Sisevo. Then you will be ready for the heat of Skopje's concrete jungle.

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