

Project with ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/,
co- funded by the European Regional Development Fund
and by the national funds of the countries participating
in the Interreg V-A “Greece- Bulgaria” 2014-2020 Cooperation Programme

WORK PACKAGE: 4
DELIVERABLE 4.9.1.

STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OBJECTS IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA

Interreg
Greece-Bulgaria
Access2Heritage

European Regional Development Fund



KARDZHALI,

2022

This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism”
/Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund
and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.



**This document was created within the framework of project
with ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism”
/Access2Heritage/, funded under the Cross-Border Cooperation
Programme INTERREG V-A Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020.**

**The entire responsibility for the content of the publication
lies with the Regional Youth Parliament and under no circumstances
can it be considered that this document reflects the official opinion
of the European Union and the Managing Authority**

CONTENTS

I. MUNICIPALITY OF ARDINO

1. Brief description
2. Tourism
3. Main tourist attractions
 - “Beli Brezi” Tourist Complex (White Birches)
 - Alada Peak
 - The Dyavolski Most (The Devil’s Bridge)
 - “Krivus” Medieval fortress
 - Ardino Museum
 - Fields with Rhodope silivryak
 - “Kaleto” Thracian Fortress
 - Hadzhi Kadirovata House
 - Hladilnata cave
 - “Patmos” Fortress
 - “Orlovi skali” Thracian Cult Complex (Eagle Rocks)
 - Gunpowder Storeroom, Ardino

II. MUNICIPALITY OF DZHEBEL

1. Brief description
2. Tourism
3. Main tourist attractions
 - "Hambar Kaya" Ancient Rock Tomb
 - Lakes near Lebed village (Swam village)
 - "Chamlak" reserve
 - "Wind Stone” Rock Tomb
 - “Kaleto” Rock Formations
 - "Mal Hazar" Medieval Fortress
 - "Ustra" Medieval Fortress
 - The Broken Mountain

III. MUNICIPALITY OF KIRKOVO

1. Brief description

2. Tourism

3. Main tourist attractions

Watermills near Shumnatitsa

Veikata Peak

The Mushroom and The Turtles

"Gyumyurdjinsky Snezhnik"

The Mosque of the Seven Girls

"Damla Kaya" Water Falling on Rock

"Punar Kaya" (Rock Well)

The Lion near Benkovski

A Bridge and "Banichkite" Springs near Kirkovo

Caves near the village of Kremen

"The Pierced Stone" Rock Tomb

Rock Tomb by Mazhentsi Village

Thracian Tomb

Nature Landmark "The Elephant"

Thracian sanctuary near the village of Samokitka

Ancient Bridges in the Village of Shumnatitsa

IV. MUNICIPALITY OF KRUMOVGRAD

1. Brief description

2. Tourism

3. Main tourist attractions

Abrasive Wells, Studen Kladenets Village

An Important Bird Area - Byala Reka (White River)

Ada Tepe

The Mills near Egrek village

Vetren Mount

Seid Baba's Tomb

"Koyunollar Dzhamisi" Mosque

"Seytlyar Dzhamisi" Mosque

Waterfalls by Dushan (Krassino village) and Dzhanka village

Ribino Protected area

"St. Elijah the prophet" Church Complex and a School

Ancient and Medieval fortress in the village of Studen Kladenets (Cold Well)

Late Antique fortress

House-Museum, Krumovgrad

The Spring of the fairies (Likoto vrizche)

The meanders of Byala River (White River)

Necropolis of dolmens

Krumovitsa Important Bird Area

A monument to Captain Petko Voivoda

Monument to killed revolutionaries and an ossuary

Monuments in the city of Krumovgrad

Caves in Ribino protected area

"Studen Kladenets" Conservation Center

The "Sheitan" Gorge

"Valchi Dol" Reserve

Medieval Rock Cloister

"St. Athanasius' church

"St. Ivan Rilski" Church

"Studen Kladenets" Dam

V. MUNICIPALITY OF KARDZHALI

1. Brief description

2. Tourism

3. Main tourist attractions

Ancient Gold Mines - "The Stremski Labyrinth"

"Slavey Zlatev" Astronomical Observatory

Kardzhali Water Mirror

The Military Club
The Central City Park
Children's Railroad
The Mosque in Kardzhali
The Cultural Center
The Stone Wedding
The Stone Mushrooms
Kerimova House
Monyak (Mneakos) Medieval Fortress
"Uspenie Bogorodichno" Monastery Complex ("Assumption of Mary")
The Statue of Orpheus
Monument to Liberators
"St. Spas " chapel near Rezbartsi
Gorubso City Park
"Prostor" Park
"Perperikon" Archeological Complex
"Utroba" Cave (The Womb)
Regional Museum of History
Rock Niches by Dazhdovnitsa and Nenkovo village
"St. Yoan Prodrom" Medieval monastery (St. John the Precursor)
"Stanka Dimitrova" Art Gallery
Heron colony
"Umruk Skala" Protected Area
Kardzhali Dam

VI. MUNICIPALITY OF MOMCHILGRAD

1. Brief description
2. Tourism
3. Main tourist attractions
"Tatul" Cult Complex
The Petrified Forest

Dambala Peak

The Big and the Small Canyon

"Studen Kladenets" Game Station

The Lake alongside the village of Letovnik

Elmala Baba Teke

"Kedikchal" Natural Park

Museum in the open, village of Batkovtsi

Momchil Yunak Monument

«Borovets» Reserve

River canyon by Chukovo village (Gulyaka)

Rock niches near Neophyte Bozvelievo

"Asara" Medieval Fortress

The old mosque in Momchilgrad

Harman Kaya Sanctuary

"St. Boris – Michael I" Church

VII. MUNICIPALITY OF CHERNOOCHENE

1. Brief description

2. Tourism

3. Main tourist attractions

"Hazar Kaya" Thracian Fortress and Sanctuary

"Black Pine" Century-old tree

"Dzhenda" Game Hunting Land

"Dzhenda" (Kazal Charpa) Reserve

"St. Paraskeva" Church

Medieval Fortress in Gradishte Area

"Parmak Kaya" Thracian Cult Complex

Olan Kaya (The Olan Rock)

VIII. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

1. A definition of accessible tourism.

This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

2. Accessible tourism in Europe.
3. Accessibility training in the tourism sector.
4. EU policies and legislation.
5. EU initiatives in support of accessible tourism.
6. Demand and supply for accessible tourism in Europe

I. MUNICIPALITY OF ARDINO

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

The municipality is part of the Southern Regional Council, it is located in the southwestern part of the Kardzhali district, in the midst of picturesque nature, on the borders between the Western and Eastern Rhodopes. The municipality is peripherally located for the country and for the Kardzhali district, but it has important transport and geographical functions. This is mainly expressed in the provision of internal connections for the Rhodopes between the two support centers - Kardzhali and Smolyan, which is carried out via the 3rd class road - Smolyan-Rudozem-Kardzhali. The municipality borders three municipalities from Smolyan district - Madan, Banite and Nedelino. A future factor in its development is its central location between the two border crossings: "Zlatograd-Termes" and "Makaza-Nympheia".

The municipality of Ardino has an area of 338.8 km², or 10.6% of the territory of the Kardzhali region, 1.5% of the area of the South African Republic and 0.3% of that of the country. The area of the municipality is smaller than the average for municipalities in Bulgaria - 422 km². According to this indicator, Ardino is in fifth place among the municipalities in the Kardzhali district and in 142nd place in the country.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
ARDINO	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1
Chernoochene	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Ardino municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

On the territory of the municipality of Ardino, there are significant natural, anthropogenic and human resources for the development of tourism. Material traces from different eras and cultures have been preserved in the municipality. The oldest historical monuments date from the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages and bear the marks of the Thracian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilizations. Cultural monuments from the time of the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms, as well as from the era of Ottoman rule, are also significant.

At the same time, the territory of the municipality is distinguished by its preserved natural environment, due to the absence of large enterprises from heavy industry. This is the reason even before 1989. to build a number of tourist sites (huts, departmental rest centers, etc.) on its territory.

As significant tourist resources of the municipality in terms of their potential, the formed resort-tourist forest park "Belite Brezi" (only 6 km from the town of Ardino on the road to Kardjali),

peak "Alada", the dams "Kardjali" and "Borovitsa" can be indicated, the "Hladilnika" karst cave, the "Devil's Bridge" on the Arda River, the "Eagle Rocks" and others. An ancient road used to pass through the territory of the municipality in the past and was also used in the Middle Ages. It connected the White Sea through the Xantian Pass (Eleghe) with Upper Thrace. On this road, about 10 km from the town of Ardino, the stone "Devil's Bridge" was built in the 16th century. The area around the bridge is ennobled with gazebos, barbecues and other elements of the tourist infrastructure. The condition of the road between the town of Ardino and the Devil's Bridge has improved significantly, but it is still not completely asphalted and this reduces the flow of tourists to the bridge.

About two kilometers south of the town of Ardino, along the route of the Ancient Road, there are "Eagle Rocks" with rock niches carved into them, which have a cult purpose since the time of the Thracians. Similar niches are carved in the rocks near the villages of Bezvodno, Sukhovo and Dazhdovnitsa. About 500 m from "Orlovi skali", in the "Kaleto" area, there are the remains of a Thracian fortress. In 1979, it was declared a historical monument, as numerous fragments of clay vessels were found. About 3 kilometers from the village of Bashevo are the remains of the "Krivus" fortress, surrounded on three sides by the Arda River. In the southern part of the fortress was the castle of the local ruler. The inhabitants of the fortress were supplied with drinking water from the Arda River through an underground tunnel. In the "Hisara" area, on the border between the "Borovitsa" and "Kardjali" dams, the foundations of the "Patmos" fortress were discovered. It had walls about 2 m thick. Stone fragments and war balls from wall-breakers were discovered machines, remains of ceramic products, statuettes, implements and weapons. The fortress was built in the period of the 13th-14th century.

The ethno-cultural characteristics of the local population in the municipality of Ardino are also a resource for the development of ethno- and cultural tourism. The annual cultural festivals of the city of Ardino and the festivals of the villages of Byal Izvor, Zhaltusha, Padina, Mlechino, Gorno Prahovo, etc. are a tourist resource. The town's ethnographic museum should also be promoted as a tourist attraction.

The municipality of Ardino has enormous natural tourist resources for its size. One of the most attractive natural phenomena is the "Hladilnika" cave. It is located in the land of the village of Lyubino. Its name derives from the constantly low temperatures maintained in it even during the hottest summer months. The highest peak on the territory of the municipality is also of interest to tourists - "Alada" peak. The peaks "Bezdiven" and "Momini gurdi", as well as the rivers Arda and

Davidkovska Malka Arda and the reservoirs "Kardzhali", "Ahryansko", "Brezen" can contribute to the development of hiking, educational, hunting, fishing tourism and water sports ", "Bogatino". A significant natural tourist resource is the floristic wealth of the municipality. It is represented not only by the birch forest in the "White Birches" area, but also by plant species such as primrose, ferns, wild strawberries, thyme, geranium, St. John's wort, mint and Rhodope silyvriak. Most of these plants have proven medicinal properties and at the same time satisfy the aesthetic needs of tourists. The Rhodope silyvryak (*Hiberlia rodopenzis*) is the most interesting and valuable floristic species in the territory of the municipality of Ardino, because it is both a relic and an endemic. It is characterized by the fact that it recovers its functional capabilities when it is torn off even after 18 months.

The territory of the municipality of Ardino also has significant faunal resources for the development of tourism, especially hunting and photo-tourism. On the territory of the municipality, the game wealth is represented by wild pigs, mouflons, roe deer, deer and other representatives of the wild fauna, which are the object of hunting. However, for the future development of hunting tourism, it is necessary to increase the population of mouflons in the DLR "Gaidartsi". In the rivers and dams on the territory of the municipality, there is also a wide selection of fish (river mullet, Balkan trout, black barbel, rasper, morunage, etc.), which is an important resource for the development of fishing and the attraction of anglers from all over the country.

Of great importance for the development of tourism in the municipality of Ardino is the state of the material tourist base. It is represented by the BTC hut, the rest stations of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, BTC, Waterworks and other companies and organizations that are located in the Belite Brezi complex. In the last ten years, a number of private hotels and guest houses were built in the municipality, with which the tourist material base in the municipality was significantly expanded and enriched.

The microclimatic conditions in the area of TC "Belite Brezi" are specific, which can be used for the development of winter mountain tourism. Clean air is suitable for the treatment of lung and allergic diseases. "Belite Brezi" has been announced by the Ministry of Health as a "Resort of Local Importance". In the future, it is planned that TC "Belite Brezi" will become an eco-village, which will attract tourists and vacationers and create new jobs in the service sector for the municipality.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

TOURIST COMPLEX "WHITE BIRCHES"

Location: The "Beli Brezi" complex is regulated as a resort of local importance. It is located in the area "Belite Brezi", 7 km from the town of Ardino on the Kardjali-Smolyan road. The average altitude in the area is 900m.

Description of the object: It is the only natural birch reserve of its kind in the Rhodopes. They are rare in the whole country. It is mixed with coniferous crops of white and black pine, spruce. It occupies a total area of about 3700 decares. The air in the complex cures lung and allergic diseases.

Access for people with disabilities: By means of transport to the resort itself - yes, to the tourist attractions and tourist sites - very difficult.



ALADA PEAK

Location: Southwest of the town of Ardino at a distance of about 12 km.

Access to the site: It is 2 km from the town of Jebel to "Alada". asphalted road, then 2 km. dirt road

Site description: It is 1241 m high and is the highest point of the Yellow Ridge mountain range. A prayer for rain is organized annually near the summit. At the top, exhibits from the Late Bronze Age were found during archaeological excavations. At its foot are fountains with cold water of high drinking quality. From the top there is a view of the Western and Eastern Rhodopes and the White Sea.

Access for people with disabilities: Very difficult.



THE DYAVOLSKI MOST (THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE)

Name of the site: "Devil's Bridge" over the Arda River, a monument of national importance.

Access to the site: A forest road leads to the "Devil's Bridge", which is well maintained and accessible for cars.

Site description: Located on the Arda River, 10 km. north of the town of Ardino; GPS coordinates: northern end - 41 37'14.82"N and 25 06'51.00"E; southern end - 41 37'13.57" N and 25 06'51.29 E.

The Devil's Bridge was built at the beginning of the 16th century, but its roots must be sought far back in time, 7,000 years ago. At its current location, there was once a Roman bridge, part of the important ancient road "Via Ignatia", connecting the White Sea and Thrace through the Makasa Pass.

Access for people with disabilities: Yes.



MEDIEVAL FORTRESS "KRIVUS"

Name: Medieval fortress "Krivus", cultural monument of "national importance"

Location: It is located north of the town of Ardino, about 3 km. from the village of Bashevo. It is surrounded on three sides by the Arda river.

Accessibility to the site: By vehicle to the village of Bashevo and on foot along a well-marked eco-path to the fortress - 30-35 minutes.

Site description: "Krivus" is a medieval Bulgarian fortress and was built in the 10th century. It is located in an extremely picturesque and beautiful place on a high hill, which is surrounded by the waters of the Arda River and has quite steep slopes.

The famous chronicler Georgi Acropolitus reported that in 1254, when the Bulgarians fought battles with the Byzantines, they managed to conquer many settlements and lands near the river Maritsa - Stenimachos, Krichim and Tsepina, and later broke through the defense of several more important fortifications - Krivus, Perperikon, Ustra and Patmos.

Access for people with disabilities: No.



ARDINO MUSEUM

Name of the Object: Ardino Museum, in 2009 the museum building was declared a cultural monument.

Location: city of Ardino, "Chinar" street #2.

Description of the object: Part of the life and rituals of the local population over the centuries are shown in the permanent exposition of the restored ethnographic museum. Its building was built at the end of the 18th century and until 1912 housed the headquarters of the Turkish military garrison. The building of a gunpowder burial, one of the few remaining in Bulgaria from those times, has been preserved in the courtyard to this day. Part of the stable building is still visible, but it is quite dilapidated. Recently, the Ardina Museum has been completely restored and a collection of ethnographic materials has been arranged in it.

Access for people with disabilities: By means of transport to the site itself - yes, to the museum exposition - very difficult.



FIELDS WITH RHODOPE SILIVRYAK

Site name: Rhodope silivryak site, protected area declared a natural landmark.

Location: Dyadovtsi village, Ardino municipality; near the village of Bashevo; near the village of Lyubino.

Access to the site: The site near the village of Dyadovtsi is located on the right rocky bank of the Arda River; near the village of Bashevo - in the area of the "Krivus" fortress; near the village of Lyubino - in the area of Guilich, near the Refrigeration Cave.

Site description: The plant is included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. The scientific name of the silivryaka is *Haberlea rhodopensis* (*Haberlea rhodopensis*).

The silivryak is a relict species dating from the end of the Tertiary. Today it is found only in Bulgaria and a little in Northern Greece, which is why it is declared a Balkan endemic. Most important is its ability to go into anabiosis (fake death) under unfavorable conditions, to stay in this state for a long time and, in the presence of suitable conditions, to revive.

Access for people with disabilities: No



“KALETO” THRACIAN FORTRESS

Name of the site: Thracian fortress "Kaleto", declared a historical monument.

Location: It is located in the area of Orlovi skali, about 4 km south of the town of Ardino.
(Coordinates: 41°33'33"N 25°9'18"E)

Access to the site: The most convenient approach to the site is past the building of the Historical Museum, in the direction of the Bistrogled hamlet. The road is narrow, but paved. Between two of the hamlets is a small wooden gazebo with an arrow pointing to a marked trail.

Site description: The Kaleto fortress was among the largest in the Rhodopes. It played an important role from the Early Iron Age to the Middle Ages. The fortress wall describes an irregular circle with a diameter of 67 m. It covers an area of 0.5 decares. The fortress was built without mortar, which is why it is completely destroyed, the construction has fallen off, and the surface is strewn with fragments of Thracian pottery. There is a visible connection with the main fortress of the Bess - Hisara.

Access for people with disabilities: No



HADZHI KADIROVATA HOUSE

Name of the site: Hadzhi Kadirovata House, declared a cultural monument.

Location: Zhaltusha village, Terziytsi hamlet.

Description of the site: The house is composed of two parts - an old one, built more than 150 years ago, and a newer, large two-story part, the construction of which began in 1939, but followed the tradition of the construction of the existing building. The two houses are connected by a tunnel-like passage. In the rooms, the ceilings are made of wood, with beautiful rosettes in the middle, the cupboards are wooden, there are beautiful ornaments above the doors, shelves on the walls, and there are built-in bathrooms everywhere. Ovens for baking bread and food were built in two of the rooms, and hearths for heating in the others. To this day, many household items from those years remain intact in the house - a loom, a milk churn, a darak, wooden utensils, etc.

Access for people with disabilities: By means of transport to the object itself - yes, inside - no.



HLADILNATA CAVE

Name of the Site: Hladilnata Cave, declared a protected site.

Location: It is located in the land of the village of Lyubino, commune. Ardino, on the right bank of the Davidkovska River, shortly before its confluence with the Arda River.

Site description: The altitude is 500m. The entrance to the cave is on the right bank of the Malka Arda river (Davidkovska river), shortly before the confluence with the Arda river. It is a vaulted, single-gallery vestibule, with an axis length of 5-6 m. There is high humidity throughout the year. The temperature inside is constant regardless of the season, 3-4°C, which is due to the many fine cracks and the proximity of the water.

Access for people with disabilities: By means of transport to the object itself - yes, inside - no.



"PATMOS" FORTRESS

Site status: "Archaeological landmark" category.

Location: Municipality of Ardino; it is located on a rocky peak in the area of Hisarya, at the confluence of the Borovitsa River and the Arda River. Long.: 25.23067117 Lat.: 41.68151019

Accessibility to the site: The fortress can be reached by boat from the "Borovitsa" hut. The approach from the side of the village of Borovitsa (on the right bank of the dam) is significantly more difficult.

Site description: It is located on a rocky peninsula formed at the confluence of the Borovitsa River with the Arda River. The fortress is larger than the neighboring Krivus with well-preserved remains of fortress walls, tower foundations and a church. It was probably built in the 10th century and was intended to guard the riverbed as well as for light signaling. The fortress has an irregular rectangular shape and occupies an area of 3 decares, in some places the walls have been preserved up to a height of 3 m and a thickness of 1.75 m. The ruins of 2 semicircular towers (bastions) can be seen, as well as a small one-nave church and several rooms.

Access for people with disabilities: No.



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

“ORLOVI SKALI” THRACIAN CULT COMPLEX (EAGLE ROCKS)

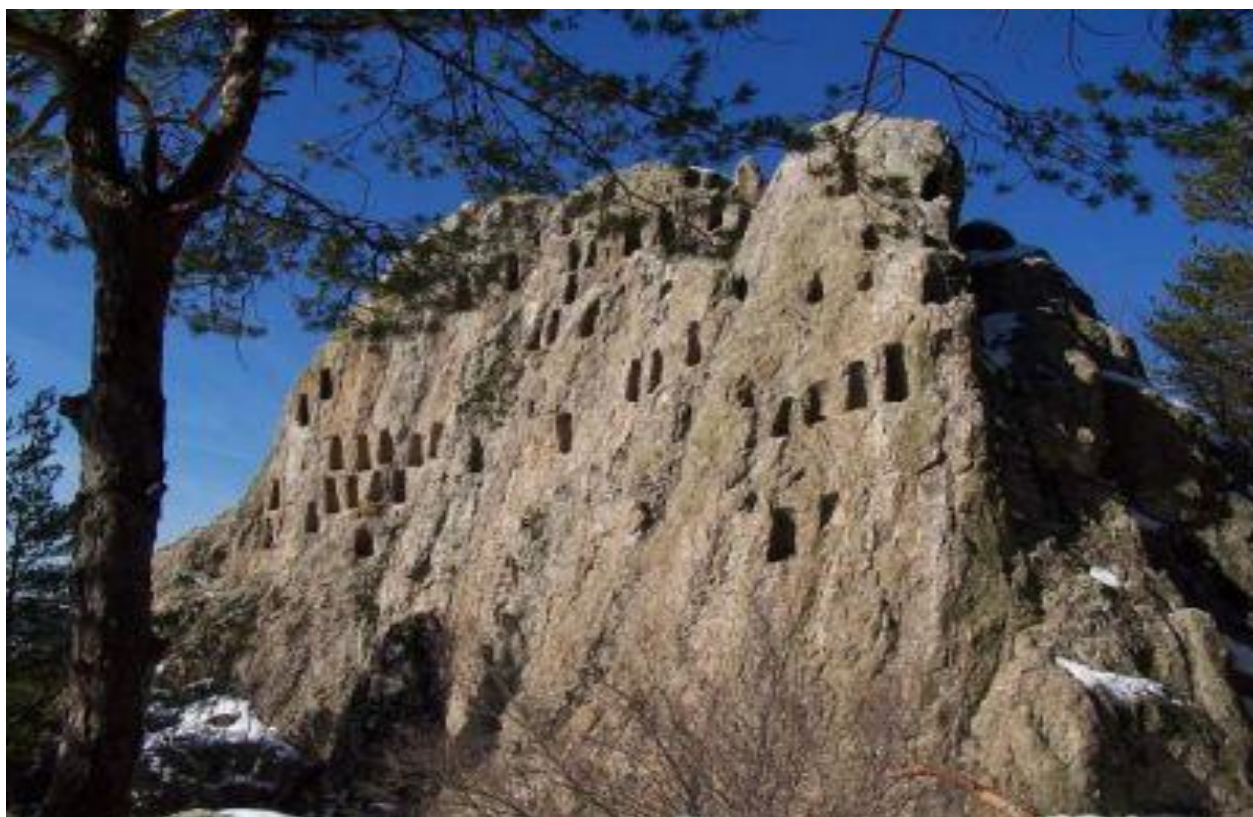
Site name: “Orlovi skali” Thracian Cult Complex (Eagle Rocks), a cultural monument of "national importance".

Access to the site: Located 2.1 km. south of the municipal center of Ardino. An eco-path has been built next to the sanctuary itself, which is well marked and signposted.

Site description: Thracian rock sanctuary "Eagle Rocks" is located in the territory of the town of Ardino with coordinates: 41 33'58.80" N and 25 08'45.85" E. "Orlovi Skali" is a group of prominent volcanic rocks. Their location is on a steep mountain terrain with an altitude of about 760 m. They are located on a west-facing slope. The height of the rocks reaches 25 m from the surrounding terrain.

Trapezoidal niches were carved by human hands in inaccessible places in the rocks, of which 97 are now preserved. At most - 55 are located on the western side. There are 35 on the southern side, 5 on the northern side, and 5-6 destroyed on the eastern side, which is accessible.

Access for people with disabilities: No.



GUNPOWDER STOREROOM, ARDINO

Name of the object: Gunpowder Storeroom, city of Ardino.

Location: In the center of the city of Ardino, next to the municipal historical museum.

Description of the site: The gunpowder mill is the only building in the city of Ardino, declared an immovable architectural and construction monument of culture. It was built in the last quarter of the 19th century by order of the Ottoman government, but by Bulgarian masters. It is a small but elegant stone building, bearing the stylistic marks of the Bratsigov building school - an architectural gem, reminiscent of a single-nave church in structure, but actually a rare testimony to the aesthetics of the service-administrative buildings preserved on the territory of the country from that era. It served as a gunpowder burial ground and ammunition storage for the Turkish army until the end of the First World War.

Access for people with disabilities: By means of transport to the object itself - yes, inside - no.



II. MUNICIPALITY OF DZHEBEL

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

Municipality of Dzhebel is an administrative-territorial unit within the meaning of the Law on Administrative-Territorial Organization in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZATURB), a part of Kardzhali District and a statistical territorial unit of level LAU 2 (municipality) according to the Nomenclature for Statistical Territorial Units (NUTS) of the EU. The administrative center of the municipality is the town of Jebel.

The Municipality of Dzhebel borders on the north with the municipality of Ardino and the municipality of Kardjali, on the east with the municipality of Momchilgrad, on the west with the municipality of Nedelino and the municipality of Zlatograd, on the south with the municipality of Kirkovo. In physico-geographical terms, the territory of the Jebel municipality is included in the East-Rhodope complex physico-geographical sub-region of Rilo - Rhodope region. The territory is located on an area of 229.1 km², and the municipality of Jebel ranks last in size in the Kardzhali district.

Municipality of Dzhebel includes 47 settlements: 1 city (administrative center) and 46 villages. Including 30 town hall centers and 8 mayor's offices. The administrative center of Jebel Municipality is the city of Jebel, which is located in the Rhodopes, with an altitude of 340 m. The city of Jebel is a support center of the fifth level in the network of support centers proposed by the National Concept for Territorial Development - small towns and villages, centers with municipal significance for the territory of the respective municipalities. The total number of the population is 9,696 people (NSI, 31.12.2020), which represents 6% of the total population of Kardzhali region (160,781 – as of 31.12.2020). About 35% of the population of the municipality of Jebel lives in the territory of the city of Jebel, which is the only city in the territory of the municipality. The population density is 42.3 d/sq.km, and is close to the average density for the Kardzhali region (49 d/sq.km), remaining lower than that of the South Central African Republic and that of the country.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
DZHEBEL	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1
Chernoochene	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Dzhebel municipality in Kardzhali region



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

2. TOURISM.

The Municipality of Dzhebel has potentially good conditions for historical, cultural, religious and balneological tourism, which, with appropriate incentives, would make a significant contribution to the promotion of the municipality of Jebel as a tourist destination. The key problems in the development of tourism in the region are the poor condition or lack of appropriate infrastructure, the lack of sustainable management of part of the tourist sites, as well as the lack of systematized and comprehensive information aimed at tourists. There are 4 accommodation places registered in the municipality - 3 family hotels and 1 guest house.

Initiatives are needed that, according to the local community, they would like to include:

- Creation of an eco-path to the Ustra fortress;
- To mark the routes to all historical and tourist sites with signs, including and those of local importance;
- The amphitheater in the village of Mishevsko should be renovated and used for cultural purposes - performances, small festivals, etc.;
- Socialization of cultural and historical sites; presenting more historical information to historical sites in place;
- Summer cinema in Jebel;
- Creating conditions for the development of spa tourism;
- Development of culinary tourism with local foods;
- To create conditions for the training of local tour guides, better acquainted with the local cultural attractions;
- To improve access for people with disabilities to tourist sites.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

“HAMBAR KAYA” ANCIENT ROCK TOMBS

Name of the site: Ancient rock tomb "Khambar Kaya", a cultural monument of national importance.

Location: Vodenicharsko village, Jebel municipality.

Description of the object: it is located in the northwest, 700-800 m from the village of Vodenicharsko. On the southwestern side of the Hambar Kaya rock are the ruins of two tombs. The first rock tomb has an open antechamber, which is a stepped platform 2.60m wide at the front. It narrows 1m further in, the opening is only 1.50m wide. With this width, it continues for another 1m, still open, and only at the last 20cm it narrows and passes into a 1.80m high vaulted niche, 1.32m wide at the bottom.

The second rock tomb consists of a long, open and outward-sloping vestibule, carved as a platform, the front of which is 134cm wide. 90 cm further in, the passage leading to the tomb narrows by 20 cm. From here the vestibule narrows further and then becomes wide again at 136cm.

Access for people with disabilities: no



LAKES NEAR LEBED VILLAGE (SWAM VILLAGE)

Name of the object: The lakes near the village of Lebed, a natural landmark.

Location: Lebed village, Dzhebel municipality.

Site description: In the area of the village of Lebed many years ago, as a result of shifting of the earth's layers, two natural tectonic lakes were formed with natural wild lilies growing in them. The place is beautiful, there is a pine forest nearby, and the approach to the medieval fortress Ustra is about 500 m away.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



“CHAMLAK” RESERVE

Name of the site: "Chamlak" reserve, maintained reserve category.

Location: It is located in the land of the village of Vodenicharsko, 5-6 km. southwest of the town of Jebel - in the direction of the quarry for perlite extraction.

Site description: This is the smallest maintained reserve in Kardzhali district. Its area is 30 decares. Its exposure is northeast, with a slight slope of 10°. The altitude is 450 m, and the main rock is sandstone. The soil is cinnamon forest, deep and fresh.

Chamlaka is a black pine forest reserve. In addition to it, there is a lot of winter oak and a little sycamore in the plantations. Dogwood, rose hip, juniper, sedge, sumac also grow in the undergrowth. The reserve has a designated buffer zone in which there is an undergrowth of black pine from self-sowing.

When Chamlaka was declared a reserve in 1956, the average age of the pine trees was 56 years, with the oldest being 120 years old. The average height was 16 m, and the thickness – 22 cm in diameter.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

"THE WIND STONE" ROCK TOMB

Name of the site: Ancient rock tomb "Wind Stone" (El Kayas), an archaeological monument of national importance.

Location: Vodenicharsko village, Dzhebel municipality (wind stone coordinates: N 41.47739; E 25.24522)

Description of the site: It is an ancient rock tomb, further drilled by human hands, which acquired an original arched shape resembling a rock window. It is located about 200 m east of the "Mal Asar" fortress in the direction of the nearby Asar ravine. Local people believe in the healing power of the place and visit it most often on May 5-6, i.e. the night before St. George's Day. The ritual is performed by thrusting a person through the hole three times, and then tying a piece of cloth or a piece of clothing to the surrounding bushes and trees. A kind of "payment" is also performed - small coins are left in the crevices of the rocks or on the floor of the rock opening itself. The next stage of the cleansing ritual is going down to Asar dere, taking from this water and sprinkling the relatives and domestic animals for health.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

"KALETO" ROCK FORMATIONS

Site name: "Kaleto" rock formations, a natural landmark with an area of 224 decares, declared a protected site.

Location: The land of Ustren village, Dzhebel municipality.

Site Description: The rock formations are made of beautiful gray and violet gray rhyolites. These are huge rock teeth of different shapes: prismatic, step-shaped, conical. Their height is from 5 to 15 and more meters.

Immediately behind the rock phenomena on the summit and on its northern slopes is the only locality of the two alpine plants - dogwood (*Cotoneaster intergerimus*) and irga (*Amelanchier ovalis*). Also there, in the cracks of the rocks, is the country's second deposit of the rare plant species white *lerchenfeldiana* (*Silene lerchenfeldiana*). It is a plant that is usually found above 2 thousand meters above sea level, and Mount Ustra is 1015 m high.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“MAL HAZAR” MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

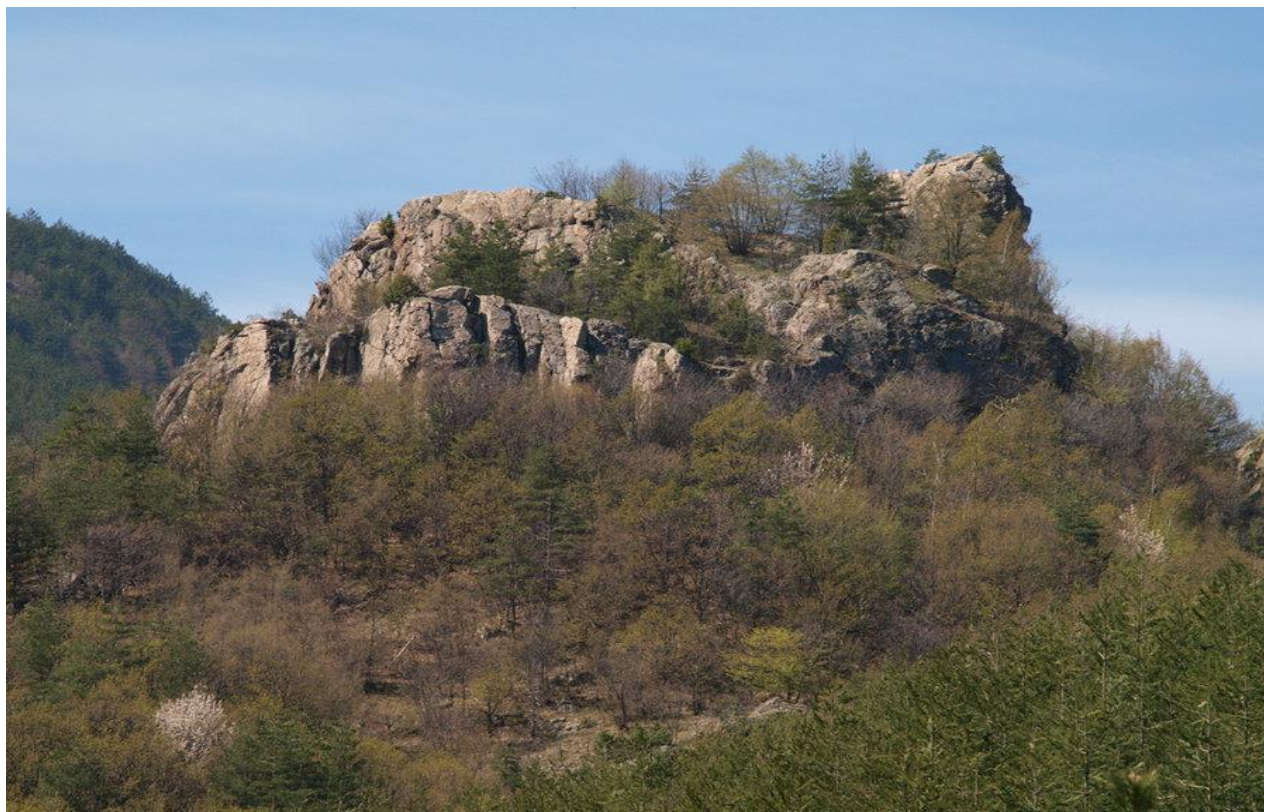
Name of the site: Medieval fortress "Mal Hazar" (fortress of treasures), cultural monument.

Location: On the land of Vodenicharsko village, Dzhebel municipality (coordinates N 41.47762; E 25.24339GPS)

Site description: The site is approached from the perlite quarry, along which an old Roman road passes. The fortress is located about 2 km away. south of the quarry, on a prominent, but not very high, peak inaccessible from the north side. The western side (which is the most accessible) is protected by walls. The fortress wall surrounds 2 sites, measuring 55/23 m and 36/21 m, respectively. The inner fortress wall stretches between 2 vertical solitary canaries, in one of which there are 4 carved rock niches.

In 1973, organized archaeological excavations were carried out. It was established that the fortress was built in two stages: the first - in the VI century, and the second - after the XI century.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“USTRA” MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

Name of the site: Medieval fortress "Ustra", an archaeological monument of national importance.

Location: The land of Ustren village, Dzhebel municipality. It is located about 5 km. northeast of the village of Ustren and 3 km. southeast of Lebed village.

Accessibility to the site: The fortress can be approached either by a turnoff marked with a sign, just before the village of Ustren, or by a path about 1 km before the village of Lebed.

Description of the site: The fortress is located on a high, elongated hill bearing the same name. The peak is 1015 m high. Its area is 1.2 decares, and the fortress wall is 113 m long and has a U-shaped shape. At the base, the thickness is 2.8 m, and at the upper end - 1.75 m. In some places, it has been preserved up to a height of 8.0 m. The fortress had 3 three-story defense towers.

The first archaeological excavations were carried out in the period 1971-1973. Numerous (over 1000) metal objects were discovered - iron arrows, parts of a helmet, bronze and silver crosses, as well as 14 clay vessels, copper coins.

Access for people with disabilities: no



THE BROKEN MOUNTAIN

Name of the Site: The Broken Mountain, a natural landmark.

Location: In the land of Vodenicharsko village, Dzhebel municipality.

Site description: An interesting geological phenomenon formed at the end of the 19th century. It is a high hill, interrupted in the middle, to the left of the road to the village of Vodenicharsko, shortly before the beginning of the "Chamlaka" reserve. The left part of the hill is displaced and sunk in relation to the right by a distance of about 600 m. The difference in height is about 80 m. The fracture is the result of tectonic displacement. The displacement was accompanied by a loud crack and flashes of fire, the memory of which in the nearby villages is passed down from generation to generation. This is due to the high temperature that develops during the strong friction of the layers.

Locals say she appeared around 1900 at midnight while a storm was raging outside. A terrible thunder shakes the village of Cossacks, and as a result of the shifting of the layers, part of the village ends up on top of the mountain.

Access for people with disabilities: no



III. MUNICIPALITY OF KIRKOVO

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

The municipality of Kirkovo is located on an area of 538 sq.km. It borders the municipalities of Krumovgrad, Zlatograd, Jebel and Momchilgrad, and the southern border of the municipality coincides with the state border with the Republic of Greece. The municipality is made up of 73 settlements, all of which are villages and hamlets. The urban structure includes - the municipal center of the village of Kirkovo (808 people), 6 large villages - Benkovski, Chorbadzhiysko, Fotinovo, Tihomir, Chakalarovo and Drangovo (with a population of more than 1000 people), 66 settlements with a population of less than 1000 people. One settlement (the village of Nane) is depopulated.

The terrain is flat-hilly to hilly-foothill. The northern slopes of the eastern Rhodope hills - Muglenik and Gyumurdzhinski Snezhnik - fall within the borders of the municipality. The average altitude is 523 m, with the highest point being Mount Veikata - 1463 m.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
KIRKOVO	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1
Chernoochene	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Kirkovo municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

The cultural and historical monuments on the territory of the municipality are diverse and represent all eras since the Thracian settlements. The main problem with the historical monuments is related to their condition - the rock tombs have been robbed, only the foundations of the fortresses have been preserved. There is a lack of sufficient financial means for protection, conservation, socialization and exposure. The historical heritage of Kirkovo municipality can serve for the development of alternative tourism.

The great biodiversity, the unique natural attractions and the preserved natural environment, unaffected by the negative influences of industrialization and urbanization, make ecotourism one of the priorities for the development of the municipality.

On the territory of the municipality is Mount Veikata - the southernmost point of Bulgaria.

In order to turn the givens into economic levers, it is necessary to promote entrepreneurship in tourism - through inventory and conservation of the local cultural and historical heritage, through

This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

ecotourism infrastructure, a network of information boards and signposts, a tourist information center, advertising materials, etc.

An important aspect in the development of tourism is the border location of the municipality. This is also an underutilized favorable opportunity with the potential to attract investors in various sectors, incl. tourism.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

WATERMILLS NEAR SHUMNATICA

Site name: The mills, an architectural landmark of local importance.

Location: Shumnatitsa village, commune. Kirkovo. It is located next to the asphalt road itself, in close proximity to the old bridge.

Site description: Until recently, there were several operating mills along the creek in the village of Shumnatitsa, also from the end of the 19th century. Today, there is one such mill, which is still working, by the bridge in the village of Shumnatitsa. Local people call it the Pehlivanska vodenitsa because it is located in the Pehlivanska mahala. Built over 200 years ago, with authentic original architecture and preserved milling facilities. The mill is of the Karadzeika type, one of the few surviving in Bulgaria in the 21st century. A little further down the river there is a second mill, the building of which is still standing, but has long been out of operation.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



VEIKATA PEAK

Site name: Veikata Peak, a natural landmark of local importance.

Location: Geographically, it is the southernmost point of Bulgaria. GPS coordinates: 41°40'21" N.W. and 25°24'16" E.D.

Site accessibility: There are several approaches to the summit. One is through the village of Chakalarovo/there are marked paths along the route/ and the other is through the village of Dolno Kapinovo.

Description of the site: This is the highest peak in the Gyumurdzhinsky snowfield. It is 1463 meters high. Geographically, it is the southernmost point of Bulgaria. The protected area "Veikata" is a mountainous area covered with mesophilic forests, including endangered natural habitats. There are beech and mixed forests over 100 years old, but you can also see those 300-500 years old. 11 species of plants and 5 species of animals from the Red Book of Bulgaria can be found here.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE MUSHROOM AND THE TURTLES

Name of the site: The Mushroom (rock phenomenon), declared a natural landmark of local importance and the Turtles.

Location: It is located right next to the road to Zlatograd, in the direction of the village of Dobromiritsi /between the villages of Dedets and Dobromiritsi/.

Description of the object: About a kilometer from the village of Benkovski, nature, like a sculptor, has sculpted a wonderful rock creation - a mushroom similar to a huge "dandruff". It is about 2m high, its diameter is about 3m. Its color is brown, the upper surface is flattened, its edges are rounded, the "stump" is short and narrows down, just like a real "dandruff". It is sculpted from medium-grained sandstones of Paleogene age (65-25 million years).

Next to the village of Fotinovo, near the roadside bus stop, you will see a strange facility that has no parallel anywhere. A series of artificially carved, interconnected troughs that enclose oval, smoothed rock outcrops of regular shape. Seen from above, they look like turtles. Perhaps it is because of this similarity that they are named so.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



“GYUMURDJINSKY SNEZHNIK”

Name of the object: the protected area “Gyumurdjinsky Snezhnik” - protected territory.

Location: village of Gorno Kapinovo, municipality of Kirkovo.

Accessibility to the object: through the village of Chakalarovo or the village of Dolno Kapinovo.

Site description: The area occupies an area of 1926.4 ha. The area includes the lands of the villages of Gorno and Dolno Kapinovo, Chakalarovo, Shumnatitsa and Kremen from the municipality of Kirkovo. Gorno Kapinovo is the main starting point for the entrance to the protected area in the "Hvoynova Polyana" locality, from where seven marked eco-trails start.

The nature in the area is well preserved. 62 tree and shrub species have been established on the territory. 11 plant species are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. Some of them are Rhodope cream (Balkan endemic, only found in the Eastern Rhodopes), Cossack juniper, yew, mountain sycamore, beech, etc. The fauna is less well studied. Golden eagle, goshawk, black woodpecker, bear, etc. were found.

Access for people with disabilities: no



THE MOSQUE OF THE SEVEN GIRLS

Name of the site: The Mosque of the Seven Girls ("Edi kazlar jamisi"), a cultural monument of national importance.

Location: Podkova village, commune. Kirkovo.

Accessibility: The site is easily accessible by car, bus and other vehicles. It is located 34 km. from the regional town and 11 km. from the municipal center.

Site description: The mosque was built in 1438, but there is information about the temple in the Sultan's archives as early as 1435. It is a completely wooden building, a unique example of old construction technology. It was built without the use of a single nail.

According to legend, the Muslim temple was built by 7 maidens whose lovers did not return from war. They sold their entire dowry to buy the materials and built the mosque in one night. No one has seen them again. It is believed that this happened on May 6, and now every year on this day, people from all over the region gather in the courtyard of the mosque, read the Mewlid, the Koran and pray. It is called "Edi Qazlar Jamisi" (The Mosque of the Seven Girls).

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"DAMLA KAYA" WATER FALLING ON ROCK

Name of the site: "Damla kaya" Water Falling on Rock.

Location: Stareishino village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Accessibility of the site: The site is not difficult to access if the right approach (gully) is found. The vehicle must be left in the village and approached from there. It is located near a domed tomb.

Description of the site: Near the domed tomb (Punar Kaya) near the village of Stareshino (about 300 m from it), opposite the current of the eastern ravine, there is a cult complex of a small waterfall, a stone well and water dripping on the rocks. Among the people of the area, this complex is known as "Damla Kaya".

The place is visited all year round, but it is believed that the water is most healing on St. George's Day - on May 6.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"PUNAR KAYA" (ROCK WELL)

Name of the site: "Punar kaya" (Rock well).

Location: It is located in the area of Stareishino village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Accessibility to the site: The site is difficult to access. The vehicle must be left in the village and approached from there.

Site description: "Punar Kaya" (Rock Well) is a domed tomb located in the area of the village of Stareishino. Water springs from it, which collects in two small pools cut into the floor - a round and a rectangular one, which are connected by a chute. The water is brought out of the tomb. In the imagination of the local population, the object is associated with a belief in the healing properties of both the place and the water gushing from it.

The object is visited by many people on May 6 - St. George's Day (Hudralez).

Access for people with disabilities: no



THE LION NEAR BENKOVSKI

Site Name: The Lion near Benkovski (rock phenomenon).

Location: It is located northwest of the village of Benkovski, in the direction of the village of Kitna, municipality of Kirkovo.

Site description: It is located northwest of the village of Benkovski, in the direction of the village of Kitna, on the left, before the bridge over the Varbitsa river. It is best seen from the bridge itself (or at its end) by looking in the opposite direction of traffic. In front of the figure is a metal bunker. It is a rock formation that, as a result of external earth forces – water, sun and wind, has acquired a bizarre shape, reminiscent of a lying lion (lioness). It is sculpted in coarse-grained sandstone.

It has been declared a protected site.

Access for people with disabilities: no



A BRIDGE AND "BANICKITE" SPRINGS NEAR KIRKOVO

Name of the object: A Bridge and "Banickite" Springs near Kirkovo.

Location: Kirkovo village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Site description: It was built over the small river Solutska (some call it Kirkovska river). It starts on the road to the village of Lozengradtsi, but at the end of the village it turns towards the "Banički" area. The bridge is only about 150 m from the springs, hidden by centuries-old fir trees. It has three arches, the length of the roadway is 22.70 m, and the height of the individual arches is 3.10 m respectively; 5.0 and 2.0 m. Completely preserved. It is built on a solid foundation (rock). Near the bridge, about 150 m downstream, there is a picturesque place called "Banički". On both sides, the banks are overgrown with centuries-old alder trees. It is located near the village of Kirkovo, in the "Kukulya" area. Several small springs gush along a small creek coming from the village of Lozengradtsi. Three or four small fountains were built with the water from several of the springs. Local people are convinced of the healing properties of this water.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



CAVES NEAR THE VILLAGE OF KREMEN

Name of the object: Caves near the village of Kremen.

Location: on the road to the village of Chakalarovo - the village of Kremen, municipality of Kirkovo.

Site accessibility: Vehicular access is available. It is best to visit the caves with a local guide.

Description of the site: Several caves of different sizes have been registered in the area of the village of Kremen. The larger ones are Zlatnata yama, Bezymenna, Kremenska, Vodnata yama, Kutlenata yama, Malkata tsepka. They are relatively shallow (up to 170 m), formed in marbleized limestones. What is interesting about them is the cave fauna. Bats, centipedes, scorpions have been recorded. In one (the Water Pit) there is a small pond in which small fish can be seen. There are visible traces of a past life in the Golden Pit. There are interesting cave formations - draperies, stalactites, dendrites.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"THE PIERCED STONE" ROCK TOMB

Name of the site: "The Pierced Stone" Rock Tomb

Location: mach. Veslets, Benkovski village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Accessibility to the site: The drilled stone can be reached from Veslets hamlet. When entering Benkovski from Kirkovo, 800 meters after the village sign, there is an intersection on the right of the road. It leads to Veslets hamlet.

Description of the site: The local people call it the "Hole Stone". It is located near the road to the village of Muglene, on the right of the road, about 300 meters after the last houses on the road. Rower. The tomb was robbed in ancient times. The dome was further pierced and thus a hole was formed. People believe in the healing power of the place and often look there for a cure for pains that "come and go" (rheumatism, smallpox, stress neuroses, etc.). The holes allow it to be poked through and so many people perform this ritual seeking relief for various pains.

Access for people with disabilities: no



ROCK TOMB BY MAZHENTSI VILLAGE

Site Name: Rock Tomb by Mazhentsi Village

Location: In the Benkovski area, Mzhzentsi village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Description of the site: A well-preserved domed tomb with a cave-like shape. There is a relatively large, well-defined entrance, at the end of which a groove from a closing plate is visible. It was cut at the base of a sandstone rounded by the winds, in an easy and accessible place. It is near the village of Mzhzentsi that the First Archaeological Trail in Bulgaria is located, where the rock formations, wells, Thracian tombs, sacrificial places are a historical and natural value. Following the trail for just a few kilometers of hiking, tourists can see archaeological monuments from the Eneolithic, the Bronze Age and the Middle Ages. The rock tomb, which is located near the village of Mzhzentsi, is the most indisputable evidence of the presence of Thracian tribes in the area, at the end of the second millennium BC.

Access for people with disabilities: no



THRACIAN TOMB

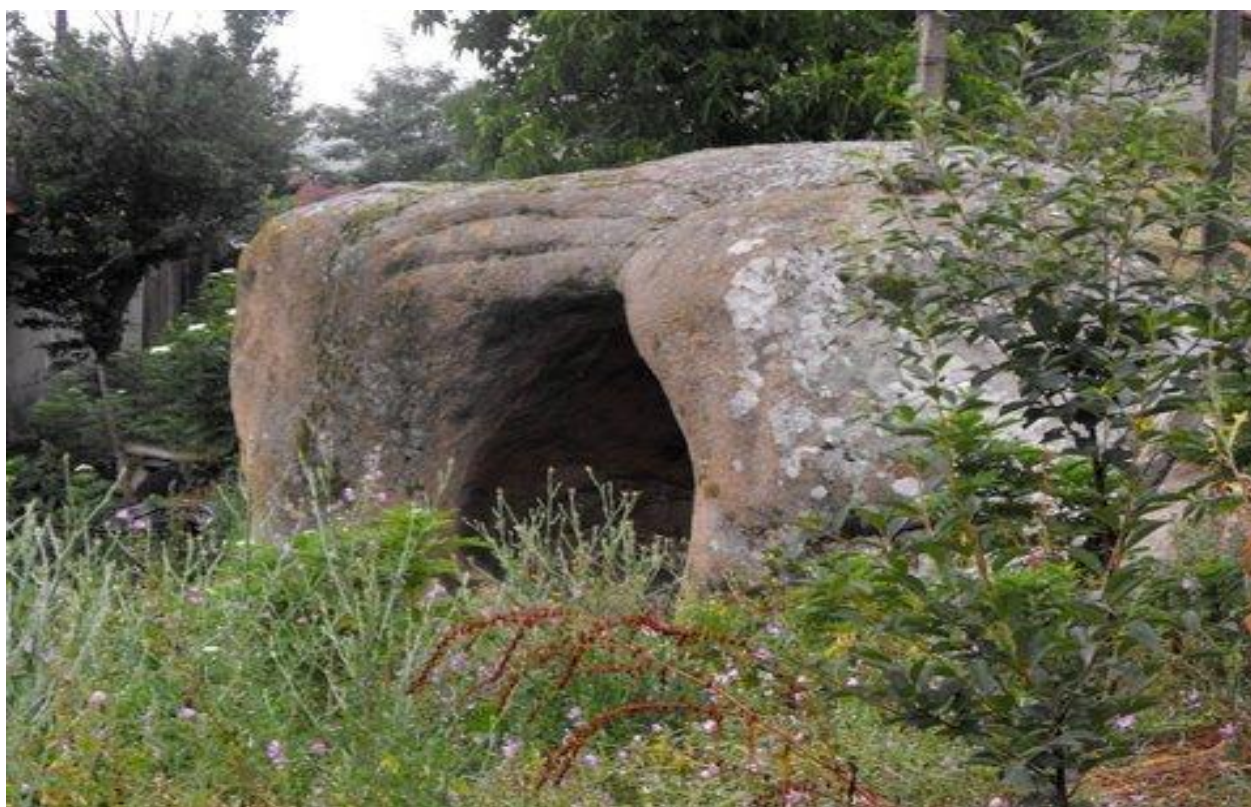
Name of the site: Thracian rock tomb in the village of Yagnevo.

Location: It is located in the village of Yagnevo /village of Benkovski/, municipality of Kirkovo. There are also such rock tombs between mah. Gorno Veslets and the village of Rastnik, in mach. Yagnevo.

Description of the site: The rock tomb near the village of Yagnevo is evidence of the presence of Thracian tribes in the area at the end of the second millennium BC.

An irregularly shaped arched niche is carved into the rock. The burial chamber has an irregular trapezoidal shape with rounded ends. Some of them are unfinished, initially the dimensions of the opening were outlined on the rock, then the surface intended for processing was leveled at a depth of up to 2 m /similar are the rock niches next to the village of Rastnik/.

Access for people with disabilities: no



NATURE LANDMARK "THE ELEPHANT"

Name of the object: Nature Landmark "The Elephant".

Location: It is located in the area of the village of Kayaloba, a little after the site of Parnari - after Jami Mahle (Neighborhood with the mosque), about 300 m (after the second turn), communal. Kirkovo.

Site Description: An original weathering form sculpted into sandstones. It is strikingly reminiscent of the figure of an elephant, especially if viewed from the east. The "proboscis" forms a vaulted hole, used by the local people as a healing potion. Local people consider the place sacred and high energy and come to leave a garment to help them heal. Therefore, hanging threads, rags, parts of clothes can be seen on the surrounding pine trees.

The entire area is dotted with interesting weathering forms formed among sandstones with interesting layering.

Access for people with disabilities: no



THRACIAN SANCTUARY NEAR THE VILLAGE OF SAMOKITKA

Site name: Thracian sanctuary.

Location: Samokitka village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Site description: It is located in the Asara area and occupies a high rocky peak. At its foot, a wall built of quarry stone has been preserved. Bronze images of the Thracian horseman and fragments of stone sculpture were found at the site. From this place there is a direct view of the rock niches near the village of Chavka.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



ANCIENT BRIDGES IN THE VILLAGE OF SHUMNATICA

Site name: Ancient bridges, an architectural monument of local importance.

Location: Shumnatitsa village, municipality of Kirkovo.

Site description: The picturesque village of Shumnatitsa is made up of several hamlets (Kamenska, Pehlivanska, Shikovska, Chilingirska, etc.). Many of the houses are uninhabited. Several bridges have been built over the local creek and its tributaries. The first is in the center of the Kamenska hamlet (near the town hall), right next to the new bridge over which the asphalted road passes. It is single-vaulted. The vault is 10.1 m wide and 6.80 m high. It is lined with rectangular plates and a cornice. The canvas is 19.30 m long, 2.70 m wide, and at one end it is widened by 1.50 m.

Up against the stream of the creek there are two more bridges.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



IV. MUNICIPALITY OF KRUMOVGRAD

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

The Krumovgrad Municipality is located in South Central Bulgaria (in the South Central Planning Region), Kardzhali District. The municipal center - the town of Krumovgrad - is located about 45 km southeast of the regional center - the town of Kardjali. In the south-west direction, about 55 km away, the municipality has a connection with the Republic of Greece, through the checkpoint "Makaza - Nymphheia". The territory of the municipality falls entirely within the scope of the Eastern Rhodopes, and with its total area of 843.32 km², it is the largest administrative-territorial unit (out of a total of 7 municipalities) in the district. Its territory constitutes 26.28% of the area of Kardzhali district. The municipalities with which it borders are: Kirkovo, Momchilgrad and Kardjali from Kardjali district; Stambolovo, Madjarovo, Ivaylovgrad from Haskovo region; and to the south with R Greece. The main road connection of the municipality is through the second-class road II-59, which facilitates transport connectivity with the town of Momchilgrad to the west and to the border crossing "Ivaylovgrad - Kiprinos" - to the east.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. km ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
KRUMOVGRAD	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1
Chernoochene	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Krumovgrad municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

The preserved nature, the diverse animal and plant world, the natural sights, the rich history and culture, the colorful palette of traditions and customs, offer wonderful conditions for tourism.

The variety of species, habitats and landscapes on the territory of Krumovgrad Municipality is extremely rich. Communities and populations of many species of European and global importance have been preserved. There are rare and endangered plant and animal species, endemics and relics. There is a great variety of valuable medicinal plants.

Undoubtedly, the most interesting from a nature protection point of view are the birds, for which most protected areas and sites have been declared. Of interest are the two species of land turtles, the colonies of bats, the deposits of Venus's hair, several species of orchids, etc.

The most frequently visited tourist destinations are the river Krumovitsa (especially the area of the village of Dolna Kula), the area of the village of Studen Kladenets and the area of the confluence of the Krumovitsa River with the Arda River.

Some of the most attractive tourist sites are located around the "Studen Kladenets" dam, built on the Arda River. On its left bank is the protected area "The Big Sandstone", which is an impressive high, steep and highly cracked rock. To the south of the dam are the only strict reserve in the Eastern Rhodopes - "Valchi Dol" and the Nature Protection Center "Studen Kladenets". After the dam wall, the Arda river has formed a picturesque gorge "Sheitan", in which the unique natural object "Abrasive wells" is located.

The municipality of Krumovgrad is one of the municipalities in Bulgaria with the highest coverage by the European ecological network "Natura 2000". Parts of five protected areas occupy almost 80% of its territory. Four of them are under the Birds Directive and one under the Habitats Directive.

In the municipality of Krumovgrad there is 1 reserve, 12 natural attractions and 3 protected areas.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTION.

ABRASIVE WELLS

Site Name: Abrasive Wells, Studen Kladenets Village.

Location: Studen Kladenets village, Krumovgrad municipality;

Site description: The rocks along the river are solidified lava from active volcanic activity in the area millions of years ago. Some of the volcanic craters have been partially destroyed by the waters of the river. Near the village of Studen Kladenets, near the dam wall, large mineral veins with quartz and chalcedony inclusions were formed. Debris from them, carried by the fast water, when they meet the rocks acquire a rotary motion, scraping the rocks from a stop and gradually begin to eat them away and large holes appear. They are of different sizes - from very small with a diameter of 20cm and a depth of 10cm, to huge ones-with a diameter of 7-8m and a depth of 15m.

The wells are located in the river bed and are very convenient shelters for fish, reptiles and amphibians wintering in the gorge.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

AN IMPORTANT BIRD AREA - BYLA REKA (WHITE RIVER)

Site name: Byala Reka protected area, declared an ornithologically important site under categories A1, A3, B2, C1, C6 (A1 - Sites for globally threatened species, A3 - Sites for biome-delimited groups of species, B2 - Sites for species with unfavorable nature protection status in Europe, C1 - Sites for globally endangered species of sub-regional EU importance, C6 - Endangered species at the level of the European Union).

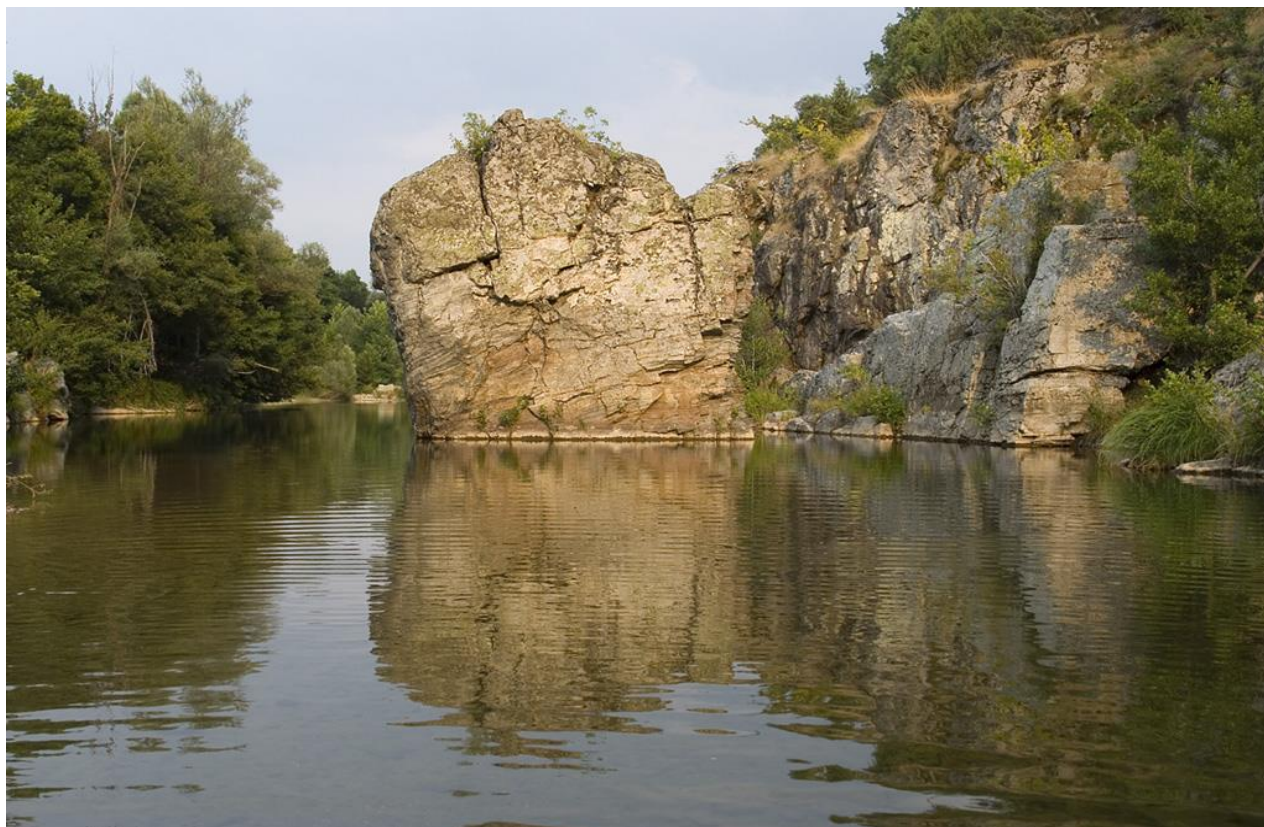
Location: It is located in Haskovo and Kardzhali regions. Part of the OVM is located in the Krumovgrad municipality.

Description of the site: The area of the site is 44623.98 ha. and covers the watershed of the White River in the most south-eastern part of the Eastern Rhodopes, immediately next to the state border with Greece.

167 species of birds have been found in the Byala Reka area, of which 33 are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria.

In 1997, it was declared an Ornithologically Important Site by BirdLife International.

Access for people with disabilities: no



ADA TEPE

Location: The Thracians, who lived millennia ago on our lands, were good miners and metallurgists. One of the places where traces of this activity have been found is the Ada Tepe hill in the Eastern Rhodopes, not far from the town of Krumovgrad. It is the earliest known gold mine in Europe. Scientists date it to the second millennium BC - the time of Mycenae and Troy. It has been established that even today the area is rich in gold deposits.

In the period from 2001-2006, excavations began, which prove that gold mining was developed in this place. The mine extends along the western, eastern and northern slopes of the hill and covers an area of 450 decares.

Remains of work sites, dwellings and a stone fortress wall that surrounded the highest parts of the peak during the Late Bronze Age have been discovered so far. Various stone tools used to process the ore and ancient clay vessels are also among the finds that the scientists came across.

Access for people with disabilities: no



THE MILLS NEAR EGREK VILLAGE

Site name: Watermills (5 pieces) and bridge.

Location: Egrek village, Krumovgrad municipality;

Site description: The mills were built along the Krumovitsa River and are intended for grinding corn flour and fodder. There are 5 of them, of which 2 in the Lower neighborhood, 2 in the Upper neighborhood and 1 in the Central neighborhood. All are operational and usually work from November to March, when the river is at its fullest. They are built of rubble stones joined with mortar. The roofs are covered with stone slabs (tikli).

The bridge in the upper hamlet is double-arched. It was built by a shepherd for the benefit of the people. The arch on the southeast side is 4.60 m wide and 3 m high, and the other arch is 2.60 m wide and 1.50 m high. The roadway is 13.20 m long and 2.60 m wide. A breakwater has been added to the pier next to the bridge. The vault is built of well-worked quarry stones with a rectangular face and dimensions of 15x45 cm. The cornice is installed perpendicular to these slabs. The bridge is well preserved.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



VETREN MOUNT

Site name: Vetren Mount (Kodzhaele).

Location: It is located in the Muglenik hill east of Makaza, in the municipalities of Krumovgrad and Ivaylovgrad.

Accessibility to the site: It starts on the road between the villages of Gugutka and Chernichevo, and at the highest point of the road there is a turn-off for an old outpost, where you can leave the car and continue on foot, by bike or by off-road vehicle. About 500 meters of unevenness follows, constantly moving 50-200 meters from the border furrow.

Site description: On many maps, the peak is marked as Vetren peak, but local people know it as Kodjaele /Big Peak/. It is 1266 m high. Nearby there is an area called Kurbanlakat, where 40 girls were slaughtered.

At the foot of Mount Vetren there is a fountain and a gazebo, and on the very top, on the territory of the Republic of Greece, there are wind generators.

Access for people with disabilities: no



SEID BABA'S TOMB

Name of the object: Seid Baba's Tomb.

Location: Village of Polkovnik Zhelyazovo, Krumovgrad municipality.

Accessibility to the site: Road III-5904 leads to the site.

Description of the site: The burial mound is approximately 3 x 4 m in size and contains 1 grave. According to legend, Seid Baba, who died during the Gazava - the holy war for the faith, was buried there. A mound of boards covered with green cloth is erected over the grave. The grave is about 3 m long. The grave is covered with hand-woven rugs. The walls are decorated with tapestries and portraits of Hazrat Ali, Haji Bektash Veli and 12 Shia Imams.

Seyid Mehmed Bey took part in the conquests of Murad I, and then performed a number of miracles. He was revered as a holy man. As a reward, Murad I personally, on behalf of his daughter Hatice, gave Seid Baba lands in the Eastern Rhodopes. His condition was that the owner should distribute relief to the poor and open an inn for travelers with free food and beds for the night.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

“KOYUNOLLAR DZHAMISI” MOSQUE

Name of the site: “Koyunollar Dzhamisi” Mosque.

Location: Chal village, Krumovgrad municipality;

Site description: The mosque is the oldest dated mosque in the Eastern Rhodopes. At the left corner on its southern wall is a large well-formed corner stone with a date which, although very vague, has been read as 1201 A.H. Adjusted to our calendar, it corresponds to the year 1786-1787.

The mosque was built by the shepherd family Koyunollar, who also founded the village of the same name. From there, it bears the name of this family - Koyunollar Dzhamisi. It is also known among the population as "Ahat Buba Dzhamisi", after the name of the Muslim saint whose tomb is located next to the mosque.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“SEYTLYAR DZHAMISI” MOSQUE

Name of the site: "Seytlyar Dzhamisi" Mosque, a cultural monument of local importance.

Location: Krumovgrad, 6 "Saedinenie" St.

Site description: The "Seytlyar Dzhamisi" mosque in the town of Krumovgrad was built on the foundations of an old talpen mosque from the 16th - 18th centuries, which was a prerequisite for the emergence of the city: in connection with the Friday gatherings of believers, trade appeared around it, commercial warehouses and later housing were built.

It was built in 1855, and the building was originally wooden. In its current form, it was built in the period 1901-1904 by Bulgarian masons from the village of Momchilovtsi, Smolyansko. The mosque was built by the Sady family. It is square in plan, with a hipped roof covered with Turkish tiles. It occupies a total area of 2152 sq.m, of which 840 sq.m is built-up area and 1312 sq.m is unbuilt-up area. The mosque is operational.

Access for people with disabilities: no



WATERFALLS BY DUSHAN (KRASINO VILLAGE) AND DZHANKA VILLAGE

Site name: "Dushan" waterfall (Krasino village), Dzhanka village waterfall, rock formations in Dushan ravine - natural attractions

Location: The village of Krasino (Yazovets mah., on the Dushan dere river, between the village of Dzhanka and the Yazovets mah.) and the village of Dzhanka (Rutlina mah., on the Dushan river between the Yazovets mah. and Rutlina mah.)

Site description: The "Dushan" natural landmark occupies an area of 0.1 ha and is a waterfall on the Dushan River. The waterfall has a height of 20 m. It is located in a deciduous forest.

The natural landmark "Waterfall" has an area of 0.2 ha and is a waterfall located on the Dushan Dere River. The waterfall has a height of 25 m and is the highest of the protected waterfalls in the Kardjali region.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“RIBINO” PROTECTED AREA

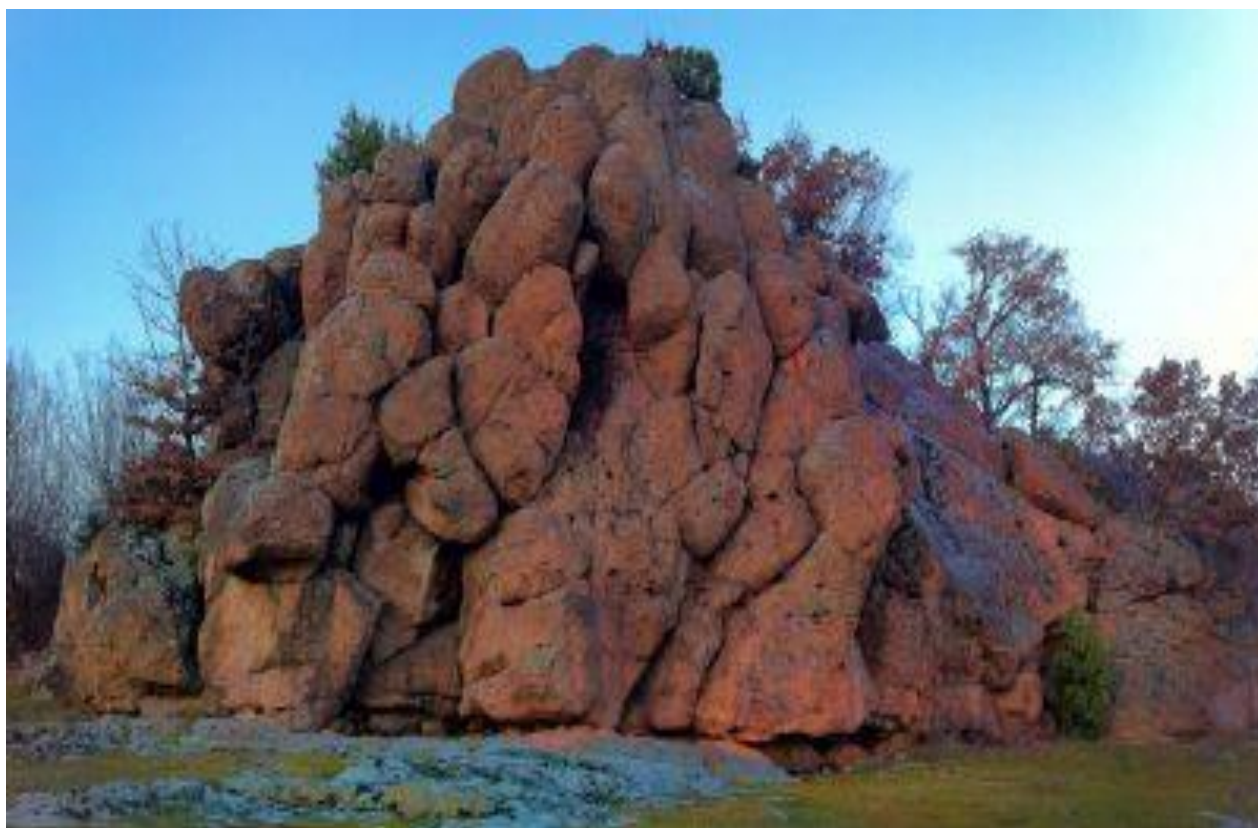
Name of the object: Protected area "Ribino".

Location: Ribino village and Samovila village, Krumovgrad municipality; covers the territory around Talashman dere - a left tributary of the Vetrenska river, in the lands of the villages of Ribino and Samovila.

Description of the site: "Ribino" has an area of 66.3 ha. It was declared a protected area on the proposal of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds in order to preserve protected and rare plants and animals, as well as for the preservation of a karst landscape, including rock massifs, springs and caves.

The area abounds in caves with a total length of over 600 m., which have been mapped and documented in the Bulgarian Speleology Federation. The "Samara" cave (one of the longest in the Eastern Rhodopes) and the "Mirror Cave" are included in the list of the 250 most famous caves in Bulgaria.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"ST. ELIJAH THE PROPHET" CHURCH COMPLEX AND A SCHOOL

Name of the object: "St. Elijah the Prophet" Church Complex and a School, group cultural monument.

Location: Avren village, Krumovgrad municipality

Description of the site: The church was built with the permission of the Turkish authorities, and construction began in 1866. It was completed and consecrated on July 20, 1870. The church is 21 m long and 12 m wide. The temple was fully explored and documented in 1992. Some of the icons are kept in the community center. In the church there is a marble plaque inscribed in Greek and 4 tombstones, of which 3 are stone and 1 is metal.

A school building is located on the property of the church and in a complex with it. From 1878 to 1928, it housed the village school.

It has cultural and historical value as the only preserved school building from this period in the area.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL FORTRESS IN THE VILLAGE OF STUDEN KLADENETS (COLD WELL)

Name of the object: Ancient and medieval fortress in the village of Studen kladenets (Cold well), cultural monument

Location: Studen Kladenets village, Krumovgrad municipality

Description of the site: The site is dated to the 14th - 6th centuries, 11th - 14th centuries. The fortification is located at the western end of an elongated east-west hill with a bare rocky ridge, at the foot of a prominent rhyolite rock. The fortress probably had a triangular or trapezoidal shape with approximate dimensions - length - 38 m and width - 20 m. The wall was built of rubble stones, joined with white mortar with ceramic impurities. An abundance of domestic and construction ceramics is found on the site.

Access for people with disabilities: no



LATE ANTIQUE FORTRESS

Name of the object: Late antique fortress, cultural monument

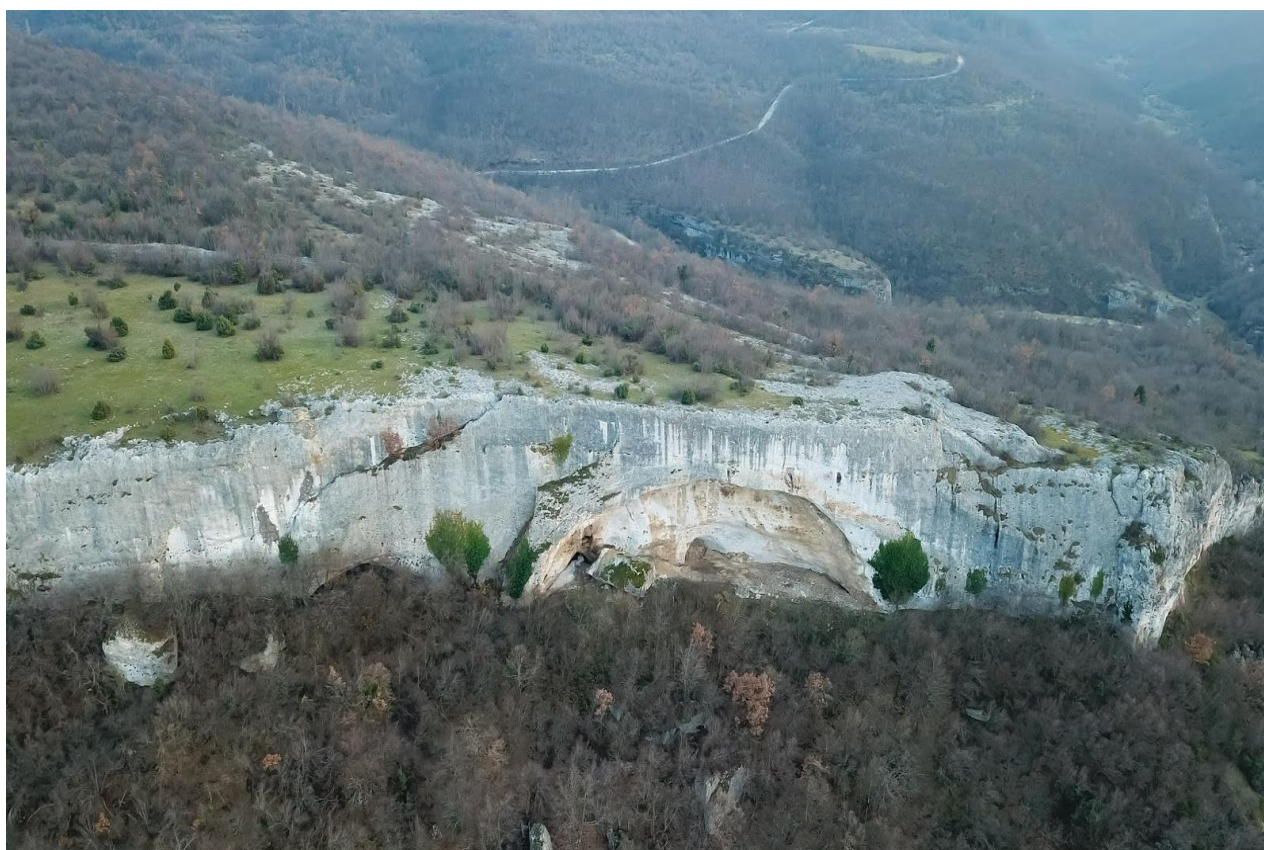
Location: Oreshari village, Krumovgrad municipality (located in the "Oreshari" protected area), Kayabashi town, on the high right bank of the Arda river, 2 km NW from the village.

Altitude: 297 m, GPS coordinates: 41°36'36" N.W. and 25°43'22" E.D.

Description of the site: The site is dated to the 4th millennium BC - 4th century. The fortress was built by walling off the accessible side of a plateau, located high above the right bank of the Arda river. The route of the fortress wall runs from the south and southwest. Its outcrop is 10-12 m wide and 1.5-2 m high. It was built with rubble, medium-sized stones without a binding substance. The area of the fortress is about 5 decares.

A small amount of Late Antique pottery was found on the site.

Access for people with disabilities: no



HOUSE-MUSEUM, KRUMOVGRAD

Name of the object: House-museum.

Location: Krumovgrad, 18 Bulgaria Square

Site description: The building was built in 1901 for a military club and has the characteristics of a late Renaissance building. In the period 1912-1913, it was used as a town hall.

In 1971, it was restored and adapted for the needs of the museum collection for the cultural and historical heritage of the Krumovgrad municipality. On an area of 250 sq.m. more than 2 thousand exhibits are arranged, which are divided into departments of archaeology, modern history and ethnography.

The building has cultural and historical value as the only preserved example of public construction in the city at the beginning of the century.

Access for people with disabilities: To the object - yes, inside - no



THE SPRING OF THE FAIRIES (LIKOTO VRIZCHE)

Name of the object: The Spring of the Fairies (Likoto vrizche)

Location: Near the village of Chernichevo, commune. Krumovgrad, south of the village

Description: This is an extremely beautiful place with the wild magic and charm of the fabulous beauty of the spring and the rocks through which the water has carved its trough. In such a place, you expect a barefooted wild woman to appear, to step into the cold water and, stepping on the whitish stone, to untangle her hair with a bone comb.

There, by the spring, pagan and Christian traditions come together. Its water was believed to be healing. On the branches around, people tied red threads for health. There are also the remains of burnt candles - homemade from dark beeswax. There they worshiped the Mother of God. In such a place one becomes stronger and breathes more deeply.

Access for people with disabilities: No



THE MEANDERS OF BYALA RIVER (WHITE RIVER)

Name of the site: Meanders of Byala River.

Location: Near the village of Chernichevo, commune. Krumovgrad /23 km in the east direction/

Description: Byala Reka is a river that rises near the village of Chernichevo, Krumovgrad Municipality and flows from west to east in the southern part of the Eastern Rhodopes. It is known for its beauty and clean water, which fully justifies its name. In the 90s of the 20th century, a species of fish unknown to science, which is not found elsewhere, was discovered in it - an Eastern Rhodope endemic, called "Rhodope pinch".

Along its course, the river forms remarkable natural phenomena called the "Meanders of the White River", located between Chernichevo and Ivaylovgrad. Immediately before crossing the border with Greece, Byala Reka joins Luda Reka, and together they flow into Greek territory until they flow into the Maritsa River.

Byala Reka is the first in the Eastern Rhodopes, part of the "NATURA 2000" network.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

NECROPOLIS OF DOLMENS

Site name: Necropolis of dolmens, a cultural monument of national importance.

Location: Chernichevo village, Krumovgrad municipality.

Site description: 6.5 km NE from the village, in the town of Hambar Dere. It is located on the left side of the bridge to the village of Gugutka. The place below the barn is called Chukursky juren, and the height is called the Church.

The necropolis consists of 7 dolmens, of which 4 are relatively well preserved. They are built from 4 or 6 vertically placed stone slabs. The entrances are from the south and are a small side opening on the short side. Nearby there are traces of 3 more half-ruined dolmens. A mound embankment is missing.

The dolmens belong to the end of II - beginning of in the 1st millennium BC In the area of the necropolis there are fragments of Thracian pottery, and in the immediate vicinity a collective find of bronze coins of Maroneia (IV century BC) was discovered.

Access for people with disabilities: no



KRUMOVITSA IMPORTANT BIRD AREA

Name of the site: Krumovitsa Important Bird Area, declared an ornithologically important site in categories A3, B2, C6 (A3 - Sites for biologically demarcated groups of species; B2 - Sites for species with an unfavorable nature conservation status in Europe; C6 - Endangered species at the level of the European Union).

Location: Covers territories of Kardzhali and Haskovo regions.

Description of the site: The protected area covers valleys in the middle course of the Krumovitsa River and the Dyushun River, which flows into it, with the adjacent elevations and slopes of the Eastern Rhodopes.

In the area of Krumovitsa, 136 species of birds have been found, of which 26 are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. On its territory there are two small natural attractions, declared for the protection of landscapes.

In 1997, Krumovitsa was declared an Ornithologically Important Site by BirdLife International.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

A MONUMENT TO CAPTAIN PETKO VOYVODA

Name of the site: A Monument to Captain Petko Voivoda.

Location: Krumovgrad, street "Knyaz Boris I" to No. 45.

Site description: The monument was erected in memory of the legendary Thracian voivode Captain Petko voivoda.

It represents a figure of the hero placed on a pedestal. The height of the figure, without the pedestal, is 4.5 m in full length. It is made of white stone.

The sculptor of the monument is Petar Ivanov Dimitrov from Sofia.

It was opened on 03.10.1975.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MONUMENT TO KILLED REVOLUTIONAIRES AND AN OSSUARY

Name of the site: Monument to killed revolutionaires and an ossuary

Location: Krumovgrad, Dimitar Blagoev Street, in the area of the former barracks.

Site description: The monument was erected in memory of the militiamen who died in a battle with Bashibozuk in 1913, during the defense of the city. It represents a figure of a soldier in an overcoat and cap, belted with a flail, in a stance with a rifle at his feet, with a knife on the rifle. The figure is made of cement with a height of 2.20 m, and the pedestal is made of marble with a height of 2.20 m. The author's collective is unknown. The monument was made in 1927. There is an inscription on the monument: "Eternal gratitude to the Bulgarian soldiers who gave their lives for the freedom of the motherland!".

Next to the monument there is an ossuary with a length of 2 m and a height of 0.80 m. It is made of marble slabs. The designer is architect Kasnakov. The ossuary was officially opened on September 23, 1979.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MONUMENTS IN THE CITY OF KRUMOVGRAD

Name of the site: Monument to Khan Krum and Monument to Mother Bulgaria.

Location: Krumovgrad, Bulgaria square.

Site description: The monument to Khan Krum was erected in honor of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state. It represents a figure of Khan Krum on horseback. The figure is 4 m high and is placed on a granite pedestal with a height of 1.50 m. The author and performer is Petar Ivanov Dimitrov from the city of Sofia.

It was opened on 24.05.1981. Inscription: "In honor of 1300 years of Bulgaria".

The monument to Mother Bulgaria is a full-length figure of a woman in domestic costume. It is carved from white stone, placed on a white stone pedestal. The height of the monument is 3 m. The sculptor is Petar Ivanov Dimitrov from Sofia.

It was opened on 25.08.1977.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



CAVES IN A PROTECTED AREA RIBINO

Name of the site: "Samara" Cave and the Mirror Cave

Location: in the protected area "Ribino", in the land of the village of Ribino

Site description: The "Samara" cave is located in the "Ribino" protected area and is one of the longest in the Eastern Rhodopes - 327 meters, with an elevation of - 11. Its galleries in some places reach up to a kilometer. It is included in the list of the 250 most famous caves in Bulgaria.

The Mirror cave is located in the protected area "Ribino", in the territory of the village of Ribino, near the village of Samokovska. The local population calls the cave "Aina ini", which translates as "mirror cave", i.e. that you can see from one of its entrances to the other. The "Mirror Cave" is 157 m long and has an elevation of 8. It is included in the list of the 250 most famous caves in Bulgaria.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"STUDEN KLADENETS" CONSERVATION CENTER

Name of the object: "Studen kladenets" Conservation Center.

Location: Studen kladenets village, Krumovgrad municipality; on the left side of the Krumovgrad - Haskovo road, bordering the Valchi dol reserve.

Description of the object: It was built in 2006 under the PHARE Programme BG 0202.02 "Development of Bulgarian Ecotourism", with the financial assistance of the EU. Several panels show the characteristic animal and plant species as well as the minerals of the region. People with visual impairments can get the same information from Braille boards. Tourists who do not have the opportunity to see the reserve can see a specially filmed informational and educational film. The center has a telescope through which vultures can be observed in their natural environment. Two eco-trails have been built, which also have access for disabled people - to the vulture feeding observation point and to the natural attractions Abrasive Wells and Devil's Bridge.

Access for people with disabilities: adapted for access by people with mobility and visual impairments.



THE “SHEITAN” GORGE

Name of the site: The “Sheitan” Gorge.

Location: The village of Studen Kladenets, on the Arda River, after the dam wall

Description of the site: Near the dam wall of the "Studen Kladenets" dam, the Arda river has formed a deep, narrow, canyon-like gorge, called Sheitan (Devil) by the local people, about a kilometer long. In the narrowest places, the rocky shores are almost vertical with a height of 5 to 10 m. The width of the river is from 1 to 6 m, and the depth reaches 20 m.

Before the construction of the dam wall, an eerie humming noise was constantly heard there. Today, the gorge has significantly less water, but it is still impressive with its size.

The landscape is unique.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"VALCHI DOL" RESERVE

Name of the object: "Valchi dol" Reserve

Location: Studen Kladenets, in the lands of the village of Studen Kladenets, the village of Stari Chal and the village of Boynik, south of the Dam "Studen Kladenets"

Site description: The "Valchi dol" reserve is the only reserve with a strict security regime in the Eastern Rhodopes. It is part of the "Studen Kladenets" Protected Area and of the Ornithologically Important Site "Studen Kladenets". The total area of the reserve is 774.70 ha.

It was declared a protected site in 1980 in order to preserve the accidentally discovered nesting site of griffon vultures. The reserve also preserves the habitats of rare and endangered birds, as well as a characteristic ecosystem in the Eastern Rhodopes, little affected by human activity. 413 species of higher plants were identified, of which 1 Bulgarian and 6 Balkan endemics. One species of plant is endangered, and 14 species are rare, included in the Red Book. The reserve is distinguished by an exceptional diversity of birds of prey. 23 species have been identified, of which 21 are included in the Red Book.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

MEDIEVAL ROCK CLOISTER

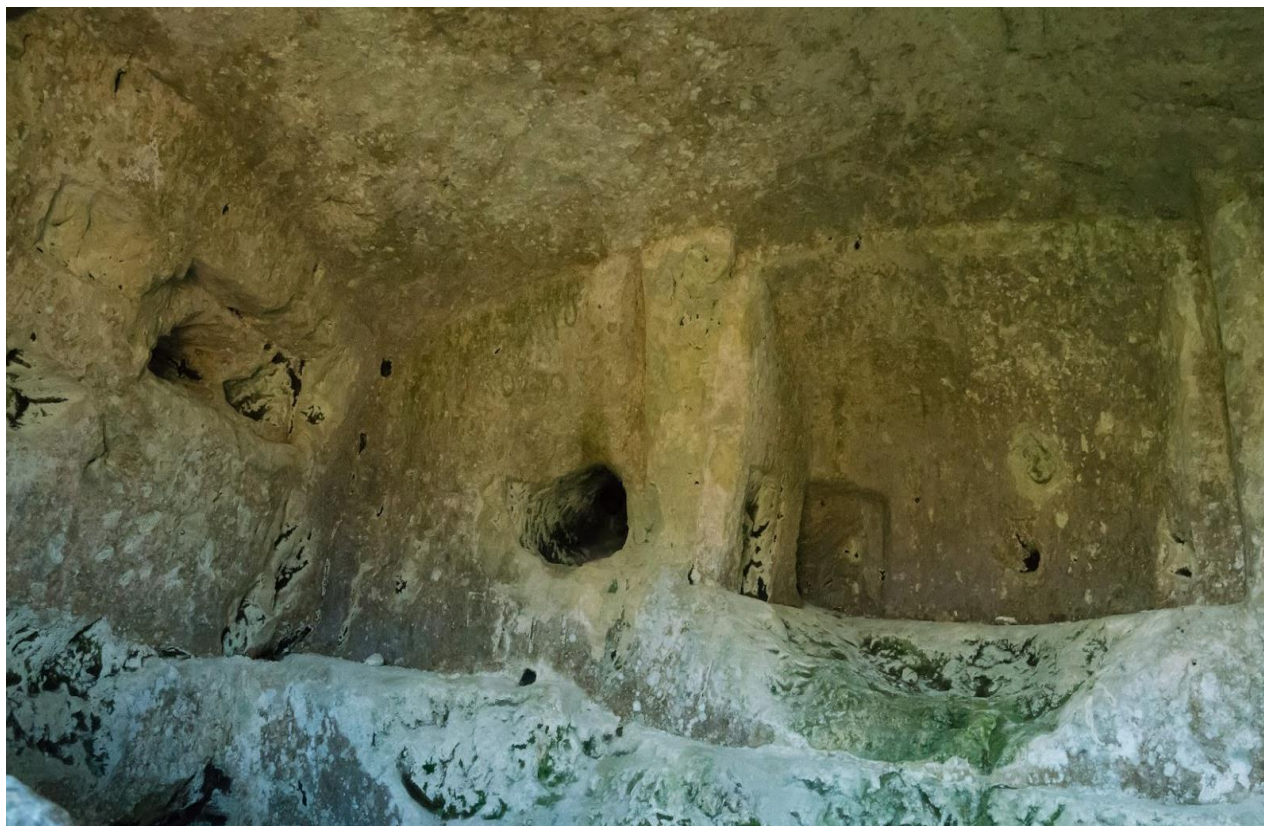
Name of the site: Medieval rock cloister "Pop Martin's Hole", also known as "The Arch", a cultural monument of national importance

Location: Oreshari village, Krumovgrad municipality, 2.4 km. SSZ from the village, in the protected area "Oreshari".

Description of the site: The tomb was carved into hard-to-reach rocks above the right bank of the Arda river. Its entrance is 4 m above the surrounding terrain. 13 rock niches have been cut around it. In terms of plan and design, this tomb differs from all the ones known so far from the Eastern Rhodopes. The interior space is broken up into niches, gutters and recesses, some of which are probably later.

It is possible that this facility was carved in the Middle Ages and served as a monastic hermitage, as its name indicates.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"ST. ATHANASIOS" CHURCH

Name of the object: "St. Athanasios" Church, cultural monument

Location: Chernichevo village, Krumovgrad municipality

Description of the site: The church "St. Athanasios" in the village of Chernichevo was built in 1847-1848 with the permission of the Turkish authorities. The initiator of its construction was Ginyu Kirev, a butcher at the time. The property was donated by someone from Rusko, who also had a house in the same yard. The construction master is Kodjagogo from the village of Petkovo, Smolyansko. The church burned to the ground in 1913 and was rebuilt in 1921-1922. It is 15 m long and 11 m wide. The iconostasis is carved, it was made in 1931-1932 by two masters from Trevna. It is 11 m long and 5 m high. The icons were brought from Edirne, and the bell was made in "Bagryanka" - Sofia. Next to the entrance of the church is a plaque commemorating four residents of the village who died in 1917 at the turn of Cerna /Macedonia/. In the courtyard behind the eastern side of the temple is a priest's grave.

The church is active.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

"ST. IVAN RILSKY" CHURCH

Name of the object: "St. Ivan Rilski" Church, cultural monument

Location: the center of Krumovgrad

Description of the site: The church "St. Ivan Rilski" in the town of Krumovgrad was built in 1934. The church was consecrated on 30.10.1938 by Metropolitan Kirill of Plovdiv, later Patriarch of Bulgaria, in collaboration with the Ivaylovgrad vicar bishop Il.P. Gavrilov and the entire Krumovgrad clergy.

The church is a three-nave, single-apse pseudo-basilica with a length of 18 m, a width of 10 m and a height of 6 m. The individual naves are vaulted with semi-cylindrical vaults under a common three-pitched roof. The iconostasis, the throne and the proskinitaria are carved from walnut wood, made in the city of Plovdiv by an unknown master. It is 10 m wide and 4 m high. The building has been preserved in its authentic form.

The church is active.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"STUDEN KLADENETS" DAM

Name of the site: "Studen Kladenets" Dam.

Location: Along the middle course of the Arda River, southeast of the town of Kardzhali, on the border of the territories of the Kardzhali municipality and the Krumovgrad municipality; GPS coordinates: E 25° 38' 24.73"; N 41° 36' 25.10".

Site description: Studen Kladenets Dam is perhaps the most picturesque artificial lake in the Rhodopes. It forms beautiful meanders and bays, and its coast is picturesque and for the most part virgin. It is the second after the Kardzhali Dam along the Arda River and begins right after the city, with the Monyak and Visegrad fortresses rising at its beginning on both sides.

The dam is part of the Arda energy cascade. This is the first dam built on the river, put into operation in 1957. Its wall was built about 30 km east of the town of Kardzhali. Its catchment area is 3,752 km² with an average annual runoff of 1,600 million m³. The concrete dam is 68 meters high at its highest point and 350 meters long.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



V. MUNICIPALITY OF KARDZHALI

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

The municipality of Kardzhali is located in the northern part of the Eastern Rhodopes, occupying an area of 574,742 sq. km, which is 20% of the territory of the District of Kardzhali and 0.51% of the territory of the country. It is included in the administrative scope of the NUTS level 2 /NUTS II/, adm. Kardzhali region /NUTS III/. The municipality corresponds to the European classification LAU 1.

The town of Kardzhali is the administrative center of the Kardzhali district. To the northeast and east, the municipality of Kardzhali borders with municipalities from the Haskovo region - Stambolovo and Haskovo, to the south - with the municipalities of Momchilgrad, Dzhebel and Krumovgrad (the area of the "Studen Kladenets" dam). To the west it borders the municipality of Ardino, and to the north and northwest with the municipality of Chernoochene.

The Ruse-Podkova railway line and the first-class road Ruse - V. Tarnovo - St. pass through the territory of the municipality. Zagora - Haskovo - Kardzhali - Makaza. The road is one of the most important transport connections, crossing Bulgaria in the north-south direction and part of the route of the All-European Transport Corridor (EUTC) No. 9. With the opening in 2013 of the Makaza border crossing, a direct connection connecting the Danube River (the Rhine – Main – Danube canal) – transport corridor No. VII with the White Sea (port of Alexandroupolis).

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
KARDZHALI	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1

Chernoochene

327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Kardzhali municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

The municipality of Kardzhali has good conditions for vacation, informative cultural-historical, rural, ecological, congress, hunting, fishing, sports, religious and ornithological tourism, which, with appropriate incentives, would make a significant contribution to the promotion of the municipality as a desirable tourist destination.

Strengths and prerequisites for tourism development:

- The municipality of Kardzhali is a cultural, administrative, transport, business and tourist center of the Region and the region.
- Unique location of the city of Kardzhali between the "Kardzhali" dam and the "Studen Kladenets" dam, which do not freeze during the winter season.

This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

- National and international fame of the ancient city "Perperikon".
- Mild climate falling in the transitional Mediterranean climate zone.
- Favorable relief with a hilly character, characteristic of the Eastern Rhodope subregion and a unique landscape.
- Formed recreation areas around the "Kardjali" dam and the "Studen Kladenets" dam.
- Tourist services in the Municipality of Kardzhali and the region form a permanent growth.
- Investments in the Municipality of Kardzhali, related to the construction of tourist facilities /hotels, motels, houses, bungalows, restaurants, catering establishments, cafes, bars, etc./, are growing at a sustainable pace.
- Availability of built tourist infrastructure.
- Traditions in offering tourist services and maintaining tourist sites.
- Three tourist sites registered in the "100 national tourist sites of the Republic of Bulgaria".
- Active activity of the Municipality in promoting objects of historical, natural and cultural value.
- According to individual projects and initiatives, administrative efforts at the local, regional and national level to build and maintain tourist infrastructure are successfully synchronized.
- Availability of protected areas and natural attractions.
- Unique archaeological, historical, prehistoric and ethno-cultural heritage.
- Preserved cultural monuments.
- Unique conditions for combining ecological, route, vacation and sports / water, etc. sports/ with cognitive /cultural-historical/ tourism.
- Large compact territories, unaffected by the negative impacts of industrialization and urbanization, combining unique cultural-historical and natural features.
- It is a tradition for the Municipality to be visited by its former and current residents, working and living in the country and abroad during religious Muslim holidays.
- Traditional international festivals confirmed in the National Cultural Calendar, National Award for Children's Literature and Balkan Writers' Meeting are organized.
- Three folk dance collectives with international recognition.
- Preserved folklore traditions of the various ethnic groups and communities: Rhodope, Thracian and Turkish.
- Very good conditions for sport fishing.

- Formed forest ecosystems with suitable conditions for hunting and experience in offering services in hunting tourism.

- The location of the Municipality, through which transport corridor No. 9 passes and is crossed by other roads of regional and local importance. The municipality is located near the Mediterranean resorts and is close to established tourist destinations and resorts in neighboring areas.

- Hard-working, educated and hospitable population with a well-established way of life and culture.

- Availability of specialized schools preparing personnel for the tourism industry, such as "Professional high school for food industry" and Vocational high school for mechanical engineering and light industry "Vasil Levski".

- Production of ecologically clean and diverse plant and animal products on a family basis.

Opportunities for tourism development:

- Improvement of transport accessibility, after the opening of the "Makaza" border crossing and other border crossings of regional significance.

- An opportunity for the Municipality of Kardzhali to participate in the implementation of projects from the structural funds of the EU, projects under the Recovery and Sustainability Plan and in an unlimited tourist market.

- Optimal functioning of OETK No. 9.

- Creation of a database for the offered tourist services and their inclusion in the program of companies with tour operator and agency activities, as well as in the unified system for tourist information in the National Information Network.

- Encouraging businesses and residents in the Municipality to register tourist sites in the National Tourist Register, including and existing accommodation: guesthouses, rest stations, family hotels, villas, private rooms, houses, bungalows and campsites; of food and entertainment establishments - restaurants, fast food establishments, drinking establishments, bars, coffee shops, etc.; monuments of culture and historical heritage, reserves, protected areas and natural attractions.

- Creation of an advertising product promoting the unique natural, cultural and historical features, customs, lifestyle, hospitality and tourism opportunities of the Municipality of Kardzhali.

- Establishing cross-border contacts at the cultural and domestic level with the neighbors from Greece and Turkey.

- Formation of a Euroregion together with the Haskovo Region and the interested regions from the Republic of Greece and the Republic of Turkey with the aim of improving the infrastructure in the region, social and economic cohesion, improving the environment and developing tourism.
- Promotion of community center activities to develop cross-border contacts on a cultural and household level with the neighbors from Greece and Turkey.
- Modernization, optimization and alignment of the built tourist infrastructure with European environmental requirements.
- Construction of modern tourist infrastructure. Improvement of entrepreneurial and professional skills in the protection of natural and cultural heritage, and in the offer of tourist services.
- Increasing employment in the protection of natural and cultural heritage, and in the offer of tourist services.
- Reconstruction and rehabilitation of the existing road infrastructure to develop regional connections and facilitate tourist flow.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

ANCIENT GOLD MINES – “THE STREMSKI LABYRINTH”

Site Name: Ancient Mines "Stremski Labyrinths", also known as "Inikler" Cave.

Location: Hisar tepe area near Stremtsi village, Kardjali municipality.

Site description: These are unique gold mines, created in ancient times, but were further developed in the Middle Ages with a total length of 460 m. The galleries resemble a labyrinth, hence their name.

The possibility that the mine dates back to a pre-Roman era is all too attractive. This is quite possible, as we know that the earliest mines on the peninsula near Lavrion in Attica do not differ from those described under Stremtsi.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“SLAVEY ZLATEV” ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY

Name of the site: "Slavey Zlatev" Astronomical Observatory

Location: Kardzhali, "Prostor" park.

Site description: The Astronomical Observatory is one of the most interesting places to visit in Kardzhali. It is located in Prostor Park. It bears the name of H.S. Slavey Zlatev, born on November 4, 1946 in Kardzhali. He graduated from the Faculty of Physics of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 1970, he established the Astronomical Observatory in Kardzhali. He is the founder of the Kardjali branch of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria. He is a member of the European Astronomical Society. Scientific leader of an international project for the development of space instruments.

The observatory has a 150 mm refractor and other smaller telescopes. Provides an opportunity for demonstration observations of various space objects.

Access is free, but prior request is required.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



KARDZHALI WATER MIRROR

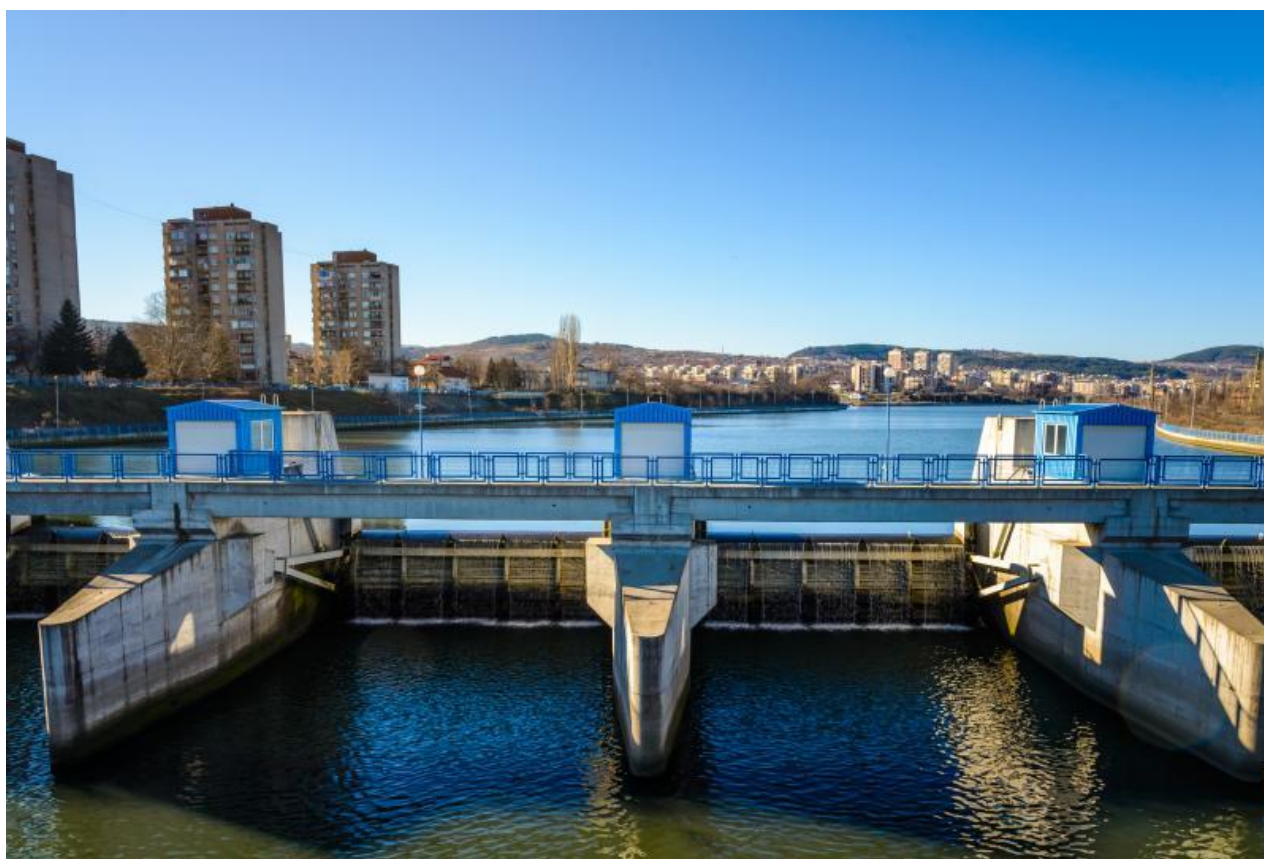
Name of the object: Kardzhali Water Mirror.

Location: Town of Kardzhali.

Description of the object: The project "Strengthening the banks of the Arda River in the area of the city of Kardjali" is a complex construction and consists of 10 sub-objects. A massive dam with retaining walls on both banks form a water mirror 3 kilometers long and 160 meters wide. It starts about 300 m after the wall of the "Kardjali" dam and reaches the bridge to the "Veselchane" district, almost to the ground zero of the "Studen Kladenets" dam.

The weir is a unique hydrotechnical facility in terms of its size and throughput - 9 segmental gates with hydraulic drive, creating a depth of 4.50 m at the weir when closed, and 5.30 m when the turbines are operating - with a throughput of 160 cubic meters. per second.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE MILITARY CLUB

Site Name: The Military Club

Location: town of Kardzhali.

Site description: The military club is located in the center of the town of Kardzhali in the central city park. The club building is one of the three oldest and most beautiful buildings, along with those of the History Museum and the Art Gallery. The beginning of the construction dates back to 1870. The architectural execution speaks of the great talent of the old masters - arches made of cut stone, stone walls almost one meter thick. It was originally built as a warehouse. In 1934, a law allowed the Kardzhali Garrison Officers' Assembly to grant one of the state buildings of the former Turkish warehouse, together with a yard around it of 7228 square meters, free of charge.

In 2004 and the first half of 2005, a major renovation of the building was carried out and it was brought to a state that meets modern requirements.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE CENTRAL CITY PARK

Name of the object: The Central City Park.

Location: Town of Kardzhali.

Site description: The city garden of Kardzhali is located in the city center between the pedestrian zone of Bulgaria Boulevard and the new Washington Boulevard. It is a place of relaxation for the elderly and for mothers with small children. The garden is more than fifty years old, with large tall trees mainly plane trees, lindens and chestnuts.

The granite bear, preserved unchanged over the years, is emblematic.

At the end of the garden are the Military Club and the Liberators Monument. All city celebrations of city holidays and national holidays are held here.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



CHILDREN'S RAILROAD

Name of the site: Children's railroad.

Location: Kardzhali, at the beginning of Prostor Park, coordinates: 41°38'30"N 25°22'50"E.

Site description: The first children's railway in Bulgaria was opened on September 30, 1962. It is located in the city park "Prostor" and has a length of 1210 m. The project is by engineer Valentina Yochkova.

The outside of the train is painted by the little artists who work in drawing schools at the United Children's Complex in Kardzhali. Traveling with the train is an attraction for generations of Kardzhali residents and guests of the city. Its path passes by the Druzhba city stadium, through a picturesque tunnel and goes around the entire park.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE MOSQUE IN KARDJALI

Name of the object: The mosque in the town of Kardjali.

Location: town of Kardzhali, central part of the city.

Site description: It is located in the immediate vicinity of the city market. A massive, elegant building built in 1812. In 1874 it was rebuilt. It is built of stone, wood and lime. It also had a vestibule with iron bars. The entrance and inner doors were high and very beautiful. There is another door to the east side. There is a fountain in the courtyard. In the hall of the mosque there is a minder - throne with 15 steps and kursi - a place for the preacher. At the time, she supported herself from her own oven and two shops. Up to 500 pilgrims can gather in it. Now it consists of a temple building, a minaret, an administrative building. In the courtyard there are renewed fountains for ritual ablution.

A working temple. The mosque is a cultural monument.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE CULTURAL CENTER

Site name: Municipal Center for Culture and Youth Activities

Location: city of Kardzhali, center, coordinates: 41°38'7"N, 25°22'16"E

Site description: In October 1952, the newly constructed building of the House of Culture, the most representative in the city, was opened. The opera from Stara Zagora was invited to the celebration with the performance "Eugene Onegin".

After its opening, many forms of artistic self-activity were created and developed - a self-made operetta theater, a music and dance ensemble, an art school for children and adolescents, created on the basis of the established children's music and ballet school, the theater studio and the painting club. Over the years, thousands of performers have gone through the formations. Alumni of the House of Culture are the world-famous clarinetist Ivo Papazov, the ballet director Hikmet Akhmedov, the rector of the Music Academy in Plovdiv Prof. Slavchev.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE STONE WEDDING

Site Name: The Stone Wedding.

Location: It is located on the land of the village of Zimzelen, 3 km. east of the town of Kardzhali.

Accessibility to the object: Road from the republican or municipal road network; there is a marked path to the site. The site is suitable for visiting in all seasons.

Site description: An extremely beautiful group of numerous stone pyramids (the so-called Kardjali pyramids), reminiscent of a wedding procession. The figures are extremely diverse in shape and size, ranging from 0.5 to over 10 m in height. The formations are volcanic tuffs with a rhyolite composition, whose age is about 35 million years. During the Oligocene, today's Eastern Rhodopes were the bottom of the sea. As a result of frequent volcanic explosions, thick layers of volcanic ash were formed on the seabed, mixed with various pieces of rocks crumbling along the coast, which slowly compacted and turned into layers of tuffs, in which the "Stone Wedding" is now formed.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE STONE MUSHROOMS

Site Name: The Stone Mushrooms.

Location: Beli Plast village, Kardzhali municipality.

Description of the site: Stone mushrooms are harmonious pieces of rock in the shape of natural mushrooms, with pink stumps and greenish googles. The height of the stumps and the width of the googles is up to 2.5 m. They are sculpted in rhyolite volcanic tuffs. The tuffs from which the stone sponges were formed are also the result of intense underwater volcanic activity dating back to Paleogene times. After the retreat of the sea and the successive rise of the seabed, the action of erosion began on them. The lower, pink layer turned out to be softer and more easily susceptible to the action of the sun, wind and rain. The upper, greenish layer contains stronger minerals, mostly volcanic glass, and is more difficult to weather. This is how this wonderful composition of unique shapes and colors has been formed over millennia.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



KERIMOVA HOUSE

Name of the site: Kerimova House (House of Artists).

Location: Kardjali, 10 Kliment Ohridski St.

Description of the object: In the old part of the city there is a preserved complex of houses built in the Renaissance style. They are located on "Kliment Ohridski" and "Ivan Vazov" streets. It houses the House of Artists in the city (the so-called Kerim House), as well as the House of Architects.

Today, the Kerim House houses the House of Creative Unions in Kardzhali. It is a center for creative contacts of artists, artists, writers. The historical landmark is located in the old part of the city. In 1882, during his visit to Kardzhali, the governor of Eastern Rumelia Aleko Bogorodi stayed in the Kerim house.

Three inns were built on the same street. The largest belonged to Mehmed Haji Hafiz and consisted of two large stables, a sleeping room for travelers, a cafe and an oven.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MONYAK (MNEAKOS) MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

Name of the site: Medieval fortress Monyak (Mneakos).

Location: Located 2 km. south of Shiroko Pole village, Kardzhali municipality

Site description: The fortress occupies a high rocky plateau, almost inaccessible from the west and south, on the left bank of the "Studen Kladenets" dam, about 5-6 km away. from the town of Kardzhali. The site has an altitude of 586 m. and GPS coordinates 41°37'22" N and 25°27'42" E.

It consists of two parts. The outer fortress wall surrounds the hill tightly from the north. In the western part is the entrance, with a tower on either side. The northern one is a solid trapezoidal bastion, and the southern one was several stories, preserved today at a height of up to 7.80 m. The wall continues to the south, following the contours of the terrain, and reaches an impassable rock drop more than 50 m high. The highest southern part of the plateau is occupied by a citadel with solid trapezoidal bastions on the walls and an entrance located approximately halfway up the north wall. The total protected area is about 50 decares.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"USPENIE BOGORODICHNO" MONASTERY COMPLEX ("ASSUMPTION OF MARY")

Name of the site: Assumption Monastery complex.

Location: Gledka quarter, Kardzhali town.

Description of the object: In May 1938, the construction of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary church began in the Gledka district with the efforts of priest Vasil Topuzliev and the local population. The temple was completed and consecrated on May 29, 1939 by Metropolitan Kirill.

The three-nave basilica from the 20th century is a unique spiritual center that houses a refectory for the poor. There is also a religious Sunday school, a computer room, a free medical office, a music room.

The temple houses the relics of an unknown saint from the time when the Thracians began to accept Christianity. The shrine was discovered during the excavations of the Episcopal Cathedral of Perperikon, embedded in a hermetically sealed bronze cross of the 5th-8th centuries. Here is also a fragment of the Holy Cross, also found in the ancient ruins of Perperikon.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

THE STATUE OF ORPHEUS

Name of the site: The Statue of Orpheus.

Location: At the entrance to the town of Kardzhali

Description: At the very entrance of the city of Kardzhali, at the entrance from the cities of Haskovo and Plovdiv, stands the monument of Orpheus, the ancient Greek mythical Thracian singer, who is the symbol of the Eastern Rhodopes and the city of Kardzhali, and according to legends and myths, he was born here, lived here and created here.

The opening of the statue took place in June 2005. Restored and moved to this place on the initiative of the Kardzhali Rotary Club after it was destroyed. Its sculptor is Krum Damyanov. Around the monument there is a specially built platform and stairs for easier access to it. At night, the monument lights up and is even more beautiful. The Orpheus monument in Kardzhali welcomes and sends off the guests of the city!

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MONUMENT TO LIBERATORS

Name of the site: Monument to Liberators.

Location: city of Kardzhali, central part of the city, City Garden

Site description: The memorial symbolizes the recapture of the Eastern Rhodopes from the Ottoman Empire and their annexation to the borders of Bulgaria in 1912. This is the first monument built in Kardzhali. In the mound under it are laid the bones of 36 Bulgarian officers and soldiers who died in the battle for the liberation of the city.

The monument represents a standard-bearer and a soldier in an attacking position "on a knife". The pedestal is placed on a level area at the highest part of the mound, along which incised stairs with two wings lead to the foot of the monument.

The official opening and consecration of the monument took place on May 28, 1939 - the day of the Christian holiday "Pentecost".

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"ST. SPAS" CHAPEL NEAR RESBARTSI

Name of the site: Chapel "St. Spas" near the village of Rezbartsi.

Location: the village of Rezbartsi, 4 km from the center of the town of Kardzhali, in a southerly direction.

Site description: Located at the beginning by the road to the village of Rezbartsi, on the right, before the first residential buildings. It is located in the middle of a beautiful deciduous forest with large meadows and nice water, in close proximity to the banks of the Kyos Dere River, which flows into the Arda River within the city.

It is assumed that the remains of a priest probably lie near the village of Rezbartsi. The sacred place cares for the hopelessly ill from all over the country. The mysterious grave attracts both Christians and Muslims from all over Bulgaria. There have been legends about its healing properties for centuries.

The chapel was built at the beginning of the 20th century and recently renovated.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



GORUBSO CITY PARK

Site name: Gorubso City Park.

Location: city of Kardzhali, central part of the city, Coordinates: 41°38'3"N 25°22'16"E.

Site description: Park Gorubso was built more than 60 years ago, when the town of Kardzhali was a small town. At that time, the park was located at the edge of the city and its main purpose was to be a green area between the Gorubso plant and the residential area.

The park has a very diverse vegetation, with centuries-old trees and diverse coniferous tree species and wide avenues. In the center of the park there is a built lake with water lilies and a bridge in the middle, as well as a beautiful rock garden.

In 2003, the project of the Kardzhali sculptor Emil Penchev "The Kiss" was realized. It depicts marble figures of a boy and girl kissing. The work is placed in the rosary next to the Youth Center.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"PROSTOR" PARK

Name of the site: "Prostor" Park.

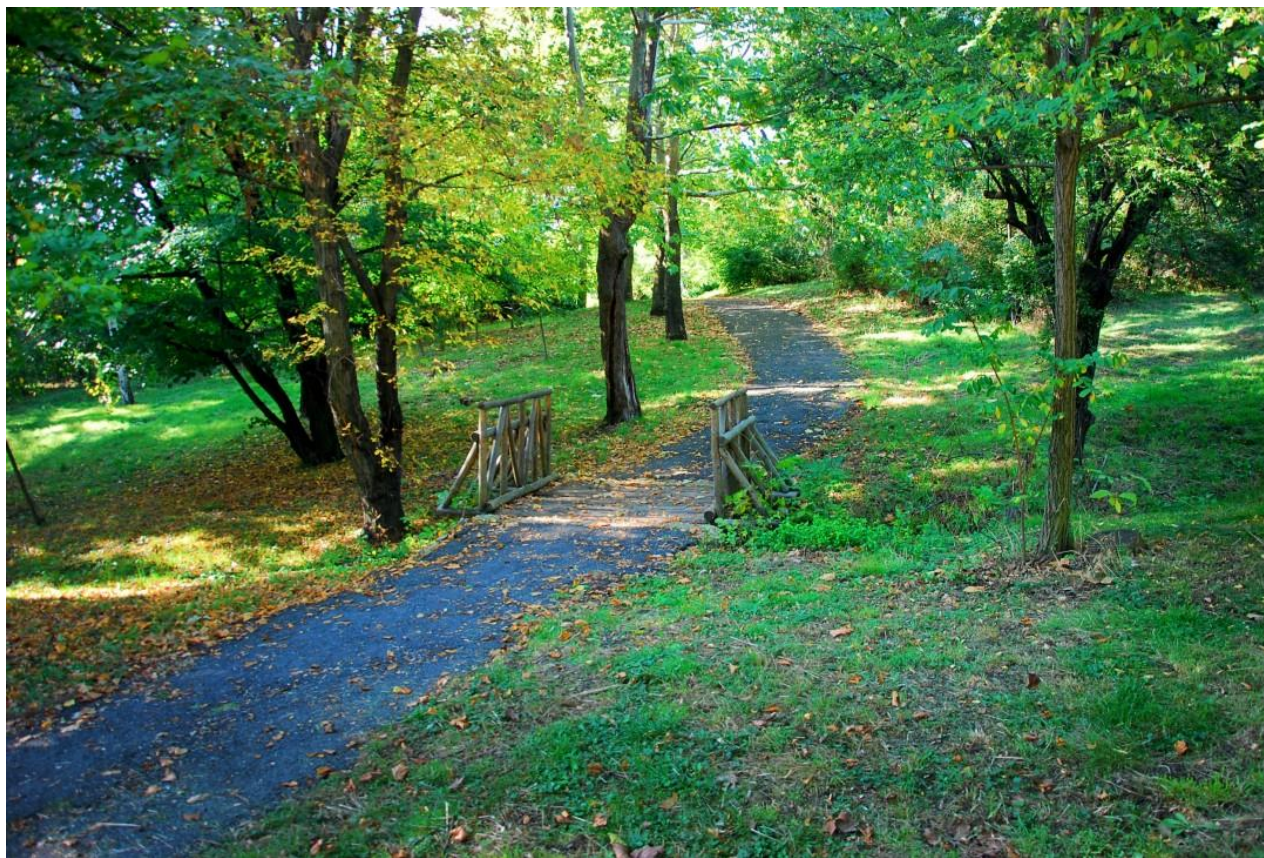
Location: city of Kardzhali, central part of the city.

Site description: Park "Prostor" is located on Belomorski Boulevard between the hospital and the city stadium. It was built more than fifty years ago.

In this park there is the only children's railway that runs during the summer period on a rail track. The train is a miniature copy of a real train composition.

The park has diverse vegetation and unique tree species, such as ginkgo biloba, white birches, etc. There are very good conditions for walking - long avenues in the shade of trees and lawns, romantic bridges and many benches. Peace and quiet reign deep in the park away from the playgrounds. There are conditions for the movement of all strollers, bicycles, rollerblades and scooters. The Astronomical Observatory is also located in the park.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



PERPERICON ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEX

Name of the site: Archaeological complex "Perperikon".

Location: It is located 15 km. northeast of the town of Kardzhali, a cultural monument of national importance - one of the 100 national tourist sites.

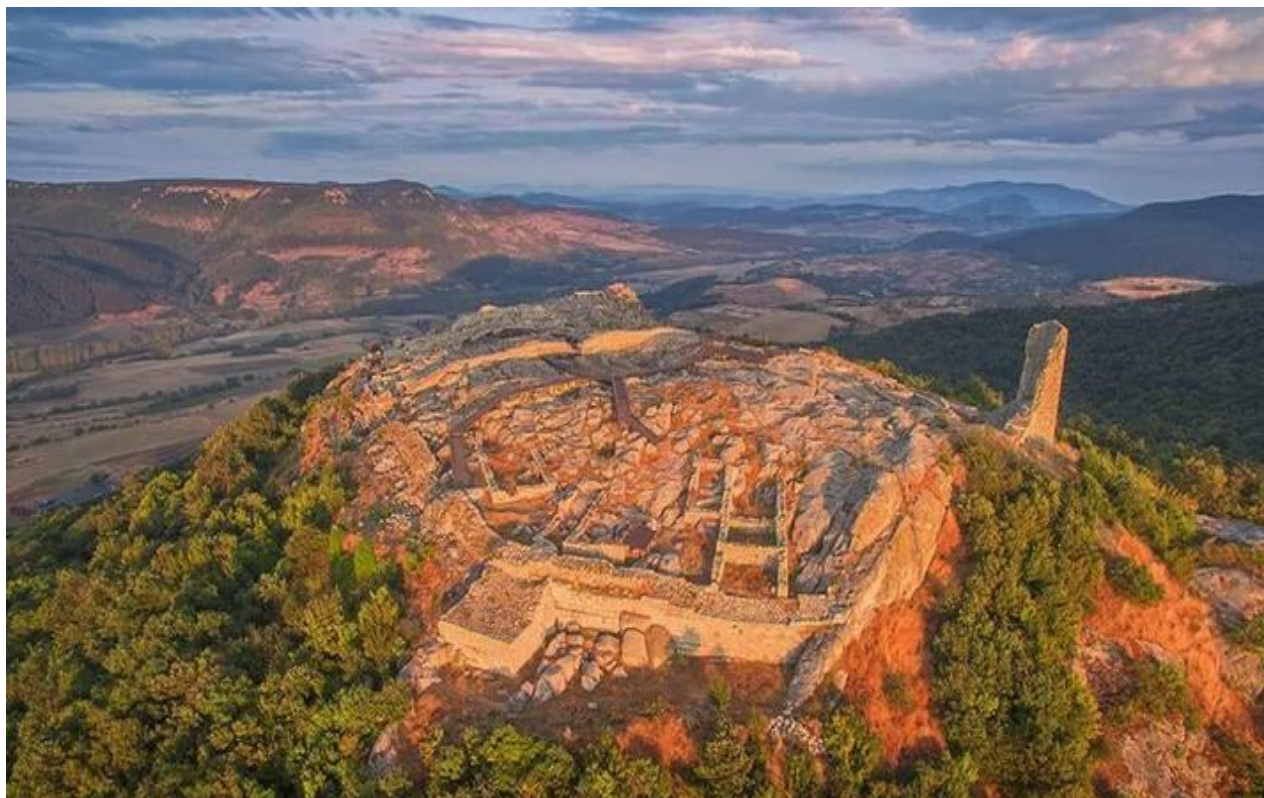
Site description: Perperikon is situated on a dominating peak in an area known locally as Djin Tepesi (Mountain of Spirits).

Perperikon is an early historical, ancient and medieval stone complex consisting of a large megalithic sanctuary from the 6th-5th millennium BC. It is believed that under the Thracians, Perperik was a sacred rock city, capital and fortress with a royal palace.

The fortress-rock city of Perperikon is located 15 km northeast of the present-day city of Kardzhali, next to the village of Gorna Krepost. It occupies the highest peak (735 m) above the valley, 10 km long and 3-4 km wide, through which flows the Perpepek River.

The megalithic complex, the largest on the Balkan Peninsula, has an area of 5,000 square meters. The Thracian sanctuary is located 470 meters above sea level.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



“UTROBA” CAVE (THE WOMB)

Site name: “Utroba” Cave (The Womb).

Location: It is located in the rocky Tangardak area next to the village of Nenkovovo, about twenty kilometers from the town of Kardjali.

Description of the site: Local people call the place Dungurduk kaya (Ringling Stone). The name comes from the impressive sound echo - a particular vibration inside the object. The entire cave is literally shaped like a female genital organ and fully corresponds to the womb-caves described by the famous trachologist Prof. Alexander Fall. Its location is south-north, with the opening from the south. The length is 22 m. Up to the 16th m, the cave is naturally karst. The last 6 m. were carved by human hands. At the northern end there is an artificially made altar, symbolizing the womb. The height of the hole is 3 m., and the width is about 2.5 m., and enough light penetrates inside.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



REGIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Name of the site: ARegional Museum of History.

Location: 4 Republikanska Street, Kardzhali.

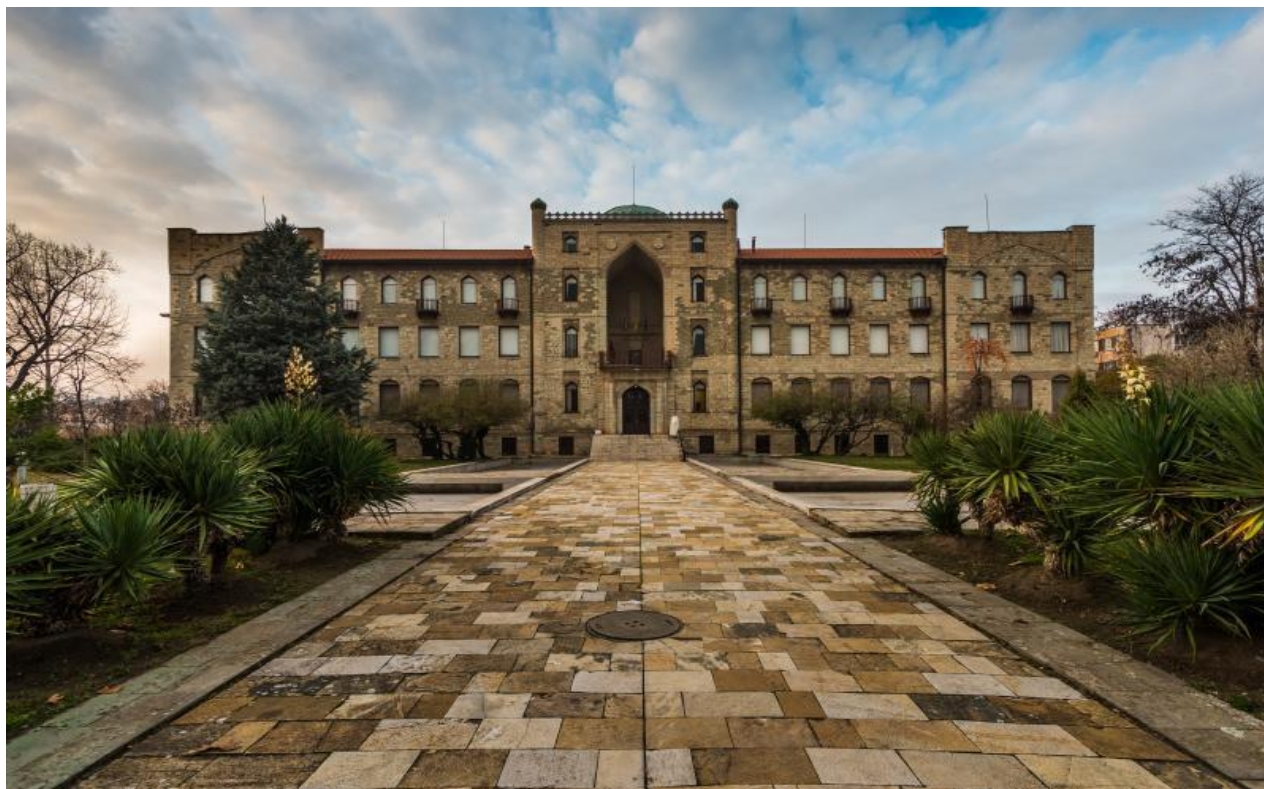
Object description: The object has geographical coordinates: 41.646862, 25.369841.

The Regional History Museum in the town of Kardzhali is one of the largest museums in Southern Bulgaria. It was built in the period 1922-1930 with the funds of the local municipality according to the project of a Russian architect working in Constantinople. The building was originally intended for a Muslim religious school, but it never fulfilled this function.

It was opened in 1965. The main fund contains over 45 thousand exhibits, tracing life in the Eastern Rhodopes from the deepest antiquity to the beginning of the 20th century. The exposition was opened to visitors in 1987 and occupies 1,800 square meters. area of three floors. The museum building has a courtyard-park with water pools on an area of 15 acres. 22 plant species are planted in the park, which are unique in the area of Southern Bulgaria.

The exposition consists of three sections - Archaeology, Mineralogy and Ethnology.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



ROCK NICHES BY DAZDOVNITSA AND NENKOVO VILLAGE

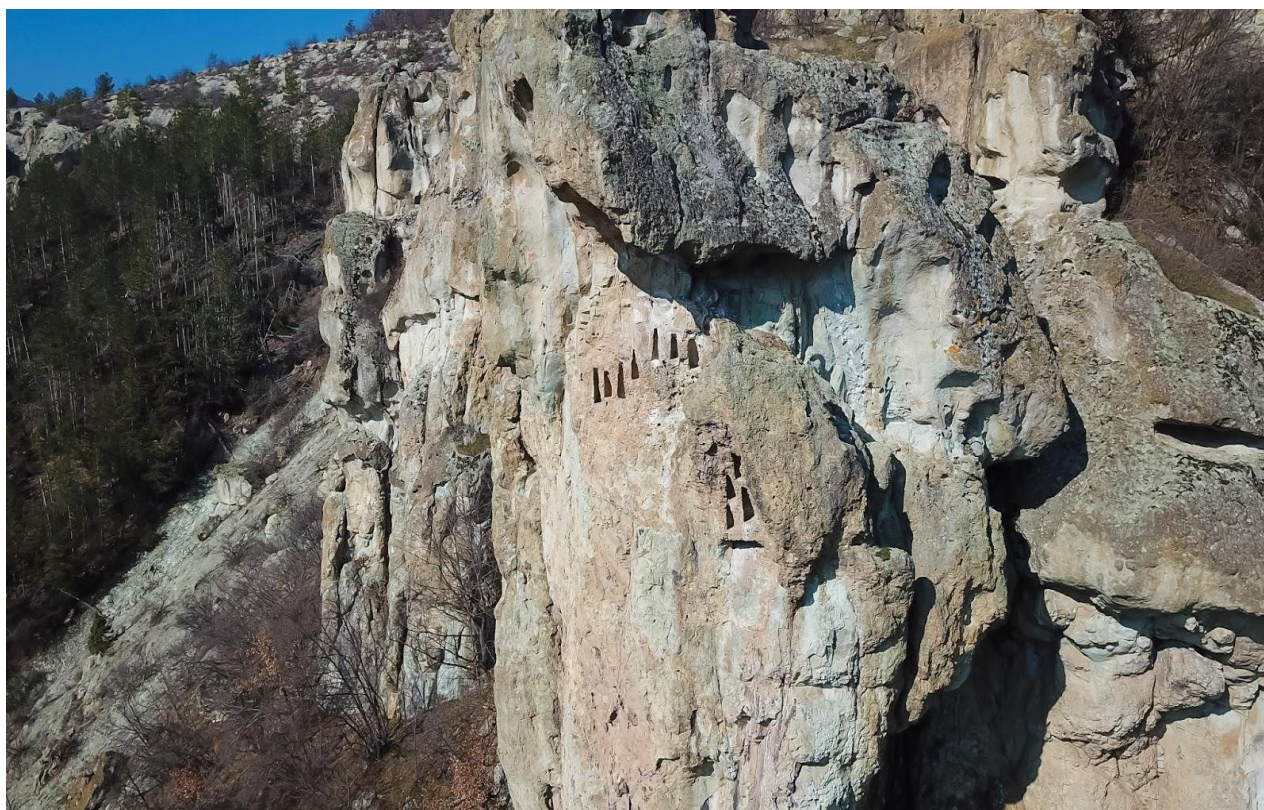
Name of the site: Rock niches near the village of Dazhdovnitza and the village of Nenkovovo.

Location: They are located in the lands of the villages of Dazhdovnitza and Nenkovovo.

Site description: The Thracian rock niches are remarkable megalithic monuments, which in Bulgaria are found only in the Eastern Rhodopes. They are carved into sheer cliffs. There are two hypotheses regarding their purpose. One is that they have a cult character, and the second is that they are miniature tombs.

The Thracians built sanctuaries in places with purifying and recharging power. Geophysical analysis registered various magnetic and energy anomalies in these areas. During the Chalcolithic, a system of rock sanctuaries developed in the Eastern Rhodopes, nearly 100 in number, with marked paths that lead pilgrims in the right direction. This network developed in the Chalcolithic continued through the Bronze and Iron Ages, Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“ST. YOAN PRODROM” MEDIEVAL MONASTERY (ST. JOHN THE PRECURSOR)

Name of the site: Medieval Monastery "St. Yoan Prodrom".

Location: On the right bank of the Arda River, Veselchane quarter, Kardjali town.

Site description: Nadm. altitude 236 m. and GPS 41°37'35"N and 25°22'12"E.

The first churches of the complex appeared in the second half of the 9th century. The main temple is of a rare and transitional type. It is about a gradual transition from the basilica plan to the classical cross-domed Byzantine church. The building had three apses from the east, in each of which there was a separate altar table. A small chapel with the grave of a prominent Christian missionary is attached to the south. From the lead seals found in the administrative center of Perperikon, the names of three bishops are known - Thomas, Constantine and Eustathius.

According to recent archaeological research, at the beginning of the XIII century the temple was destroyed by the knights of the Fourth Crusade. After that, it was briefly restored again, but during the Turkish invasion of the Balkans, it was turned into ruins. Life in the monastery subsided at the end of the 14th century. In 2000, the complex was restored.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

"STANKA DIMITROVA" ART GALLERY

Name of the object: Stanka Dimitrova Art Gallery.

Location: city of Kardzhali, street "Republicanska" №39.

Site description: Located in the old part of the city, near the market. It is housed in a separate two-story building and has in its fund a rich collection of paintings by old and contemporary Bulgarian artists. In the ground floor of the gallery (the crypt) many icons and Renaissance prints are presented.

Part of the building is still in its authentic form. It is one of the oldest cultural institutes in the city. The building was built in the middle of the 19th century for a Turkish guesthouse. At the end of 1885, Kardzhali became a district center and the building was used by the army, the police and the state administration.

At one time, it also housed the historical museum.

Access for people with disabilities: no



HERON COLONY

Site name: Heron colony.

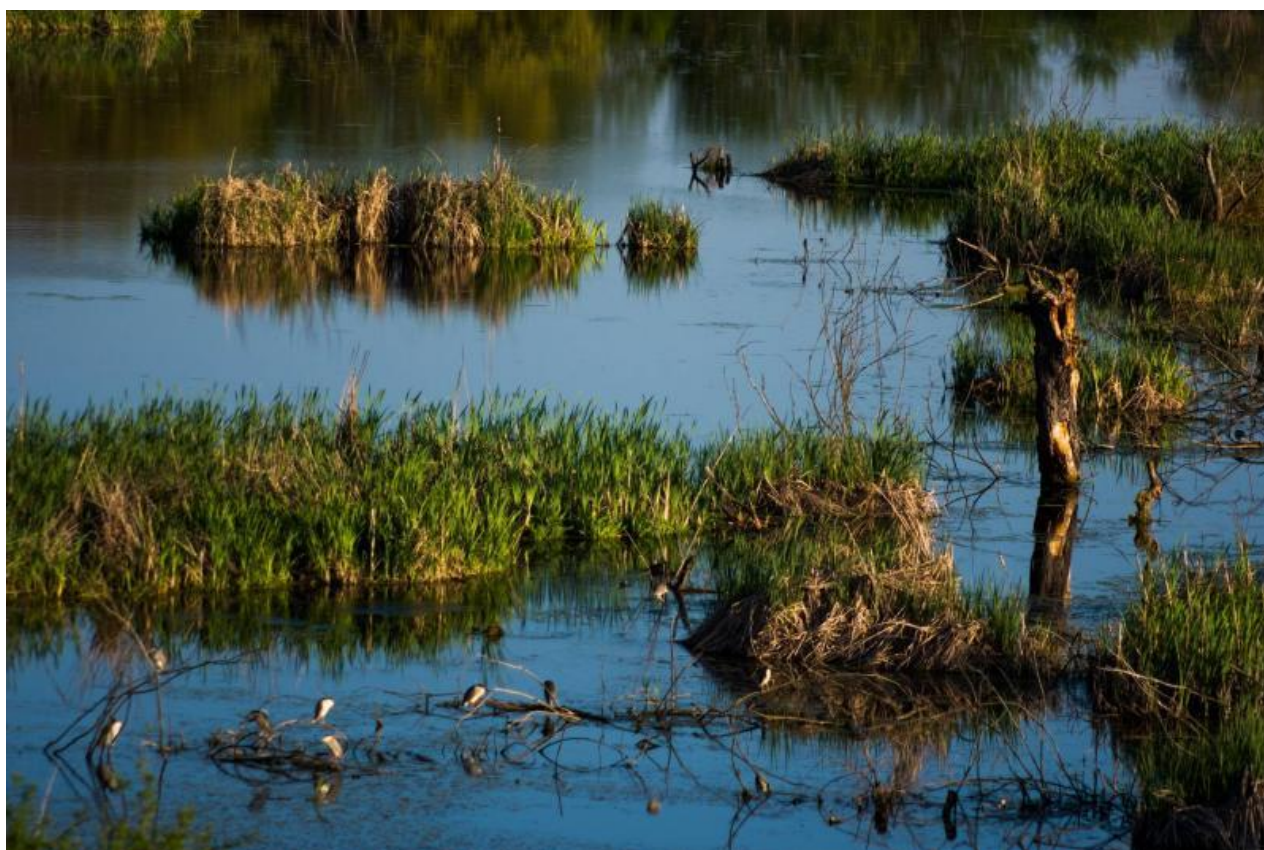
Location: city of Kardzhali, central part of the city.

Site Description: In Kardzhali, in the very center of the city, there is a unique heron colony, which is located in an old correction of the bed of the Arda river.

The mixed heron colony on the Arda River is the only one in our country nesting within the boundaries of a settlement. Little egret, night and crested heron, little water bull and little cormorant can be seen in it. All of them are protected under the law on biological diversity, and the little cormorant is also a globally endangered species, for which it is foreseen to bear responsibility under the criminal code in case of an attack against the species.

Other water-loving species protected by law also nest within the boundaries of the colony.

Access for people with disabilities: no



PROTECTED AREA "YUMRUK SKALA"

Site name: "Yumruk Skala" protected area.

Location: It is located in the land of Kaloyantsi village, Kardjali municipality.

Site Description: Declared a protected area in order to preserve the population of protected and endangered species of animals and plants, including black stork, Egyptian vulture, griffon vulture, goshawk, blue-tailed buzzard, black-nosed kestrel, peregrine falcon and etc.

The protected area has an area of 346 ha. The area is of extreme importance for the protection of avifauna.

Here is one of the nesting grounds of the griffon vultures, used intermittently over the years.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



KARDZHALI DAM

Name of the site: Kardzhali Dam.

Location: town of Kardzhali, about 3 km. northwest of the city.

Description of the site: Kardzhali dam is one of the three large dams, along with "Studen Kladenets" and "Ivaylovgrad", which accumulate the waters of the Arda River and its tributaries.

The dam wall is 3 km away. from the city of Kardzhali and was built in the period 1957-1963. It is concrete arc-gravity, rises 103.5 meters above the ground, and the total volume of the reservoir is 497.2 million cubic meters. In terms of size, it is in second place, and in terms of shape, construction and performance, it is the only one on the Balkan Peninsula.

Kardzhali Reservoir is an attractive tourist attraction. It forms beautiful bays and peninsulas, above which there are steep slopes dotted with bizarre rock formations.

Fishing here is a priority for anglers from all over the country. The waters of the Kardzhali reservoir are inhabited by American and Balkan trout, sturgeon, catfish, white fish, carp, grass carp, mullet, perch, redfin, uklei.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



VI. MUNICIPALITY OF MOMCHILGRAD

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

Momchilgrad Municipality is located in South Central Bulgaria (in the South Central Planning Region), Kardzhali District. The municipal center of Momchilgrad is located about 10 km south of the regional center of Kardjali. In the southern direction, about 35 km away, the municipality has a connection with the Republic of Greece, through the "Makaza-Nympheia" checkpoint. The territory of the municipality falls entirely within the scope of the Eastern Rhodopes, and with its total area of 358.12 sq. km, it is one of the medium-sized administrative-territorial units in the district. Its territory constitutes 11.16% of the area of the Kardzhali region, which places it in fourth place (out of a total of 7 municipalities) in terms of area within the region.

The municipalities it borders are Kardzhali, Krumovgrad, Kirkovo and Dzhebel.

Part of the Pan-European Transport Corridor No. 9 passes through the municipality, connecting Northern Europe with Alexandroupolis, Hellenic Republic.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
MOMCHILGRAD	358,1
Chernoochene	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Momchilgrad municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

The municipality of Momchilgrad has good conditions for vacation, informative cultural-historical, rural, ecological, hunting, fishing, sports, religious and ornithological tourism, which, with appropriate incentives, would make a significant contribution to popularizing the municipality as a desirable tourist destination.

Strengths and prerequisites for tourism development:

- The territory of the SSR falls under the scope of two tourist regions – Thracian (with main specialization in cultural and wine tourism) and Rhodope (with main specialization mountain and rural tourism).

- For the new programming period, efforts in the field of tourism should be directed towards creation of a regional product - winter sports, the dams - areas for recreation and sports, the magic of the Rhodope - route and alternative tourism, history in layers - the valley of the Thracian kings, the

memory of Apriltsi, the Kardzhali "Holy Forest", the charm of the rose, on the way of Bacchus - the wines of Thrace, traditions and customs - Rhodope sings, etc.

- Existence of protected territories and zones that enable the development of alternative and educational tourism;

- Recognizable natural attractions – Petrified Forest, Tatul, etc.

- Development of tourism based on the experience - rural, food, photo observations, etc.

- Preparation of common tourist packages and routes with neighboring municipalities.

- Development of the "Recreational and touristic functions" zone, which covers the area of the village of Ptichar, in which a recreational zone is provided for in the UMP of the Momchilgrad municipality. The village is in the mountains, with unique nature, a calm and quiet place, next to the Varbitsa river, close to the I-5 road and the railway line, which gives the opportunity for the development of tourism - small family hotels, guest houses with an authentic local look. They can attract tourists for recreation and relaxation amidst beautiful nature and fresh air. The zone also covers the area around the Thracian rock cult complex "Tatul", the Petrified Forest and the Thracian rock sanctuary Harman Kaya. The entire area has significant potential for the development of mountain, photo and other types of alternative tourism. Enriching the area with tourist eco-paths and signaling (signs) will help to attract an additional number of visitors.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

"TATUL" CULT COMPLEX

Name of the object: Cult complex "Tatul."

Location: It is located 15 km east of the town of Momchilgrad in the area of Asara near the village of Tatul, at an altitude of height 369 m. and GPS coordinates: 41°32'30" N and 25°32'44" E.

Description of the site: The exact dating of the megalithic monument is disputed, as materials from different eras are found. According to one of the hypotheses, it dates back to 6000 years ago - at the end of the Stone-Copper Age, i.e. older than the Egyptian pyramids.

Another of the scientific hypotheses is that it is a sanctuary of Orpheus, even the place where the mythical singer is buried. Of course, at the current stage of research, this cannot be proven. The fact is, however, that the site described is only part of a much larger cult complex that needs to be explored.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

THE PETRIFIED FOREST

Name of the site: The Petrified Forest, declared a protected site in the "natural landmark" category.

Location: Near the village of Raven, in a valley called "Gabuz Dere" by the local people.

Description of the site: The petrified forest is a unique natural phenomenon with about 20 trees petrified 30 million years ago. It occupies an area of 7.5 hectares. Most likely, millions of years ago there was an ancient forest from the Tertiary period, located on the coast of the sea. When strong volcanic activity began, the forest was buried and burned by the hot lava. The high temperature charred whole trees or parts of them. During the later stages of volcanic activity, waters flowed through these skeletons, carrying with them a flint substance, and filled the cavities, thus forming the petrified (silicified) trees.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



DAMBALA PEAK

Name of the site: Dambala Peak.

Location: Located about 8 km. northeast of the town of Momchilgrad, Kardjali municipality.

Description of the site: The name of the massif comes from the Turkish language "damla - drop". In the picturesque area, amidst a broad-leaved forest, abundant water flows along a high rock ridge. A fountain with several spouts is built at its foot. There is a belief that at midnight on May 5-6, the water acquires miraculous power and cures various diseases. There are legends about the healing properties of the water flowing from the rock at the top. However, these properties are manifested only on the night before St. George's Day on May 5-6.

Through Mount Dambala passes the most ancient road connecting the old Thracian city at Harman Kaya with the fortresses on the right bank of the Sutliika River and descends to the early Thracian sanctuary at Tatul, from where you reach the famous cold water at Sheitan Kypryu (Cold Well). Traces of mining can also be seen along this main road.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

THE BIG AND THE SMALL CANYON

Name of the site: The Big and the Small Canyon.

Location: They are located in the "Kazan Beyug" locality, near Vaz hamlet, Raven village, Momchilgrad municipality.

Description of the site: In the "Kazan Beyug" area rises a complex of interesting rock formations, located on the left bank of the Kazan Dere River, with a height of over 30 meters. There are numerous rock-cut structures in the area - passages, altars, grooves, gutters, trapezoidal niches, as well as a well-preserved tomb with a distinct groove for its closure. Ceramic fragments are found on the surface. The complex has a good visual connection with the sanctuary near the village of Tatul. No organized excavations have been carried out.

The river has formed 2 beautiful canyons, which the local population calls the Big and the Little Cauldron (Kyuchyuk Cauldron and Beyug Cauldron). At the approach to the rocks, the figure of a large stone giant stands out, resembling the figure of a man standing in post.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"STUDEN KLADENETS" GAME STATION

Name of the site: "Studen Kladenets" game breeding area.

Location: Near the "Studen Kladenets" dam.

Site description: The game breeding area occupies an area of 5186 hectares in an extremely beautiful landscape, in the area where the Nanovishka River flows into the Studen Kladenets Dam. It was created in 1957 with the first afforestation measures in the area, after the construction of the dam, with the main purpose of breeding and resettling partridges and partridges. In 1960, the first fallow deer were released on the farm, and to date they number over 1,000, coexisting with wild boars, roe deer, rabbits, capercaillie, etc. Mouflons were imported in 1976-1978.

The "Yumruk kaya" rock massif is located within the farm, where griffon, black and Egyptian vultures and rock eagles, which are protected throughout Europe, nest. There are 219 species of birds in the refuge area, of which 59 are in the Red Book of Bulgaria and 69 are included as protected under "Natura 2000".

Access for people with disabilities: yes



THE LAKE ALONGSIDE THE VILLAGE OF LETOVNIK

Name of the object: The lake near the village of Letovnik.

Location: Letovnik village, Momchilgrad municipality

Description: A corner of paradise where water lilies cover the surface of the lake near the village of Letovnik in Momchilgrad. There are only thirteen such in the world, and this is the only one in Bulgaria. The lake is known to local people as Sülyuklu göl /leeches' göl/. It is assumed that there were leeches in it, which the adults collected to treat ailments. The water was springing on the spot, but in the seventies of the last century the lake was expanded to an area of about three acres and they began to use it for irrigation.

Water lilies appeared in the lake about 20 years ago, but no one knows how they got here.

The lake is a tourist attraction for the area. Those who go up to Mount Dambala for the healing water there can stop by and enjoy the beauty of the water lilies. There is a road to the lake.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



ELMALA BABA TEKKE

Name of the site: Elmal Baba Tekke.

Location: The land of Bivoljane village, Momchilgrad municipality;

Site description: Elmal baba is a religious complex that consists of a turbe, a mosque, a religious house and adjacent buildings. It was built in the period 1362 - 1402. It is one of the most refined in the country - there is no analogue in Bulgaria. There are not one, but seven graves in Elmal Baba Teke. The tekke is divided into two - male and female. The male one is named after Saint Elmal Baba himself and there are 6 nameless graves in it. The female is of Fatima - the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and the wife of Hazrat Ali - the greatest saint of the Alevis. An inscription from the 17th century was found, which is supposed to belong to the son of Elmal Baba. According to the discovered tomb inscriptions, there was a Bektashi monastery here. Many dervishes lived there. A madrasah (school) was built next to the tekke, which existed until 1935.

Centuries ago, there was a Christian chapel in this place, where every traveler was welcomed, feasted and sheltered.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



“KEDIKCHAL” NATURAL PARK

Site name: "Kedikchal", nature park.

Location: Raven village, Kedika locality, Momchilgrad municipality.

Site description: "Kedikchal" is a nature park located in the village of Raven, about 7 km from Momchilgrad.

It is a complex of centuries-old oaks, represented by the scotch oak and hairy oak species, over 600 years old. Various species of protected birds are also found there, and various herbs and rare beautiful plants can be found in the park area.

These are the remains of the ancient forest that covered the territory of the Eastern Rhodopes and was described by the chroniclers as the Great Bulgarian Forest (Silva Magna Bulgarica).

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MUSEUM IN THE OPEN, VILLAGE OF BATKOVTSI

Name of the object: Open-air museum - Batkovtsi village.

Location: Batkovtsi village, Momchilgrad municipality

Description: The attraction is located about 17 km from Momchilgrad, on the road to Krumovgrad.

The flags of all European countries are placed, which fly all year round, and their coexistence with the old household items is in some miraculous harmony. In the same place are the cherry balls made by Hassan Sadak. Near them are arranged a plough, a cart and a darak, a saw for whipping boards, stone mortars for manual grinding of wheat, vessels for beating butter, which were used by the local people hundreds of years ago.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MOMCHIL YUNAK MONUMENT

Name of the object: Momchil Yunak Monument

Location: At the beginning of Momchilgrad.

Description: Momchil voivoda or Momchil yunak was a Bulgarian feudal ruler in the Rhodopes who lived in the 14th century. A warrior with an impressive physique, who led an independent policy in the complex situation in the Balkans at that time and died heroically on the battlefield against the Turkish invaders.

Momchil was born in the Rhodopes and has no noble background. Because of his imposing appearance, fighting spirit and arrogant politics, Momchil soon became a folk hero, protector of the Rhodopes, who rides a winged horse and wields a magic sword.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"BOROVETS" RESERVE

Site name: Borovets Reserve, declared a maintained reserve.

Location: It is located about 2 km from the village of Raven, Momchilgrad municipality.

Site description: This is a cherbor forest reserve - the easternmost cherbor plantation in our country. The total protected area is 360 decares.

The terrain of this reserve is highly rugged - with large slopes and many steepes. The exposure is too diverse - northern, northwestern, southern. Its average altitude is 400 m. The soil is cinnamon mountains with a clay-sandy mechanical composition. In addition to red pine, the tree composition also includes a significant amount of winter oak, less hornbeam and even less hornbeam. Single specimens of white pine are also found. Rose hips, sumac, blue juniper, etc. take part in the undergrowth. The reserve has rich grassy vegetation. The average age of pine trees is 130 years, and the oldest - 180.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



RIVER CANYON BY CHUKOVO VILLAGE (GULYAKA)

Name of the object: River canyon by Chukovo village (Gulyaka)

Location: Located near the village of Chukovo, Momchilgrad municipality.

Site description: The village of Chukovo is surrounded by many hills, painted in all colors. At the bottom of the Chukovska River, there is a rock canyon with an unknown depth and a waterfall, which give the settlement an exceptional color. However, the rock sanctuaries, rising high above the village, located on the very top, remain the most impressive.

Above the village of Chukovo there is a monolithic rock that resembles a huge figure of a lion lying on its right side. The figure even bears a resemblance to a clay animal statuette stored in the Historical Museum in Stara Zagora, dated to the Chalcolithic. The mysterious rocks also have carved trapezoidal niches on two levels.

From the mysterious rocks, an incredible panoramic view can be found.

Access for people with disabilities: no



ROCK NICHES NEAR NEOPHYT BOZVELIEVO

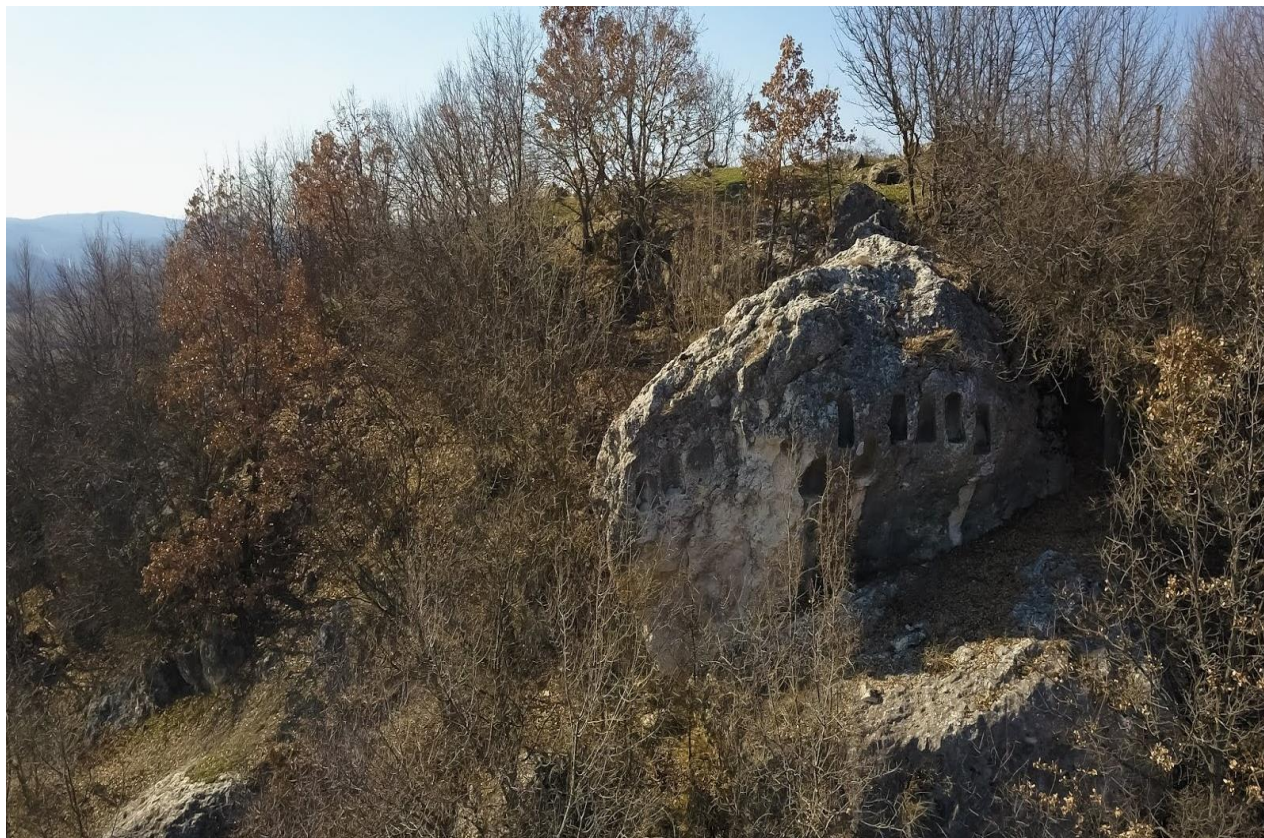
Site name: Rock niches.

Location: They are located near the village of Neofit Bozvelievo, mun. of Momchilgrad.

Site description: The niches are located on a prominent rock to the right of the road in the direction of the village of Lale. They are carved in an accessible place, in limestone, which is relatively rare. They are 11 in number, distributed over 2 levels. Among them there are also unfinished ones, which makes it possible to trace the way of cutting. Two of the niches are considerably larger than the others, and when you utter a sound there is a peculiar echo, as if the stone reflects back to you what you have said. Some call them "acoustic niches". On the hill immediately above the rocks with the niches there is a ruined sanctuary, the area is littered with ceramics.

Rock niches are also found in seven settlements in the municipality: Tatul village, Raven village, Bivolyane village, Chaika village, Drumche village, Obichnik village, Chukovo village near rock tombs and sanctuaries.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“ASARA” MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

Name of the site: Medieval fortress "Asara".

Location: It is located near a mine in the village of Zvezdel, on Mount Asara, 590 m above sea level. height

Site description: The site has GPS coordinates: 41°27'19" N.W. and 25°30'42" E.D.

The fortress was built in the 11th-12th centuries. It was built on a rock sanctuary with a rock tomb dating from the middle of the XIII century BC to the VIII-VII century BC. Hr. The fortress was guarded by two quadrangular towers, from the north and south it was surrounded by a wooden palisade. To the east was one of the two quartered towers, it defended the gate of the fortress. Almost all the walls of the fortress were made of wood, which is rare in our lands. The connection between the two towers is made through a rock passage. In one of the towers there was also a chapel, the remains of the frescoes of which were found. The fortification served to protect the mine where gold and silver were mined. It is assumed that the fortress was captured during the Bulgarian-Byzantine wars of 1205-1207.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

THE OLD MOSQUE IN MOMCILGRAD

Site Name: The Old Mosque.

Location: Momchilgrad.

Site description: The mosque is located in the town of Momchilgrad and was built in the 17th century.

In 2004, a complete renovation was carried out, which gave it a new look and typical Islamic architectural features.

It has original architecture – the only mosque in the region with two old, elegant minarets.

A working temple.

Access for people with disabilities: no



HARMAN KAYA SANCTUARY

Name of the object: Harman kaya.

Location: It is located on the land of Bivolane village, Momchilgrad municipality.

Description of the site: Harman kaya is a rock-hewn sanctuary that developed on a low plateau around a natural small cave with a depth of 7 m. In front of it on the surface of the terrain there is a large accumulation of ceramic fragments, the earliest of which refers to the Late Eneolithic era, and the latest is from the 1st-2nd century AD.

Numerous sacrificial pits, altars, and room foundations are located in the area of the outer sacred space. Beds for wooden structures, as well as trapezoidal niches and sacrificial altars, can be seen carved into the surrounding cliffs.

At the foot of Harman Kaya are the remains of a large Thracian city, in which, apart from the outlines of the premises, the streets and squares are clearly visible. The masonry is without mortar, and the uncovered pottery dates back to the 6th-1st centuries BC.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"ST. BORIS – MICHAEL I" CHURCH

Name of the object: "St. Boris - Michael I" Church.

Location: Momchilgrad.

Description of the object: The church "Saint Tsar Boris - Michael I" is located in the center of the town of Momchilgrad. It was built in 1938 on the site of a small wooden chapel. It is a one-nave basilica bearing the name of the canonized Tsar Boris I. As a cultural monument, the temple was mainly restored and consecrated after a three-year renovation on the temple holiday of May 2 in 2009.

The church is famous for its unique wood carving of the iconostasis and the bishop's throne, which are made of wood. The wood sculpture belongs to the Devar school. To the church in 1970. Kostnica was built in memory of those who died during the Russo-Turkish War and the Balkan Wars.

The complex is complemented by a monument to Gen. Nikola Genev – commander of the Kardzhali detachment during the Balkan Wars.

Access for people with disabilities: no



This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.

VII. MUNICIPALITY OF CHERNOOCHENE

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION.

Chernoochene municipality is located in the South Central region, in the northwestern part of the Kardzhali region. The territory of the municipality is 327.1 km², which represents 10.2% of the territory of Kardzhali region.

Its borders are as follows: To the south it borders the municipalities of Kardjali and Ardino; In its western and northern part, the municipality has common borders with Banite municipality from Smolyan district and with Asenovgrad and Parvomai municipalities from Plovdiv district; To the north-northeast it borders the municipalities of Haskovo and Mineralni Bani from Haskovo district.

The territory of Chernoochene municipality is formed by the lands of 50 settlements, with no urban center. The population as of 31.12.2019 amounted to 8,772 people. The municipal center is the village of Chernoochene. The territory of the municipality is sparsely populated - 32 people per km². The first-class road I-5 Stara Zagora–Haskovo–Kardjali passes through the territory of the municipality, in a north-south direction, which is part of ETC No. 9 Helsinki–Dimitrovgrad–Alexandropolis.

Table 1. Area of municipalities in Kardzhali region (sq. km.)

Area / District / Municipality	Area (sq. км ²)
Southern Central Region	22 365,1
District Kardzhai	3 209,1
Ardino	338,8
Dzhebel	229,1
Kirkovo	537,9
Krumovgrad	843,3
Kardzhali	574,7
Momchilgrad	358,1
CHERNOOCHENE	327,1

Source: NSI

Figure 1. Location of Chernoochene municipality in Kardzhali region



2. TOURISM.

The territory of the municipality has been inhabited since the Stone-Copper Age /3500 years BC/. Many megalithic monuments associated with the Thracian civilization have been discovered. These are mainly rock niches, rock tombs and wine cellars. Of greater interest among them are the rock tomb in the area of Guzugun Kaya /Burning Kamak/ 3 kilometers east of the village of Dushka, and the niches near the village of Bezvodno. During archaeological excavations in the "Gradiste" locality, located 10 kilometers from Chernoochene, numerous cult objects and tools of labor made of bone, ceramics and metal were discovered. A unique collection of 57 clay and marble idols was also discovered here. In this area, archaeologists also found a copper sculpture of a Thracian horseman. The analysis of the cultural-historical heritage indicates that in the urbanized borders of five of the settlements (the villages of Beli Vir, Svobodinovo, Komuniga, Pchelarovo and Voynovo), immovable cultural values have been registered. Outside the urbanized territories, a concentration of cultural and

historical heritage is registered in the lands of 12 villages - Bezvodno, Srednevo, Chernoochene, Dushka, Gabrovo, Zhenda, Zhitnitsa, Nochevo, Pchelarovo, Petelovo, Sokolite and Voinovo.

Most of the monuments of cultural and historical heritage in the municipality of Chernoochene are archaeological, being located in relatively separate territorial zones:

- Northwest of the villages of Nochevo and Dushka;
- Northeast in the lands of the villages of Pchelarovo and Petelovo;
- The central zone – to the south of the village of Komuniga;
- in the lands of the village of Cherna Niva to Zhitnitsa;
- In the lands of the village of Zhenda and the village of Bezvodno.

There are many isolated objects scattered around and in the settlements - Gabrovo, Chernoochene, Minzuhar, etc.

The main weaknesses in the field of cultural and historical heritage can be summarized as follows:

- There is a lack of categorization in accordance with the Civil Code, as well as requirements for the regimes of the territories.
- There is a lack of accurate up-to-date cadastral and geodetic data for site boundaries, security zones, etc.;
- The objects are not fully studied, socialized and popularized.

In terms of urban heritage elements, the available cultural landscapes with natural and anthropogenic traces included can be defined as evolving and associative. The combination of natural and cultural values presents an integral and diverse picture - a basis for education, research, conservation and tourism. The available cultural landscapes are still not effectively "exploited", and this requires their purposeful identification, development and management.

3. MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

“HAZAR KAYA” THRACIAN FORTRESS AND SANCTUARY

Site name: Thracian fortress and sanctuary in the "Hazar Kaya" area, an archaeological landmark.

Location: Chernoochene municipality, Zhenda village, longitude: 25.18°; latitude 41.76°.

Description of the site: In the locality "Hazar Kaya" ("Buyuk Tepe"), about 1.6 kilometers south of the village of Zhenda, there are remains of a Thracian fortress and a sanctuary. The fortress was located on a high rock terrace, built of piled stones without mortar. The fortification was naturally protected by sheer cliffs, and from its most accessible part (southwest) it was protected by a stone wall. Excavations such as trapezoidal niches, gutters, grooves, semicircles, etc. were found on the rock on which the fortress was located.

The place offers an exceptional view of the region.

Access for people with disabilities: no



"BLACK PINE" CENTURY-OLD TREE

Name of the site: A century-old black pine tree, declared a protected site.

Location: Pchelarovo village, Chernoochene municipality.

Description of the object: The tree is located in the immediate vicinity of the church in the village of Pchelarovo. It was declared a protected site in 1984.

It is 25 m high and the circumference of the trunk is 3.50 m. The top is broken. Age at the date of announcement – 500 years.

About 30 years ago there were 2 trees, but a thunderbolt destroyed one of them.

The site is by the road, suitable for visiting.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



"DZHENDA" GAME HUNTING LAND

Name of the object: "Dzhenda" Game Hunting Land.

Location: The land of Dzhenda village, Chernoochene municipality.

Site description: "Dzhenda" GHL is located on an area of 21489 ha, it covers two forest complexes, located on two different mountain massifs. The relief of the western is typically mountainous, with distinct, steep ridges, deep and incised ravines, steep and cut slopes. The eastern complex has rounded shapes, spilled bela and poorly defined valleys. There are 1 reserve and 3 natural attractions on the territory.

The hunting farm is inhabited by deer, roe deer, mouflon, wild boar, rabbit, wolf, jackal, fox. There are also protected species such as bear, weasel, wild cat, otter. Of the birds inhabiting the farm, there are also protected species such as the great hawk, the little hawk, the common buzzard, the owl, the cuckoo, the short-eared owl, the woodpecker, the gray crow, the magpie.

2 hunting lodges have been built on the territory of the farm - "Dzhenda" and "Bolartsi".

Access for people with disabilities: yes



“DZHENDA” (KAZAL CHARPA) RESERVE.

Name of the object: "Dzhenda" Reserve.

Location: The land of Dzhenda village, Chernoochene municipality (coordinates: 41°47'17"N 25°11'11"E)

Description of the site: It is a black pine forest, remnants of a once rich vegetation, surrounded by a coppice oak forest that extends beyond the reserve. Only the pine plantations in the reserve cover an area of 39.9 ha. The terrain of this forest is very diverse - from gently sloping to steep, mainly with east, north-east and partly south-east exposure. The altitude varies from 700 to 850 meters. The soil is cinnamon forest with clay-sandy mechanical composition. The oldest trees cover an area of about 100 decares. Today they are 150 to 300 years old, with the largest being 25 meters high.

The territory of the reserve is a suitable place for recreation and ecotourism.

Access for people with disabilities: no



SAINT PARASKEVA CHURCH

Site name: Saint Paraskeva Church, cultural monument.

Location: Pchelarovo village, Chernoochene Municipality.

Site description: The church is popular among the population as "Sveta Petka". Architecturally, two construction periods stand out - from 1886 and 1893.

In the royal order there are 6 icons, arranged according to canon. The Apostolic Order has 20 icons. The iconostasis, the icons, the bishop's throne and the church utensils are typical for small rural churches.

The construction of the bell tower is original – a 6-wall dome with a cross on round columns.

There is an old cell school near the church. Near the church there is a large fountain, and next to it - traces of a small chapel.

Access for people with disabilities: yes



MEDIEVAL FORTRESS IN GRADISHTE AREA

Name of the site: Medieval fortress (Gradisheto), archaeological landmark, cultural monument of local importance.

Location: Chernoochene municipality, Pchelarovo village (long.: 25.37°, lat.: 41.81°).

Description of the site: About 4 km from the village of Pchelarovo, in the area of Gradishteto (to the right of the road to the town of Haskovo), the remains of a fortress were discovered. The structure is dated to the Middle Ages, but archaeological investigations of the site reveal that it was built on the foundations of a much older cultural layer - dated to 3500 BC.

The fortress next to the village of Pchelarovo is in the shape of an ellipse with diameters of 75 and 22 meters. It is located on a low but dominating hill. The western and southern parts of the fortification are steep and naturally protected by sheer cliffs. The northern side was the most accessible. A protective wall was built there, which was 32 meters long and 1.2 - 1.5 meters thick, built of rough-hewn river stones.

Access for people with disabilities: no



“PARMAK KAYA” THRACIAN CULT COMPLEX

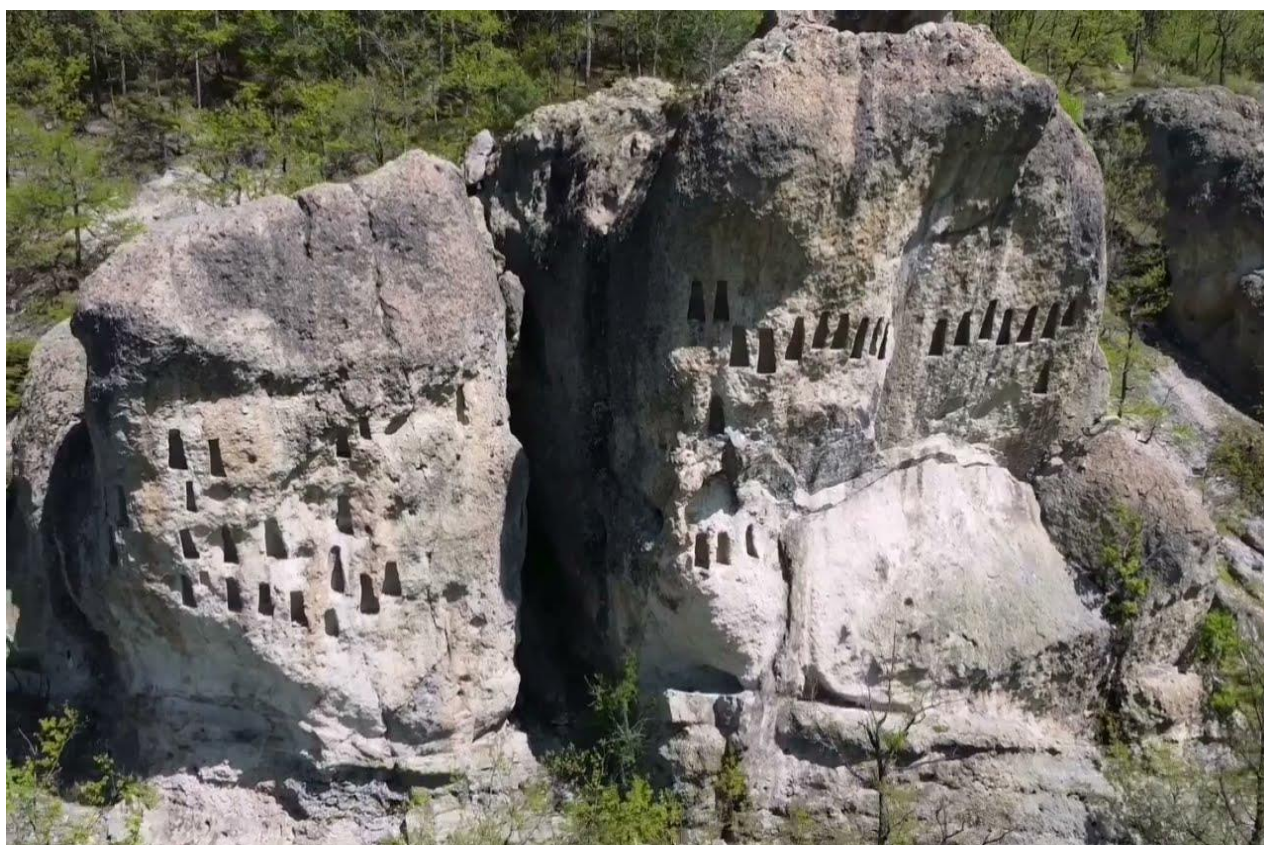
Site name: Thracian cult complex "Parmak Kaya", archaeological landmark.

Location: Chernoochene municipality, east of the village of Nochevo, "Parmak Kaya" locality (The finger-shaped rock); longitude: 25.20°, longitude: 41.87°.

Description of the site: In the "Parmak Kaya" locality, over a fairly large area in the pine forest, there are scattered many prominent rocks with various ancient carvings in them. The well-preserved trapezoidal rock niches, as well as several arched dry caves, make an impression. The view of the river valley is outstanding.

The second cave is in the next rock complex and is called "Kodja in" (Big Cave), and the area around it also has a lot of ancient structures and excavations. The local population has given different names to each prominent rock group (Aries, Blind Head, Rug, etc.).

Access for people with disabilities: no



OLAN KAYA (THE OLAN ROCK)

Name of the object: Rock phenomenon Olan kaya

Location: Murga village, Chernoochene municipality.

Site description: Olan Kaya is among the most impressive Rhodope rock phenomena. It is hidden in the bosom of the mountain under the Eastern Rhodope village of Murga and is ten kilometers away on a dirt road dug in many places by torrents and difficult to pass even by jeeps.

Olan Kaya is almost 40m tall and from a distance looks like a baseball bat stuck in the ground with its thin end, on the steep slopes of a deep ravine. At first, only the tip of the "bat" is visible, and each subsequent step up reveals more and more. Gradually, a stone rocket appears before your eyes, aimed fearfully at the sky, which looks different on all sides.

On the side opposite Karaman dere, black storks build their large nest every year.

Access for people with disabilities: no



VIII. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

1. A DEFINITION OF ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Drawing on one of the key publications in the field, “Accessible Tourism: Concepts and issues”, the following definition of accessible tourism is given: **“Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition adopts a whole of life approach where people through their lifespan benefit from accessible tourism provision. These include people with permanent and temporary disabilities, seniors, obese, families with young children and those working in safer and more socially sustainably designed environments.”** (Buhalis, & Darcy, 2011).

Key to this definition is the premise that accessible tourism is part of collaborative processes that understand the heterogeneity of access requirements informed by people’s different embodiments (health and functional abilities), and where the creation of enabling environments through universal design is essential to the achievement of tourism services that are accessible for all.

2. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN EUROPE.

“Accessible Tourism has been recently brought to the forefront of the agenda for sustainable tourism development, as numerous research reports took notice of the spike in demand for accessibility. This tendency is supported by the statistics related to the growing number of people with disabilities and growing ageing population in Europe and among inbound travellers to European destinations. Existing research proves that people with disabilities and other access needs, including elderly people, pregnant women and families with children, tend to travel just as much as people without specific access requirements (ONCE Foundation, 2016).”

It was also noted that:

- One billion people or 15% of the world population live with some form of disability (WHO, 2021);

- People with disabilities or other access needs, including older people, pregnant women and families with children, tend to travel just as much as people without specific access requirements (ONCE Foundation, 2016);

- However, the supply of tourism products and services is extremely low. Only about 15% of all tourist services promoted their offers as being accessible for persons with disabilities or older persons in 2020. (European Commission Report on Supply and Performance Check of Accessible Tourism Services in Europe, 2020);

- People with disabilities and older people show a high demand for nature-based leisure activities. However, accessibility in natural and rural areas (NRAs), presents a challenge. Even at well-equipped accessible tourist destinations, attractions and recreation opportunities are often inaccessible (European Commission Report on Economic Impact and Travel patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe, 2020);

The European tourism sector is dominated by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Managers of tourism SMEs tend to lack awareness of the access needs of their customers and have insufficient skills in developing and implementing innovative, sustainable solutions, which could help them increase their market share by seizing the opportunities offered by the growing market of accessible tourism.

This is particularly true for Natural and Rural Areas (NRAs), where professional development and training opportunities are limited (Mapping and performance check of the supply of tourism education and training, EC, 2016).

Yet, it is widely recognized that dynamic, forward thinking entrepreneurs, who understand their customer base and apply innovative solutions could improve tourism offers towards increased accessibility (see: European Commission studies cited above and Research Study for European Parliament Transport and Tourism Committee, 2018). Tourism accessibility in NRAs is a challenge in all partners' countries. Accessibility education is not mainstreamed in VET programmes in the field of tourism, and related professional development opportunities for tourism SMEs are only occasionally offered.

Only in one EU Member State – Portugal – is Accessible Tourism an obligatory subject in the national curriculum for tourism management and hospitality VET. (EU Parliament TRAN Committee, 2018).

3. ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING IN THE TOURISM SECTOR.

Despite the growing demand for accessible tourism services, so far relatively little attention has been paid to the need for education and training of management and staff in the tourism sector, in matters concerning quality of service and how to welcome guests with access needs.

Employment in the tourism sector is typically sensitive to seasonal demand and economic factors. Employees therefore need professional qualifications that are recognised and “portable” across national boundaries, and here accessible tourism qualifications should also be included.

Tourism training programmes can play a vital role in preparing managers and employees to deliver their services in appropriate ways, respecting not only the diversity of customers’ access needs but also specific requirements related to disabilities or long-term health conditions.

With suitable training, front-line staff can make disabled and senior guests feel welcome and, in some situations, even overcome some of the physical and functional barriers that are still present in older buildings and environments. Accessible tourism training can help to change attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities are persistently facing from staff in the tourism sector. Such attitudes are largely due to lack of knowledge and consequent misunderstandings. When properly performed, accessibility training gives staff the necessary knowledge, competences and skills to cope with diverse situations and customer needs. With greater confidence, managers and front-line personnel are able to handle situations, which could otherwise be seen as difficult or threatening.

Currently, Europe lacks a tradition or widespread practice of training in accessible tourism skills. Where there is some take-up of such training it has been largely due to short-term initiatives such as EU-funded projects and national programmes for Human Resource Development.

The aims of such projects have been quite varied but many seem to have difficulties in achieving wider impact, especially beyond their original partnership or geographical boundaries, and most projects have failed to achieve long-term continuity (EC Study, Training Skills needs for Accessible Tourism, 2020) . Greater efforts are needed across the tourism training sector in order to embed accessible tourism training in VET and university curricula, providing recognised qualifications for tourism managers and front-line staff.

From the visitor perspective, tourists with specific access requirements can experience difficulties at any point in their journey, from the earliest stages of seeking information (through internet websites or traditional media), to booking, travelling, using various modes of transport, in

accommodations, and at attractions such as cultural venues. There are many access barriers in existing offers, in restaurants and cafes, when shopping or attending a business meeting or conference, when passing through urban areas or natural landscapes, simply finding and using a public toilet, and returning safely home again.

It is therefore essential that persons who are employed in any part of the tourism value chain can understand these barriers in the “Visitor Journey”. They must be trained to acquire certain skills so that they can assist and cater for all visitors with equal attention, respect and support, when required.

4. EU POLICIES AND LEGISLATION.

The tourism sector is made up of a diverse range of actors and stakeholders, with primary providers, secondary suppliers and tertiary operators who may all benefit from tourism in businesses and at destinations.

Tourism businesses are regulated and licenced by national and regional governments and city authorities to ensure that suitable levels of quality are achieved, with health, fire safety and constructional and electro-technical safety standards being of utmost importance.

In Europe, accessibility is regulated through legal requirements regarding the nondiscrimination of persons with disabilities - ensuring their equal access to goods and services, and through building regulations and standards, which are applied at national and regional levels, and also at local level in some jurisdictions.

All EU Member States have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which was also signed by the European Commission on behalf of the EU as a whole in 2014.

The UNCRPD obliges signatories (“States Parties”) to enact provisions in their national legislation to ensure, amongst other things, **equal opportunities to participate in “...tourism, leisure and sport”** (UNCRPD, Article 30). This makes the UNCRPD the first international treaty to guarantee everyone the right to enjoy tourism.

5. EU INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF ACCESSIBLE TOURISM.

While the European Union has taken several initiatives in support of accessibility in tourism over more than two decades, activities have intensified in this area in more recent years.

This document has been prepared within the framework of project ref. No 2055 „Pathways of Accessible Heritage Tourism” /Access2Heritage/, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme.



Following the signing of the UNCRPD, the European Commission and member states have carried out various initiatives to promote actions in favour of accessible tourism or “Tourism for All”. Under the Lisbon Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (2007), the European Commission received powers to share information and coordinate actions in favour of tourism. However, the EU Member States retained the right to make their own policies in the tourism area. This has had the effect of limiting EU Commission and EU Parliament actions on accessible tourism, to some extent, since no primary EU legislation can be developed on tourism matters.

In 2006 the EU Commission initiated a series of awards under the name “EDEN Destinations” (European Destinations of Excellence), which reward, especially, rural destinations. The key feature of the selected destinations is their commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism. The recipients of the award are emerging, littleknown destinations located in EU countries and candidate countries. The EDEN initiative helps to spread the sustainable practices used in the awarded destinations across the EU. In 2013, the theme of Accessible Tourism was chosen and 19 destinations won EDEN awards for their accessible and sustainable tourism achievements. Five main aspects of accessibility were taken into consideration. The winners had to demonstrate that their destination:

- is barrier-free (infrastructure and facilities);
- is accessible by transport means suitable for all users;
- has high quality services provided by trained staff;
- has activities, exhibits, attractions in which everyone can participate;
- has marketing, booking systems, web sites and other information services which are accessible to all.

In addition, destinations also had to fulfil the general criteria of EDEN destinations. They had to demonstrate that they:

- are „non-traditional”, with a low number of visitors (in comparison with the national average);
- manage their own tourism offer in a way that ensures social, cultural and environmental sustainability;
- are managed by a partnership between the public authorities and all those involved in tourism in and around the area;

- are preparing or have in place a marketing management structure and a defined strategy for sustainable tourism development.

Through a decision of the European Parliament, three studies on accessible tourism were commissioned by the EU Commission. These studies, carried out in 2014 and 2015 examined the demand, supply, performance levels and skills requirements for accessible tourism, showing that this sector had a very large growth potential, yet was hindered by the lack of skills and training in the sector and by an insufficient level of service provision.

To encourage accessible tourism initiatives around Europe, EU funding was made available through the COSME Programme, to enable project teams of public, private and NGO organisations to develop accessible itineraries, senior tourism, actions to extend the tourism season and the development of accessible destination networks.

Yet there is still persistent market failure in many parts of the tourism sector with regard to accessibility. The majority of tourism enterprises, (as many as 90% according to the EU study in 2015) do not promote accessibility in their marketing, although there is a strong and growing demand from those who need accessible services and facilities. Thus, the actual supply of accessible tourism offers lags far behind the demand. Customers with access needs are underserved and are left with fewer choices of where to travel and what they can do on holiday, both in their own countries and abroad.

6. DEMAND AND SUPPLY FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN EUROPE

As shown in this section, there is scope for the tourism industry to make significant economic gains if the potential target of tourists with specific access requirements is offered the appropriate and comfortable conditions to enable them to travel.

From the results of market studies at national and EU / international levels, in various countries, it is clear that the market potential, represented by older travellers and people with disabilities, in particular (but not only these), shows estimates of increasing economic value, with significant impact on the tourism sector if the supply of accessible services is increased to meet the projected demand. (European Commission, 2020).

According to the World Health Organization, (World Report on Disability, 2019), there are approximately 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world. This equates to approximately 15% of the world population having a physical, mental or sensory disability.

Based on evidence gathered by the WHO and World Bank there is a high correlation between ageing and disability. Older people (over 65 years) who may not be considered “disabled” very often have similar difficulties in carrying out daily activities. Therefore, they are usually included among those who have specific access requirements, thus greatly increasing their number.

They represent a significant potential source of tourism business, which can benefit host countries and destinations if they take the necessary steps to improve their accessibility.

This significant potential becomes more evident if we consider that a rapid ageing of the population is under way. In 2019, there were 650 million people aged 65 or over in the world, comprising 10% of the global population. Their number is projected to increase more than 60% in just 15 years: in 2030, there will be about 1 billion older people globally, equivalent to 12.0 % of the total population.

The share of the older population will continue to grow in the following 20 years: by 2050, there will be 1.6 billion people aged 65 or over worldwide, representing 16.7 percent of the total world population.

Due to the ageing population, the number of people with specific access requirements with the capacity to travel is increasing, boosting the demand for an accessible environment, transport and services and, therefore, bringing benefits to the tourism sector. Much of the senior population, in fact, has significant income and the desire to travel, both in their home countries and abroad, and their expenditure tends to be higher than that of tourists in general. Many people with disabilities and retired people have the possibility of travelling throughout the year, which helps to reduce the seasonality of demand experienced by many destinations.

The numerical importance of people with specific access requirements for the tourism sector has been confirmed by the results of a study on Accessible Tourism Demand that the European Commission had commissioned in order to provide a coherent picture of the current and future potential demand of accessible tourism in Europe and to estimate its economic impact (Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe – GFK and Partners, 2020).

According to this study, in 2019 there were 138.6 million people with access requirements in the EU (around 27% of total population), of which 35.9% were people with disabilities aged 15-64, and 64.1% were the older population aged 65 or above.

In 2019, people with access requirements in the EU took approximately 783 million trips, thus generating a total gross value-added contribution of about €365 billion and a total employment of about 8.7 million persons.

Driven by the ageing population, which in Europe, Japan and other industrialised economies is much higher than in developing nations, the study projected that demand would grow by 15% to about 885 million trips per year by 2023, equivalent to an average growth rate of 2% annually.

However, the study pointed out that the overall potential is far greater: if it would be possible to increase the accessibility of tourism-related facilities significantly, then up to 1.231 million trips per year could be realized, equivalent to a growth of 43.6%. If accessibility is significantly improved, the total economic contribution generated by the EU tourists with specific access requirements is expected to increase against the current contribution by roughly 36%.

Moreover, like most of the people, persons with specific access requirements rarely travel alone; on the contrary, they usually prefer or need to travel with relatives or friends. According to the previous study, on average, people with specific access requirements in the EU travel with about 1.9 companions. Therefore, if we consider this, the economic contribution of Accessible Tourism will be amplified by a similar scale if the travel companion effect is taken into account.

The GfK study also emphasised that tourists with specific access requirements and older people do not form a homogeneous group. Concerning their travel motivation, they do not significantly differ from other travellers. However, some special requirements have to be taken into account: the preparation of a journey plays a very important role for this group. Most important are the recommendations from relatives and friends as well as their own travel experiences. Although brochures and other print media are still very important, it is clear enough that the Internet with its numerous research opportunities is a very important source of information.

Many tourists with disabilities and older guests as well as families with children look for specific information of accessible conditions that are important to them. Thus, the lack of such information is considered to be a great barrier. In particular, families with children want more detailed information about the accessibility of their resort, their hotel, or recreational facility. For all groups, it is important that such information can be found in the standard media and not only in special-interest media.

For many travellers, the lack of awareness and knowledge among service personnel about the needs of guests with access requirements is a frequently cited problem. This applies widely across the tourism sector. Insufficient availability of accessible offers, services and lack of physical accessibility are equally important barriers.

A tourist destination is an integrated system of attractions and services, or better still, a set of resources that attract and induce the traveller to make the necessary efforts to go and stay there.

Clearly, the supply of accessible tourism services must be adequate in terms of the quality provided by individual suppliers as well as being sufficient for the rising demand, in order to have a well-functioning marketplace which accommodates all user requirements.

In 2014 the European Commission contracted a team of researchers, including ENAT members across Europe to make a study entitled: “Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of Accessible Tourism Services in Europe”.

As part of this extensive study, the websites of European tourism service providers were scanned and analysed to establish the amount and types of information available concerning accessible tourism offers. Three types of information were collected:

- Membership of existing accessibility information schemes (AIS). These schemes bring together large numbers of suppliers with accessible services and they make information about those services available to travellers with specific access requirements;
- Individual registrations of suppliers that claim to provide accessible services / facilities, gathered via the web tool Pantou.org which was specifically designed for this study;
- Suppliers and services collected from identified third-party sources offering accessibility information of tourist venues. These sources are: hotels.com which is an affiliate of Expedia, Inc., handistrict.com, an online database developed by the French firm Kernix and several other AISs and national or regional tourism online services.

This large-scale survey provided, for the first time, an overview of the existing stock of accessible tourism services offered in Europe, compared with the overall supply of tourism services.

It has been estimated that about 3.5 million enterprises were active in the EU tourism industry in 2014. These enterprises accounted for 14 % of the persons employed in the non-financial

business economy and 32 % of persons employed in the services sector. In addition, more than one in two enterprises in the tourism industries operated in the accommodation or food and beverage serving sector.

The mapping exercise conducted as part of this study revealed 313,286 accessible tourism services across the EU Member States (EU-28). Existing Accessibility Information Schemes list 224,036 accessible facilities and services.

The study found that accessible tourism services constitute approximately 9.2% of the overall supply of tourism services.

While this study had focused on the supply of accessible services, the potential demand for such services has been estimated in a parallel study whose main figures have been reported above.

Taking these estimates as a starting point suggests that demand for accessible services may be as high as 37% of the total travel market, estimated in the number of trips.

Contrasting this figure with the estimated supply of 9.2% of services catering to tourists with access requirements suggests that today there is a significant gap in the supply of accessible services of 27.8 percentage points.

Furthermore, it is likely that the gap between the provision of accessible services and demand for such services will increase further over the coming years. According to the parallel demand study, expected future demand for accessible services would be at least 29.2% higher in 2023 than it was in 2014. In the absence of any changes in the supply of accessible services at least an additional 1.2 million tourism enterprises will need to provide accessible services to meet future demand.

It is necessary to understand that each element of the tourism chain influences and depends on the others: if one of the elements is weak, in terms of the quality and the experience offered to the customer, the holiday can be strongly compromised as a whole. The accessible supply chain must also be “joined up” so that tourists can experience a series of trouble-free services throughout their journey, as they pass between the different venues they visit.

A hotel without barriers but located in a site where there are no recreational and cultural facilities accessible to people with specific access requirements, would not be assured of attracting customers with specific access requirements, however good the quality of its accessibility and usability. The same would apply to an accessible museum or monument that can’t be reached by

suitable means of transport or hasn't nearby adequate accommodation facilities for customers with specific access requirements.

Destinations should therefore create a comprehensive supply of Tourism for All products and services in which all the elements of the supply chain (reservation systems, accommodation, transport, etc.) are easily accessed.

It should be noted that a tourism destination that adequately caters for the needs of visitors with specific access requirements leads to improved quality of service and ensures a good experience not only for them but also for all the other visitors and improves the quality of the daily life of the local population.

Finally, it is important to remember that any tourists can have access requirements; they do not form a homogeneous group and they do not constitute a separate market segment, but they belong to different segments. For example, regarding travel motivations, as any other tourist, among those with specific access requirements are those who travel for cultural reasons, those who want to practice a sport, those who look for relaxing and calm holidays and those who seek fun and exciting experiences, and so on.

They only share the need to find tourism offers that cater for the access requirement they have and that derive from their personal conditions, which can differ from one to another depending on their personal permanent or temporary difficulties. And, above all, they require trained staff who understand their needs and know how to relate to them properly.