

## COVER PAGE

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# Interreg



EUROPEAN UNION

## Greece-Bulgaria

### INTEGRA\_TOUR

European Regional Development Fund

## RESEARCH AND DISCLOSURE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR ATTRACTION RELATED TO TOURISM CULTURAL AND NATURAL SITES ON THE TERRITORY OF CHEPELARE MUNICIPALITY



Presentation of opportunities for  
promotion of the explored tourist cultural  
and natural objects on the territory of  
Chepelare municipality

This research has been created within the framework of the Project "Integrated Tourism Approach For the Development of Cultural and Natural Sites in Chepelare, Bg and Prosotsani, Gr" (INTEGRA\_TOUR), financed under the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Program "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020", Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.01/31.08.2017. The Project is 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 contents of this document are sole responsibility of the Municipality of Chepelare and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the participating countries the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat.

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## RESEARCH AND DISCLOSURE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR ATTRACTION RELATED TO TOURISM CULTURAL AND NATURAL SITES ON THE TERRITORY OF CHEPELARE MUNICIPALITY

### Introduction

Chepelare Municipality is located in the Central Rhodope Mountains, in the upper reaches of the Chepelare River. The territory of the municipality is 375 sq. Km. or 11.74% of the territory of Smolyan region. Chepelare municipality borders on the east with the municipality of Lucky, to the west with the municipality of Devin, to the north and northeast with the municipalities of Rodopi and Asenovgrad, and to the south with the municipality of Smolyan.

The terrain of the municipality has a typical mountain character. The highest point of the territory is Persenk Peak - 2091m. The average altitude is 1200 m.

It is 230 km from Sofia, 80 km from Plovdiv and 22 km from Smolyan. The municipality covers 12 settlements. Its territory is part of the resort Pamporovo.

The municipality is becoming a preferred tourist destination for winter sports in Bulgaria and the Balkans. The beautiful nature, the modern hotel base and the ever-increasing opportunities for recreation and entertainment attract more and more tourists from Europe and the world.

The necessity to conduct a tourist market research is imposed by many factors - both external and internal. Such a strategic document, on the one hand, will help Chepelare Municipality to pursue sustainable policies and practices in the management of the economy of tourism and on the other hand will contribute to the development of a prosperous local tourism industry.

The **external factors** implying a strategic approach to the development of tourism in Chepelare are related to many aspects of the development of the tourism industry, not only in Bulgaria but also in the world. These are the factors that Chepelare Municipality can not directly influence. Such are the behavior of tourists and the factors determining the actions of the stakeholders in tourism - external suppliers and distributors of tourist services and products and trends in the management and marketing of destinations.

### Factors determining the behavior of tourists

Worldwide, there are the following main factors influencing the choice of travel destination not only for winter sports but also for all kinds of tourism:

- *Increasing the number of trips per a year, while reducing the stay of every trip;*
- Increase international travel for recreation and tourism
- Attempting to practice more than one type of tourism during a trip in order to optimize the time and increase the "benefits" of the trip
- Attempting to individualize tourist services, leading to a reduction in the share of group trips
- Attempt to avoid intermediaries when buying trips
- Attempting to find experiences and share travels, not just products and services (hotels, tours, restaurants) - etc. Economy of experiences.

#### **Factors related to the tourism industry**

- A strong increase in "standard", mass, global distribution of tourism products competing solely on the basis of price depression and hence pressure on local suppliers;
- Huge choice of tourist products and services available globally, leading to the need for strong marketing in the tourism industry as a major tool for increasing competitiveness
- Reduce and optimize budgets for traditional advertising in the tourism industry thanks to technical achievements in social, geo-social and mobile Internet marketing.

#### **Factors related to the management and marketing of tourist destinations**

- Increase in the number and variety of affordable tourist destinations offering similar products due to their increased access to low-cost flights;
- The growing awareness of the need for planned and focused marketing of destinations, satisfying their desire to impose an image of uniqueness and thus to increase their competitiveness on the global market;
- Increasing the importance of the destination brand as a key prerequisite for increasing competitiveness;
- Increasing the pressure of "hostile" tourism communities seeking to hinder the development of destinations, pursuing different political, economic and social goals;
- Increasing politicization in tourism management, sometimes leading to contradiction with the economic and social benefits of tourism in a given destination;
- Global trend among destination managing authorities to demonstrate environmental and social responsibility to local communities, sometimes leading to solutions that reduce the competitiveness of local tourism business.

#### **Factors related to the development of ski destinations**

- High concentration of the market for ski tourism, leading to the need for a strong destination marketing;
- High intercourse between skiing, natural and adventure tourism with social and environmental responsibility, requiring an interactive marketing approach;
- Global warming leading to a reduction in the duration of the ski season and from there - shrinking the profitability of tourism in winter sports;
- High seasonality, necessitating the diversification of tourism supply by introducing other types of tourism and using the bases in other seasons in order to increase tourism revenue in ski destinations

The **internal factors** are those that derive directly from the needs for a strategic approach to tourism in the Municipality of Chepelare. They are related not only to local self-government but also to the needs of the population, the tourism and the satellite industries as well as the factors influencing the overall economic, cultural and social development of the Municipality.

- Prioritization of tourism as a leading factor for the development of the Chepelare municipality's economy by local self-government
- High commitment of the local population to providing conditions for the development of a competitive tourism industry
- Striking stakeholders from the tourism industry to ensure sustainability in tourism development in the municipality
- Highly active local community, supporting the intensive development of various types of tourism
- An enthusiastic non-governmental sector wishing to help build and develop an image of Chepelare as a leading tourist destination in the Central Rhodopes

The Tourism Towards 2030<sup>1</sup> developed by the The World Tourism Organization to UNDP, which served as a key strategic framework for both Bulgaria's National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development by 2030 and many other European documents, focuses on five key factors that determine the development of tourism:

- ✓ For many countries, tourism is a powerful tool for social and economic development and poverty reduction through job creation, enterprise, infrastructure development and tourism exports;

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<sup>1</sup> UNTWO. Tourism Towards 2030. A global overview. Annual Assembly October 2011. Madrid, Spain

- ✓ To take advantage of this potential, it is important that the countries continue to generate interest, increase awareness of the opportunities offered by the tourism industry and to make tourism a priority policy objective;
- ✓ Sustainability (social, economic and environmental) is much more important now than ever before, addressing areas such as energy independence, climate change, the green economy, risk management;
- ✓ Continuing monitoring and compliance with the constantly changing consumer: much more experienced and demanding customers, demographic changes (population aging, migrations, diversification of the family structure), changing values and lifestyles, changing from "Economy of Services" to "Economics of Experiences";
- ✓ Improving competitiveness by developing an adequate business environment: innovation, product diversification, markets and segments, product development, information and computer technology, marketing and advertising, research, realistic market assessment, development of quality human resources.

On these five factors are built strategic documents in most national strategies for the development of tourism in all countries. They are embedded in the European version of the Europe 2020 Tourism Vision. Many of these factors (for social, economic and eco-sustainability, innovation, etc.) are addressed in the Regional Development Plans, Regional Development Strategies, and Municipal Development Plans in Bulgaria. Based on these documents, and the 5 factors determining the future of tourism is defined environment, which creates the Program for sustainable development of tourism in the Municipality of Chepelare 2014-2020.

The present "Tourism market research" is a product with the main purpose, apart from the activity under the project "Integrated Tourism Approach For the Development of Cultural and Natural Sites in Chepelare, Bulgaria and Prosochani, Greece" under the "Interreg VA Program Greece – Bulgaria 2020" is to represent a "road map" for the achievement of sustainable competitiveness of the Municipality Chepelare as a tourist destination.

This document is being prepared at a time when the National Tourism Strategy is adopted but there is no regional strategy for tourism development. On the other hand, the Regional Development Plan, the Smolyan Region Development Strategy and the Municipal Development Plan of Chepelare for the period 2014-2020 are already on the table. All these include strategic goals and measures for their implementation in the field of tourism.

In addition, the "Tourism market research" is coordinated with the key principles addressed in the following strategic documents:



## **Europe 2020 Strategy**

The priorities of this strategy document are to achieve an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive economy in 2020. In order to achieve these priorities, the Europe 2020 Strategy sets ambitious targets in the areas of employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate / energy. The Strategy highlights measures to promote the competitiveness of the European tourism sector.

## **National Development Program "Bulgaria 2020"**

The National Development Program "Bulgaria 2020" reflects the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy through the selection of national targets and the identification of national measures for their achievement. The present product within the project "Integrated Tourism Approach For the Development of Cultural and Natural Sites in Chepelare, Bulgaria and Prosochani, Greece" will contribute on a municipal scale to achieving these goals by increasing employment, increasing levels of innovation and improving education in the local tourism industry. It is in line with social inclusion through tourism and enhancing the environment through smart use of climate and energy resources.

## **National Strategy for Regional Development 2012-2022**

The National Strategy for Regional Development (NSRF) for the period 2012 - 2022 is the basic document defining the strategic framework of the state policy for achieving a balanced and sustainable development of the regions of the country and for overcoming the intra-regional and interregional disparities / inequalities in the context of the Europe 2020 and Bulgaria 2020 Strategy. The overcoming of the imbalance between the tourist development of the regions is envisaged as a strategic goal, based on the diversification of the tourist supply and the alternative types of tourism in order to use the rich natural and anthropogenic recreational resources in the regions.

## **National Concept for Spatial Development**

The National Spatial Development Concept for the period 2013-2025 is a medium-term strategic document that provides guidance on the design, management and conservation of national territory and the aquatic environment and creates prerequisites for spatial orientation and coordination of sectoral policies. Together with the National Strategy for Regional Development 2012-2022, it is a key document in Bulgaria's latest legislation and is a long-awaited tool for integrated planning and sustainable spatial, economic and social development.

This is a particularly important document for the development of tourism due to the fact that it treats tourism mainly in the aspect of its territorial development and direction. It states: Very often, the cultural heritage is seen as "a generator of tourist infrastructure, which in turn generates processes and activities in the settlements". Therefore, besides the integrated approach to the management of cultural heritage, the possible clusters in which the diverse cultural values can participate should be investigated. In this document Chepelare is pointed as part of the "Ski Tourism" cluster, which develops in parallel with the cultural assets of the municipality.

#### **Analysis of the territorial development of tourism**

The analysis of the territorial development of tourism is a comprehensive document examining the territorial concentrations by types of tourism and other indicators important for its territorial governance. Municipality of Chepelare is mentioned in the group of municipalities with a good level of tourism development.

#### **Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria, Horizon 2030**

The strategy justifies the tourism of winter sports as one of the main priority tourism types and stresses that the increase of the ski structures in Chepelare is a positive opportunity for the development of ski tourism in Bulgaria. This document also takes into account the European importance of Chepelare Municipality as part of the small, cozy winter resorts in the country.

#### **Regional Development Plan for the South Central Region (NUTS 2)**

The South-Central Regional Development Plan for the period 2014-2020 sets out the medium-term objectives and priorities for sustainable integrated regional and local development within the area, taking into account its specific characteristics. It is clearly defined as a priority - Development of sustainable forms of tourism and cultural and creative industries in the South Central Region, considering that the region has significant potential for expansion and diversification of the regional tourist product and the offered services. The document draws attention to the features of the Municipality of Chepelare, which allow its development not only as a destination for ski tourism but also as a tourist destination with many cultural and natural aspects.

#### **Strategy for development of Smolyan region 2014-2020**

In the developed Strategy for the development of the Smolyan region in 2014-2020, tourism is one of the priorities for development in the programming period. Priority area 1 is "Sustainable

tourism". It is important to note that tourism development is not part of general economic development, but emphasized as a separate priority. To implement this strategic goal, the next 7 measures have been identified:

- Measure 1.1. - Transport accessibility.
- Measure 1.2. - Promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the region.
- Measure 1.3. - Development of complex tourist products and routes.
- Measure 1.4. - Development of Tourist Centers Perelik, Pamporovo, Chepelare.
- Measure 1.5. - SPA tourism.
- Measure 1.6. - Cognitive tourism. Eco tourism, NATURA - 2000 zones. Hunting tourism.
- Measure 1.7. - Providing and ensuring the quality and level of the offered tourist services and products.

#### **Municipal Development Plan of Chepelare Municipality 2014-2020**

One of the main priorities of the municipality according to the Municipal Development Plan by 2020 is the development of tourism. Prerequisites for this are favorable climate, natural resources, clean environment, existing good recreation and entertainment facilities and equipment, etc.

The vision for the development of Chepelare Municipality is „Municipality of Chepelare - attractive for tourism, sport and residential community that has preserved its natural, cultural and historic heritage, built and maintained with technical and business infrastructure, regional and cross-border initiatives, with ensured balanced territorial development and quality of life for the populations". SG 1.1.3 is "Development of sustainable forms of tourism and tourist attractions.

The research of the tourist cultural and natural sites on the territory of the Municipality of Chepelare as a tourist destination examines the condition of all the resources and factors for tourism development at the moment of the development of the present document, namely:

- Main natural and anthropogenic resources that are or can become assets in the formation of a competitive tourism product tailored to the needs of the target markets. These assets and resources are valued in quality and variety;
- The capacity of the Municipality of Chepelare and the tourist industry in the municipality to serve a rich variety of tourism types and a specific set of targeted tourism markets.

For this purpose it is necessary to make a profile of Chepelare Municipality as a tourist destination. The first part of the resource analysis is on the assets of Chepelare Municipality (location, physico-geographic features, transport links and accessibility, cultural heritage) that are present at the moment. Some of these assets are unchangeable in time and do not succumb to the control and efforts to be improved by local authorities. They are the location and physico-geographical characteristics. Others, such as transport links, accessibility, cultural heritage can change over time in a positive or negative direction. The research focuses more attention on the second type of resources and assets - those which through strategic measures can be turned into assets for the development of tourism.

#### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS: analysis of the current situation in Chepelare Municipality as a holiday destination**

##### ***Geographical location and accessibility***

Chepelare municipality is located in the Middle Rhodopes, in the upper reaches of the Chepelarska River and falls in the Smolyan Region, the South Central Planning Region of NUTS 2. The town of Chepelare is the administrative center of the municipality, which is 230 km from the capital of Bulgaria Sofia, 80 km from the regional center of Plovdiv and 22 km from the regional center Smolyan and 7 km from the ski resort Pamporovo. It is situated at 1 140 m above sea level. In the beginning of 2010 a new border crossing point Zlatograd - Termes, which connects Smolyan region with the Greek part of the Rhodope Mountains, is opened so the distance from Chepelare to the border crossing with Greece is only 75 km. In the administrative boundaries of the municipality there are 13 settlements, one of which is Chepelare, which is also the administrative center of the municipality and twelve villages: Bogutevo, Dryanovets, Zabordo, Zornitsa, Lilekovo, Malevo, Orehovo, Ostrica, Pavelsko, Progled, Studenets and Hvoyna. The municipality also covers most of the national resort of Pamporovo, which, with its status as a settlement formation, falls entirely within its borders. This fact is a favorable condition for the integrated management of tourist resources in the resort and tourist area of Pamporovo and in the adjacent suburban area of the town with tourist potential.

In the Middle Rhodopes, nature has formed on a relatively small area a rich variety of unique rock species and formations: marbles, rheolites, sandstones whose geological erosion has saturated the region with many canyons, gorges, caves, peaks with splendid panoramic views. Without its Alpine character, this part of the Rhodopes is full of spacious meadows and forests,

rivers, lakes, dams, centuries-old coniferous forests / pine, spruce, spruce / deciduous - mainly beech.

All of this well-preserved natural wealth is very accessible for visits, thanks to the extensive network of different class roads, including forest ones. It is thus possible to easily conquer by individual and organized tourists, even the highest peaks and rock groups in the area, to which well-marked hiking trails lead.

From the west to the east through the municipalities of Dospat, Borino, Devin, Smolyan, Chepelare and Banite crosses the cross-border European hiking route E 8 and from the north to the south along the ridge Chernatitsa, Kaynidina and Ardenski through the municipalities Chepelare, Devin, Smolyan and Rudozem passes an eco-route with a length of 200 km. The two tourist routes that cross Snezhanka peak in the resort of Pamporovo are well marked with information signs, billboards. Pavements, shelters, fountains and benches are installed along the routes.

On the territory of Chepelare municipality there are 6 tourist huts and one hunting lodge. They are run by Studenets Tourist Company, founded in 1934, which, besides the accommodation facilities, offer excursions on certain routes, green school, treks, organizing school and training camps and visits to sites.

Through Chepelare Municipality there are also tourist routes, very suitable for hiking:

 Routes with high stress:

- Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite kamani - Chudnite mostove - Kabata hut - through the villages of Malevo and Hvoyna;
- Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite Kamani - Groben prohod (Mesargedik) - Persenk hut - "Vrahovrah" hut - Perushtitsa;
- Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite Kamani - Groben prohod (Mesargedik) - Persenk hut - "Vrahovrah" hut - Brynovshtitsa - Hrabrino;
- Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite Kamani - Groben prohod (Mesargedik) - Persenk hut - Byala Cherkva - "Zdravetz" hut;

- Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite kamani - Chudnite mostove - Kabata hut - through the villages of Malevo and Hvoyna – Village of Pavelsko – Pashalijca hut – Haydushki polyani – Momchil Yunak hut – village of Momchilovci;
  - Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Mecho grobe - Izgrev hut - Gluhite kamani - Chudnite mostove - Kabata hut - through the villages of Malevo and Hvoyna – Village of Pavelsko – Pashalijca hut – Haydushki polyani – Momchil Yunak hut – National Astronomical Observatory - Rozhenski Polyani - Pamporovo;
  - Pamporovo – Rozhen - National Astronomical Observatory - Pashalijca hut – town of Laki – village of Borovo – Krastova gora – village of Mostovo – Belintash;
  - Pamporovo – Rozhen - National Astronomical Observatory - Pashalijca hut – town of Laki – village of Borovo – Krastova gora – village of Mostovo – Belintash – x. Marciganitza hut – Bezovo hut – Momina salsa hut – Asenovgrad
- 📍 One-day routes on the territory of Chepelare Municipality with less stress:
- Chepelare - Izgrev hut - Gluhite kamani - Mezargedik - Natural phenomenon Chidnite mostove - "Kabata" hut - Malevo village - Hvoyna village – can also be two days if there is a stay at the "Skalnite mostove" hut;
  - Chepelare - St. Peter and Paul chapel - Chufadzitsa - Holy Trinity chapel - National Astronomical Observatory - Holy Trinity Chapel - Rozhenski Polyani - Chapel "Holy Spirit" - Chapel St. Kirik and Julita - St. Pantaleimon Chapel - Progled village - St. Marina Chapel - St. Iliya Chapel - Chepelare;
  - Chepelare - "Izgrev" hut - Zaburdo village - Natural phenomenon "Chudnite mostove" - Persenk peak - Orehovo village - Hvoyna village;
  - Chepelare - the abandoned village of Karamanica - National Astronomical Observatory - "Pashaliytza" hut - the village of Pavelsko;
  - Chepelare - Yanchovitsa - the Rozhenski Polyany area - Svetitsata - Pamporovo - Mechi Chal - Chepelare.

In general, the municipality offers favorable conditions for acclimatization and preparation of athletes, national and international teams in various sports. Besides Pamporovo's base, which

can be used in non-busy seasons, there is potential for development of such initiative in Chepelare with all the facilities and equipment.

Chepelare is already popular with summer sports challenges. For several years the town hosts prestigious competitions in cycling, there are clubs formed. The newly opened bicycle park on the track "Mechi Chal" attracts active athletes and numerous tourists. Bike park area has comfortable wooden lounges for relaxation, located on the sunniest slope of the mountain and offers beautiful views. The route is already included in the annual Chepelare Rolled Competition. Bicycle races are organized in the center of Chepelare, where there is a another bicycle park. Bicycle in the summer, skiing and snowboarding in the winter - could be the new business card of Chepelare.

#### **Chepelare Municipality - the Green Heart of Bulgaria**



Chepelare Municipality, declared a climatic mountain resort of local importance and Pamporovo resort, located on its territory and declared a climatic mountain resort of national importance, revived the idea of a century ago to develop tourism on the basis of climatic treatment using the unique natural and climatic features of the region with the slogan "Chepelare Municipality - the Green Heart of Bulgaria". The microclimate in the region is extremely favorable, and the presence of predominantly coniferous tree species that produce

phytoncenes or so-called antibiotics of the future are not only healing but also have somewhat antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and nerve-soothing effect. This way, the tourist flow, which is currently characterized by seasonality (mainly in winter) will be increased and appropriately distributed throughout the year. This will lead to a number of positive economic factors in the region.

Apart from its own resources and assets, the Municipality of Chepelare also counts on the number of nearby tourist destinations and attractions, complementing the tourist product of the municipality and the opportunities for development of complex integrated tourist services diversifying the tourist product.

#### **Natural, cultural, religious and eco tourism. Evaluation of sites in Chepelare Municipality, with tourist potential**

In the administrative boundaries of the municipality there are 13 settlements, one of which is Chepelare and twelve villages: Bogutevo, Dryanovets, Zabardo, Zornitsa, Lilekovo, Malevo, Orehovo, Ostritsa, Pavelsko, Progled, Studenets and Hvoyna.

The village of **Bogutevo** is a small village with beautiful authentic houses, diverse nature, interesting customs and traditions and hospitable people. Several houses offer accommodation and food for tourists from a total of 100 houses in the village. Local residents state a high degree of readiness for joint actions to improve the appearance of the village and create prerequisites for the development of tourism.

The village of **Hvoyna** is located to the right by the road connecting Plovdiv and Smolyan. This is a good place from which the tourist can start their tourist routes in the region. The hiking trails lead to mountain huts and other nearby villages. Classified guest houses offering 47 beds for accommodation. Most of the rest houses are of local families that are very hospitable and friendly.

The village of **Orehovo** is a picturesque colorful place situated along the river Oreshitsa, in the bosoms of the Chernatitsa ridge in the Western Rhodopes. It is an important starting point for the huts- Persenk, Kabata, Skalni mostove, Byala Cherkva as well as to the natural phenomenon Chudnite mostove. Close to the small picturesque village of Orehovo, drinking water comes from a depth of 650 m. It is suitable for everyday consumption and is distinguished by its sweetness, softness and lightness. It rises crystal clear, which is proved by the daily laboratory tests.

There is established "Tourism Association - Orehovo village" in the village. Orehovo is the village with the most developed rural and eco tourism in Chepelare Municipality. It has 103 places for rest and recreation in private houses, one of the houses has a modern conference hall suitable for seminars. In the village of Orehovo a historical and ethnographic museum collection is organized in the Community Center "Rodopsko badeshte" /Rhodope Future/. It contains all the tools and objects used in everyday life of the people from the area to mid-twentieth century. The family tree of all generations in the village was made. Exposure has extensive archaeological material, some of the discoveries are of value, especially ceramics.

The village of **Pavelsko** is situated 2 km to the left of the central road Plovdiv - Smolyan. At 14 km from Pavelsko there is the Pashalitsa hut, which is visited all year round by Bulgarian and



foreign tourists. Classified guest houses offering 27 accommodation spaces. There are several tourist routes for hiking through the village. For this purpose, local traditions and customs have been restored, showing the local people, folklore and ethnographic features. Pavelsko is the oldest village in Rupchos, which occupies part of the northern slopes of the central Rhodopes. Found near the village archaeological finds are evidence that there were settlements in antiquity. In the creation of the historical map of Bulgaria for the V century of the new era, the villages are marked only by Pavelsko and Gela. Since Roman times roads passed from Plovdiv to Thrace through the village. Pavliksko was inhabited today in 1660 by fugitives from the village of Borovo.

The village of **Progled** is situated at 1370 m above sea level. The village is 4 km away from the resort of Pamporovo. Progled is small, but remarkable with its nature, past and present village. Resort with traditions, suitable for both summer holidays and winter skiing. Progled is one of the rare places on the Balkan Peninsula, where from the middle of June until the beginning of July you can see the Rhodopian Cream, which is included in the Red Book of the rare and endangered species. Categorized guest houses offering 88 accommodation places. Tourists can enjoy the slopes of Pamporovo and Chepelare.

The village of **Zabardo** is located 13 km. from the central road Plovdiv - Smolyan. Close to the village is the natural phenomenon "Chudnite mostove" /The Wonder bridges/, visited annually by thousands of tourists. Center for Traditional Culture, Tourism and Sustainable Development with Ethnographic Exhibition is functioning at "Hristo Botev" Community Center. It owns a large amount of exhibits, skillfully combined with panels of wood carving, each exhibit from the exhibition can be purchased. An attraction of the village is the Zabardo wheel. Local people claim that their carousel has appeared before the Ferris wheel. And today in the center of the village you can see and spit on the carousel, restored by memories and photos from the beginning of the 19th century. It is made entirely of wood and its diameter is 6 m. In the past, the "dropping-off" between the youngsters took place, while the girls were riding the wheel manually driven by the boys. Categorized guest houses offering 23 accommodation beds.

The village of Zornitsa is located 7 km away from the town of Chepelare. The region is suitable for mountain sports, horse riding, long walks in the nature and skiing. From the village of Zornitsa there are tourist routes to the Izgrev hut, Pamporovo, Chudnite mostove, Shiroka Laka and many others. In the village there are guest houses with 14 beds for accommodation.

#### Natural attractions in the municipality of Chepelare

- **Chudnite mostove /Wonder bridges/**. A distance of 50 minutes from Chepelare is the natural phenomenon - Wonder Bridges. In Chepelare municipality there is a socialized eco-route along the ridge of the Chernatitsa ridge, the eco-trail "The Wonder Bridges". This allows the Municipality of Chepelare to diversify its tourist product in the direction of natural, adventure and eco tourism. These natural wonders in very close proximity also allow for the enrichment of the tourist product of Chepelare with niche tourism, as well as the integration of the natural tourism on a larger scale - adventure tourism in all its dimensions.
- **Cheleveshtata Dupka cave** is located 7 km away from the village of Orehovo. It is reached by a tourist trail. The tourist guides always offer their groups a visit to the Cheleveshtata Dupka cave, especially the groups sent by the Bulgarian Tourist Union - Sofia. The small groups visiting Persenk Hut also almost always go to see it. Hiking to the cave is one of the - light hiking tour and therefore is preferred by tourists. The cave itself is not suitable for tourists.
- **Spruce constellation "Ardashla"** near Pamporovo – century-old spruce with thirteen "brothers" (branches, but starting at the very root underground) declared a natural monument in 1967.
- **Waterfall** located in the **Duplevo** area of Orehovo - 0.5 km. west of the village. Rock gorge along the Oreshitsa River. Protected Natural Site
- **Waterfall** located in the **"Skakaloto"** area of the village of Orehovo - 0.5 km. south of the village - the second largest waterfall in the country with a drop height of 30 m. Protected Natural Site
- **Kosten kamak /Bone stone/** - a colossal rock mass, resembling a huge wall over which grows a century-old spruce forest; is located 4 km. southwest of the village of Orehovo. This natural rock phenomenon was marked as a natural landmark in the encyclopedia in 1965. There is a natural waterfall over a large rock niche with a waterfall height of 30 m, which gives greatness to the area. It is connected with the stone canyon in the area of "Koilovo dere". It is declared a natural attraction. There is a legend that from the brink were thrown alive inhabitants of the nearby village Koylovo refusing to convert to Islam. At the foot of the rock was covered with bones, hence the name of the locality come.
- **Vaklite dupki /The dark holes/** - located 7 km south of the village of Ziburdo (2 km south of the Kabata locality). South eroded slope with natural rock (cave) calcite-covered canals. These interesting rock niches are declared a natural phenomenon.

- **Gluhite kamani /Deaf stones/** near the village of Zabardo. Natural rock formations. There is a humorous story of how they got their name "Deaf stones". Isein Agovsky, son of Kara Ibrahim, and Abdulah Agovsky, grandson of the same, once met Tanyu Voyvoda, and decided to joke with him, telling him that if someone spoke on one side of the stones, then nothing could be heard. Initially, Tanyu did not believe, but the two jokes offered him a check. They decided Tanyu to stand on one side of the stones, and Isein and Abdullah on the other, the last two to shout to convince Tanyu that nothing could be heard. So it happened, except that Isein and Abdullah stayed silently all the time. After Tanyu strained for a while to hear the cries of his two friends, he went to them and asked: "Did you call?" "We called!" - said the two jokers. – „If you want, now you call, and we will listen.“ Again the voivoda agrees, but this time he repeats the same. Again he went to them and asked them, "Did you hear anything?" "Nothing was heard. Did you call?" - Isein and Abdullah pretended to be furious. Tanyu Voyvoda stayed long on the stones, wondering what happened, and Isein and Abdullah Agovsky continued cheerfully on the way to Chepelare, laughing at Tanyu.
- **Chelevistnitsa Cave.** It is situated to the southwest of the village of Zabardo in the area of Aidarski Kamak, in the high parts of the stone. The cave gap is 36 m deep. From its bottom begins a gigantic cone, consisting of a dense clay and a soil embankment. There are thousands of stones buried there, somewhere supported by huge, overhanging blocks. There are no shapes in the abyss.
- **Cave Slivova dupka /Plum hole/.** In the 60s of the twentieth century, Shaban Slivov and other hunters from the village of Zaburdo, chasing a marten in the locality under Zagradaska Chuka, not far from the Tyovna Dupka, accidentally discovered a hole and behind it a spacious cave. Slivov peeked into the cave, but nothing could be seen. The next day, he entered the cave and the sight stroke him. There were many bones of human skeletons, and most of them were childish. Until then, for this cave in Zabardo, nobody knew anything. The newly discovered cave is located 200 - 300 m to the east of the Tyovna dupka cave, in an even more hidden and sheltered place.
- **Cheleveshnitsata cave** is situated in the village of Pavelsko. In 1966 it was visited by the Sixth International Expedition with the participation of Russian specialists Igor Efremovich and Viktor Dublyanski. The expedition finds that a 33 meter-long hollow tunnel (shaft) starts from its opening, reaching an underground hall measuring 85 meters in length and 40 meters in width. Immediately, after a cone of earth and stones, under the cave hole begin huge, up to 1 meter tall and thick up to 50 centimeters, sinter barriers. One part of its sparkling air walls are dry and covered with small as millet pearls

and another with crystal water. Experts believe that once there was a 12-meter deep lake that dried up. Some of the cave formations are similar to a cave forest, and over the dried lake there is a beautiful colonnade. The cave's vault, with its countless white-stalked hangings hanging on it, rests on stalactons, resembling strange snowstars. Continuous drops of water drip from the ceiling and swim to the cave floor. In the middle of the hall, in a huge bowl carved by drops drops, lies the most beautiful and majestic cave pearl found in the Bulgarian caves, perceived as a miracle of nature and a pearl of the pearls. In 1966 Peter Tranteev described it as the "King" of the cave pearls. The name of the cave is supposed to originate from the presence of human bones in it. Among the local population there is a legend that a cruel Turk has been thrown into Cheleveshtnicata, and according to another version of the same legend - a local chorbadzhiya was the one thrown there. Indeed Chepelare cavers have found the cave skeleton of a man under investigation.

- **Kutsinskoto blato** - in the region of Chepelare village Progled is a natural field of Rhodope Cream, included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. It is a natural landmark.

Cultural heritage in a region is the unique combination of traditions, values and beliefs, folklore, crafts and technologies, cuisine, fine art and applied arts, buildings and nature. The objects of cultural heritage are archeological, historical, architectural, ethnographic and complexes, artistic cultural values, monuments of urbanism and industrial heritage, cultural landscape, park art, intangible treasures such as craft technologies, customs, beliefs, song, dance, fabulous folklore. In the region of the Middle Rhodopes there is a significant and specific for this part of the country cultural heritage.

### Archaeological monuments

Since ancient times the Rhodopes have been a mysterious and mysterious mountain. The mountain of the mythical Orpheus and the Besses - the guardians of the famous temple of Dionysus. Archaeological excavations testify to the existence of life from around XII century BC. The remains of many Thracian fortresses suggest that here, in ancient times, a wealthy social and cultural life has been boiled. Since the period of the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdom (681-1393) many medieval fortresses, settlements and necropolises have been discovered. During the Bulgarian Renaissance (1762-1878) in the town of Chepelare and the settlements around there used to be lively cultural and educational activity, illustrated by the existing 14 temples and 72 chapels. The four churches are declared as cultural monuments of national importance and one of the churches and 15 chapels are declared as monuments of culture of local importance. Each temple had a school. On the territory of the municipality can be seen

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the churches 'Sv. Atanasii' and 'Sv. Bogoroditsa', the Museum of Speleology and Bulgarian Karst which is unique in kind not only in Bulgaria, but also on the Balkan Peninsula and Europe. The municipality has recently also opened a Ski Sports Museum, telling about the rich history of white sports in the area.

#### Fortresses

- **The Zarenitsa Fortress** - located on the left bank of the town of Lyuthodol, 5 km east of the village of Pavelsko and 5 km south of the resort Narechenski bani. There are many old swarms of rough red mortar, tombs, coal, bones, etc. The Zarenitsa dates back to the Thracian times, as evidenced by the preserved walls of large stone blocks up to two meters. From the east, there is 200 meters of vertical rock, not accessible to Lutidol. In a study from 1978 was discovered precautionary wall, over 210 meters long, inner wall of 111 meters with a well defined and preserved walls wider than 3 meters. There is no water in the fortress, it is believed that there was a spring on the northern side - Amuzhova padina, which has dried up over time. The legends associated with Zarenitsa are many. The main one, supposedly connected with the name of the fortress, is related to the famous hero Zaryu, who stood up against the Turks. In the midst of the battle itself, using the cover of the fallen fog, Zaryu pretended to have betrayed himself. When the invaders entered the fortress, they were lured to the other end, where they poured out of the sheer cliff into the abyss. After that the corpses smelled, and hence the name "Lyutidol" – frowsy vale. In another legend, the fortress is associated with the unearthly beautiful Zarena, which threw herself from the rocks because of unrequited love.

#### Antique Roads

- In the region of the Middle Rhodopes, the ancient Trans-Rhodopi road "Plovdiv - the ridge of the Chernatitsa ridge - Persensk - Smolyan - Arda village - Parnesti village, Greece", which linked the two main Roman roads across the Balkans: Singidunum / Belgrade / - Constantinople and Via Egnatia along the coast. It was also used in ancient times, before the Roman, as a route. At the beginning of the 18th century, the French traveler Paul Luksas passed on, which indicates of durable stability and long use. Today, this route is part of a 200 km eco-route from the village of Hvoina to the Elidzhe pass and in several areas is still preserved - the most authentic one is near Persenk Peak, south of Smolyan and over Paranesti in Greece.

#### Sanctuaries

- **The fortress "Zagrad"** – Thracian fortress (Zagradaska chuka locality, Zaburdo village), an archaeological site 4 km away from the village of Zabardo. It is situated

on a high rock peak, at the southern foot of the peak there is a Thracian mound necropolis. Remnants of Thracian pottery from the period of the late Bronze and Early Iron Age (XIII - XI century BC).

- **Thracian settlement** – a cave; is located in the Tyovnata Dupka Cave, east of Zabardo; cultural monument of national importance. The cave is not socialized,
- **Tsirikova church** - peak located in the Kabata area; cultural monument of national importance. Today, only the remains of the former fortress have remained, which clearly indicate its existence. At the top, in place of the former old church, the chapel "St. Spirit" was built.

For tourist purposes the next projects were funded under European Programmes:

- Part of an ancient road in the Persenk Peak area
- Thracian sanctuary in Zagrad near the village of Zabardo

#### Architectural heritage

In the Municipality of Chepelare with the potential for status of cultural monuments of "national importance" are **the churches**:

- "Vaznesenie Gospodne" in the village of Pavelsko was built in 1834. and consecrated in the following 1835. (July 20 - Ilinden) by the Metropolitan of Nicephorus in Plovdiv. The highest bell tower in the Middle Rhodopes - 17 m - was built next to I in 1894.
- "Sv. Iliya" in the village of Hvoyna was built in 1857, consecrated in 1858 (July 20 - Ilinden) by the Plovdiv Metropolitan Paisii (1857-1861).
- "Sv. Nedelya" in the village of Orehovo
- "Vaznesenie Gospodne" in the village of Malevo was built in 1860. The building is ecclesiastical property and needs immediate overhaul - on the roof, the altar, the replacement of the wooden part, the restoration and preservation of the frescoes and icons.
- „Sv. Bogorodica" in the town of Chepelare

The Church "Sv. Atanasiy Veliki" in the town of Chepelare is with potential for status of a monument of local importance. It was built for one month in the autumn of 1834. with the active participation of the entire Christian population. It was officially inaugurated on 11yuli 1835 by the Plovdiv Metropolitan Nikifor. In 1841 in a буилдинг, specially constructed in the courtyard of the church the first school was opened.

In the village of Pavelsko is the church "Vaznesenie Gospodne", which was built in 1834 for 40 days. It is a three-nave basilica with four columns and five arches in each basilica. It has three altar apses. It was consecrated in 1836 by Ilinden by Metropolitan Nathanail of Plovdiv. The bell tower was built in 1865. It is 8 meters from the church, with a height of 17 meters and has 5 floors. The temple was declared a cultural monument.

"Sv. Panteleimon" Church in the village of Progled was built in 1921 and illuminated in 1928. (August 9 - St. Panteleimon) by the Plovdiv Vicar Bishop Hariton. In 1983, to the church was built a complex of narthex, office and bell tower.

The Church "Uspenie na Presveta Bogoroditsa" in Pamporovo - is a three-aisled, cross-shaped building. On the initiative of god-loving citizens in the early 90s of the twentieth century was established a non-profit association "Christians", which started the construction of the temple. With the assistance of the Bulgarian National Television, the donor campaign was popularized throughout the country. It was consecrated of 30.10.1999g. by Plovdiv Metropolitan Arseniy in the presence of thousands of devotees incl. The President of the Republic and almost all of the Council of Ministers.

There are mosques in the town of Chepelare, as well as in the villages of Lilekovo, Zornitsa, Bogutevo and Ostrica - the oldest of them is the one in the village of Bogutevo. Those who are active are located in the town of Chepelare and in the village of Bogutevo.

Other architectural and historical sites, chapels and modern monuments in different settlements are:

In the town of Chepelare:

- Uzunskata Kashta in Chepelare, with a rich and picturesque decoration from 1870;
- Ancient house, located in Chepelare, 5, "Mramor" Str.
- Chapel "Sv. Joan Krastitel"
- Chapel "Sv. Georgi Pobedonosets "
- Chapel "Sv. Cyril and Methodius"
- Chapel "Ascension of God"
- Chapel "Holy Trinity"
- Chapel "Holy Spirit"
- Chapel "Sv. Ap. Peter and Paul "
- Chapel "Sv. Nedelya"
- Chapel "Sv. Marina"

- Chapel "Sv. Iliya"
- Chapel "Rozhdestvo of the Most Holy Mother"
- Chapel "Sv. Petka"
- Chapel "Sv. Ivan Rilski"
- Chapel "Sv. Archangel Michael "
- Chapel "Sv. Mina "

In the village of Pavelsko as architectural monuments are declared:

- Four houses (private ownership) with interesting architecture;
- Chapel "Sv. Vasiliy Veliki";
- Chapel "Sv. Atanasiy Veliki";
- Chapel "Sv. Yoan Predtecha";
- Chapel "Sv. Vlasiy";
- Chapel "Sv. Theodor Tyron"
- Chapel "Sv. Georgi"
- Chapel "Sv Prokopi";
- Chapel "Sv. Varvara";
- Chapel "Sv. Konstanin I Elena";
- Chapel "Sv. Iliya";
- Chapel "Sv. Dimitar";
- Chapel "Uspenie Bogorodichno";
- Chapel "Sv. Nikolay";
- Chapel "Sv. Ap. Petar I Pavel";
- Chapel "Sv. Arhangel Mihail";
- Chapel "Sv. Troitsa – Sv. Duh";
- Chapel "Sv. Teodor Tiron";
- Chapel "Sv. Paraskeva";
- Chapel "Sv. Mina";
- Chapel "Sv. Spirit "
- Chapel "Sv. Nedelya";
- Chapel "Sv. Mary Magdalene";
- Chapel "Sv. Panteleimon "
- Chapel of the Most Holy Mother of God;
- Chapel "Sv. Petka";



In the village of Hvoyna;

- Three houses of interesting architecture declared to be monuments of culture;
- A school building built in the autumn of 1857 in the church yard with materials remaining from the church "Sv. Iliya "(currently the second one preserved in the municipality of Chepelare);
- Chapel "Sv. Duh";
- Chapel "Uspenie Bogorodichno";
- Chapel "Sv. Konstanin I Elena";
- Chapel "Sv. Georgi".
- Chapel "Sv. Yoan Krastitel"

In the village of Malevo:

- Chapel "Sv. Vlasiy";
- Chapel "Sv. Iliya";
- Chapel "Sv. Georgi";
- Chapel "Sv. Varvara";
- Chapel "Uspenie Bogorodichno".

In the village of Progled:

- House of Dicho Petrov (Takov) - a monument of culture of national importance.
- Chapel "Sv. Panteleymon";
- Chapel "Sv. Marina" – built 1940 on the ruins of an old church.
- Chapel "Sv. Iliya" – built in 1930;
- Chapel "Sv. Troitsa" – built in 1935;
- Chapel "Sv. Kirik I Yulita" – built in 1932
- Chapel "Sv. Georgi Pobedonosets" – built in 2010.

In the village of Orehovo:

Chappel "Vaznesenie Hristovo" – built by Ivan Velkov Peltekov's personal resources in the 20s of the 20th century.

- Chapel "Uspenie Bogorodichno" – built in 1888 by Mircho Zlatkov;
- Chapel "Sv. Petka" – built in 1888 by Mircho Zlatkov;
- Chapel "Sv. Atanasiy Veliki";
- Chapel "Sv. Nedelya";

- Chapel "Sv. Georgi";
- Chapel "Sv. Varvara";
- Chapel "Rozhdestvo Bogorodichno";
- Chapel "Sv. Iliya";
- Chapel "Sv. Ap. Petar I Pavel";
- Chapel "Sv. Ana";
- Chapel "Sv. Troitsa – Sv. Duh";
- Chapel "Sv. Arhangel Mihail";
- Chapel "Sv. Mina";
- Chapel "Sv. Yoan Rilski";
- Chapel "Sv. Bogoroitsa - Stradashta";
- Chapel "Vaznesenie Gospodne";
- Chapel "Sv. Nikolay";
- Chapel "Sv. Krast Gospoden";
- Chapel "Sv. Yoan Predtecha".

In Zabardo there is

- Chapel "Uspenie of the Most Holy Mother of God"

## Public construction

### Fountains

Their construction is of a deep ritual character: to honor the memory of a relative, to make a "good" to enjoy all passing by the tap of this precious gift of nature with which the Rhodope was gifted. The majority of the fountains are made of stone and pieces of cultural heritage.

- „Pichurskata voda” – the town of Chepelare;
- „Turskata voda” (a fountain of Gashtevi family) the village of Pavelsko;
- Fountain of Semerdzhievi Famili – village of Pavelsko;
- Fountain „Varada” - village of Hvoyna
- Fountain-monument of the perished in the church yard to the bell tower of the village of Malevo
- Old fountain in the center of the village of Orehovo
- Old fountain in front of the town hall of Orehovo;

### Bridges

Many of the bridges in the Middle Rhodopes are believed to have been built during the Roman Empire and among the local population are referred to as the "Roman Bridge". Larger samples from the old Rhodopi masters have always attracted the attention of both locals and guests in the mountain:

- Old arched bridge between Hvoyna and Narechenski Bany over the Chaya river in the "Moste" area - 11 m height. Normal access on the road Asenovgrad - Chepelare"
- Bridge at the entrance of the village of Orehovo - Located on the road from the village of Hvoyna just before the village of Orehovo. Height of the arch - 8 m. Normal access on an asphalt road
- Old vaulted bridge in the village of Orehovo to Kabata area and Persenk. Height of the arch - 10 m. Normal access on the way to the Kabata locality, as well as under the bridge.
- Bridge to the Asenets settlement - on the way to the village of Asenets in the "Licovskoto" locality, height of the arch 7 m. The access is for off-road cars or pedestrians
- An old bridge, which is located on the main road to Plovdiv and the fork of the village of Zornitsa.

In the more recent history of Chepelare Municipality there are monuments and memorial tablets related to liberation, wars and events and personalities of local importance:

#### Monuments

1. Monument to the victims of the wars in Chepelare, erected to perpetuate the memory of the people from Chepelare who died in the wars. The design of the monument is made by the sculptures Nikola Popov and K. Ihtiarov from Plovdiv. It was built by the sculptors from Chepelare. The construction lasted two years and costed 160 000 leva. The funds were collected by subscription, by exploding a so-called golden book. First of all, an amount was recorded by Tsar Boris III. the municipality. On the southern and northern facades are plaques with the names of the dead, and on the west, the main façade laurel wreath and sword are carved. Its consecration was on 08.08.1937 by the Metropolitan Bishop of Plovdiv, Hariton.
2. Monument of Captain Petko Voyvoda, erected in 2004, as a tribute to the legendary voivoda and his contribution to the stay of the settlement within Bulgaria after the Berlin Congress. Thanks to Petko Voyvoda, the city received its freedom several decades

earlier than the neighboring settlements in the Rhodopes, remaining outside the border of Bulgaria.

3. Monument-fountain in memory of the wartime officers, officers and soldiers who died during the war (1912-1913), (1915-1918) in the town of Chepelare;
4. A memorial plaque dedicated to those who died during the Second World War in Chepelare. It is located in the landscaped area next to the monument to those who died during the wars;
5. A memorial plaque dedicated to Captain Petko Voivoda in the town of Chepelare. The memorial plate indicates the location where Captain Petko voivoda headquarters were housed;
6. Monument to the heroes killed in the Balkan and World War I in the village of Hvoina Monument-obelisk, made by Todor Karamihaylov in 1933;
7. Monument to the victims of the Balkan wars in the village of Pavelsko. Located in the yard of the church "Vaznesenie Gospodne";
8. Monument to the people killed in the wars / 1877 - 1878 // 1912 - 1913 /; / 1915-1918 /; / 1944 - 1945 / in the village of Pavelsko. Opened in 2001;
9. Monument to the killed people for their country in Bogutevo. Opened in 1950;
10. Monument of the people killed in the wars (1912 - 1918) in the village of Malevo. It is located in the yard of the church "Vaznesenie Gospodne", near one of the walls of the bell tower. Opened in 1933 on May 6 - The Day of Courage;
11. Monument of the perished in the wars in the village of Orehovo. It is located in the center of the village.

#### **Other monuments, plaques and sculptures:**

1. Monument of Vasil Dechev in Chepelare;
2. A monument of Vasil Gadzhurov in the town of Chepelare;
3. Commemorative plaque in honor of welcoming the parts of the Russian liberation troops in Chepelare, led by General Cherevin;
4. Monument of Dicho Petrov - located near the road Plovdiv-Smolyan at the fork of the village of Progled;
5. Memorial of Dicho Petrov - Progled village;
6. Monument of the Russian Warrior (Monument of an Unknown Russian Courier from the General Cherevin's Crusade, who died in 1878 on a road from Zlatograd to Plovdiv) - 7 km from the village of Hvoyna;
7. Monument to George Rusenov (1892 - 1923), politician and activist - village of Hvoyna;

8. A memorial plate of Georgi Vuldjev, a researcher and a public figure, opened in 2008 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of his birth in the village of Hvoyna;
9. Memorial plaque at the place where he lived Nikolay Haytov, opened in 2009 on the occasion of 90 th anniversary of his birth, the village of Hvoyna;
10. A memorial plaque of Nikola Zhalov, a researcher and a public figure, opened in 2010 on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of his birth in the village of Hvoyna;
11. A memorial plate of Kostadin Zlatanov, who discovered the mineral waters in the village of Narechenski bani, opened in 2011 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth in the village of Hvoyna;
12. Sculpture "The hospitality of the Rhodope Mountains" located next to the road Plovdiv - Smolyan on the crossroad of natural phenomenon "The Wonderful Bridges"
13. Monument of Marko Ivanov, Prichovo (donor of the land, where the church was built) in the village of Pavelsko
14. Miner's monument in the village of Pavelsko;
15. Memorial plate of Stoil Kalfov (agronomist and public figure) in the village of Pavelsko;
16. Memorial plaque of Georgi Pashev (writer) in the village of Pavelsko;
17. Memorial Plate of Stefan Vagov (opened the first museum collection in the region) in the village of Pavelsko;
18. Memorial plaque of Boris Djurdjev (teacher) in the village of Pavelsko;
19. Memorial Plate of Zlatyl Kaybitsky in the Grave Locality (cashier and one of the main organizers together with Marco Ivanov for the construction of the church in the village of Pavelsko);
20. Memorial plaque of Pop Iliya (Revival) in the village of Pavelsko;
21. Memorial Plate of Deli Vasil Semerdzhiev (a participant in the liberation movement) in the village of Pavelsko;
22. Memorial plate of Nikola Zapryanov (teacher, school inspector, public figure) in the village of Malevo;
23. Memorial plaque indicating the names of the priests in the Church "Vaznesenie Gospodne" in the village of Malevo;
24. A monument of Vasil Levski in the village of Malevo - opened in 2018. The memorial was built with donations from local residents and with the support of the Municipality.
25. A memorial plate dedicated to the perished in the wars in the village of Orehovo

#### Park spaces

An important and untapped resource for tourism development are remarkable places that have the characteristic of a "topos" - a remarkable place with a specific atmosphere and active presence of the local people. In the Municipality of Chepelare such spaces are:

- The renovated "Olympic" square in the town of Chepelare, named in honor of the first Olympic gold medal for Bulgaria from the 1998 Winter Olympiad Nagano, won by Katya Dafovska - born in Chepelare;
- City Garden, City Park and Garden on Vasil Dechev Street in the town of Chepelare

#### Movable cultural values

##### Exhibitions and expositions

##### The town of Chepelare

- Rhodope Karst Museum - unique for Bulgaria and is the only museum of caves in Southeastern Europe. The history of its creation began in 1950, when the teacher Dimitar Raichev set up a geology workshop. The first cave intrusions in the region were organized. In 1963, Raichev was supported by other enthusiasts - scholars and cavers, leading to the creation of the Cave Club. A cave research started. Only for 5-6 years nearly 200 caves in the Rhodope Mountains were studied and the findings of the studies were collected in a museum collection in caving, opened in 1968. A scientific team of specialists from national cultural institutions developed the museum collection in an exhibition of the Museum of the Rhodope Karst, officially opened in 1980. This is the result of the tough work of several generations of cavers, associates and scholars. For the fulfillment of its functions, the museum performs the following specific tasks: it searches for and studies the caves of natural wealth; registers, maps, documents and protects the caves; gathers, examines, records, documents and preserves the natural samples received in the museum; provides dermoplasty for samples of living nature, etc. The Rhodope Karst Museum is housed in a public-owned building, with specially equipped exhibition rooms, funds, laboratory and offices for employees. The exhibition, 470 square meters, presents eight themes: geology, mineralogy, petrography, surface and secondary karst forms, bio-speleology, cave paleontology, cave archeology, cave conservation. In the exhibition area and the museum are stored 4044 pcs.
- Museum of skiing in Chepelare presents personalities, activities, phenomena and events, which together represent public and tourist interest. The museum collection features ski models from the beginning of the development of skiing to the latest

models produced at the ski factory in the town; ski boots and sticks; cups, medals, plaques and flags; information boards.

#### The Village of Pavelsko

- Museum collection at the Aleko Konstantinov Community Center in the village of Pavelsko. It presents historical and ethnographic materials from the region of the village of Pavelsko. Some archaeological finds are of great historic value.

#### The Village of Orehovo

- In the village of Orehovo a historical and ethnographic museum collection is organized in the Community Center "Rodopsko badeshte" /Rhodope Future/. It contains all the tools and objects used in everyday life of the people from the area to mid-twentieth century. The family tree of all generations in the village was made. Exposure has extensive archaeological material, some of the discoveries are of value, especially ceramics.

#### The Village of Zabardo

- Permanent ethnographic exhibition at the community center "Hristo Botev" - a fair amount of exhibits that are perfectly combined with panels of wood carving. The visitors of the exhibition, apart from the exposed exhibits, may, if they wish, also get acquainted with their way of production by visiting the Center for Traditional Culture, Tourism and Sustainable Development at the Community Center Hristo Botev, located in the same building. Each exhibit of the exhibition can be purchased.

The National Astronomical Observatory "Rozhen" was put into operation in 1981 and since then has been an attraction for visits to the Rhodope region. The scientific complex is located in the region of Rozhen saddle - between Perelik and Prespanski part of the Rhodopes. It is reached by the Chepelare road to Ustovo quarter in Smolyan, and in the region of the highest point it goes to the Haydushki polyani area. There is a second deviation - especially to the hill where the complex was built. A visitor center for tourist services was established. It features a museum collection presenting the history of the science complex, as well as an opportunity for observation with an 18-cm demo telescope. The large 2-meter telescope is available for visitors during the day, where there are seminars and its mobility is demonstrated. Under suitable weather conditions, and upon request for groups of more than 4 participants night observation

with the 30 cm Telescope can be carried out. NAO "Rozhen" can be visited every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with entry only with an escort.

Despite the richness of many unique values of material cultural heritage, it has not yet become a resource-to-asset of a competitive tourism. The lack of data on visits, demographics of audiences and other marketing research leads to an illusory assessment of resources, and hence less effort to turn these resources into attractions.

## **Intangible cultural heritage**

### **Events and customs**

The cultural life in the municipality is saturated with events. Each year are held May traditional cultural celebrations within May month. The celebration of the town of Chepelare is May 24 – The Day of Slavic Scripture and Culture.

Chepelare Municipality has traditions in the publication of books not only of local authors. The meeting room of Chepelare Municipality is a place for exhibitions and literary events such as: presenting books, inviting theaters, organizing concerts, celebrating all national holidays and anniversaries of national and local significance. Two national competitions are validated. National Contest for poetry "Ussin Kerim" and National Competition for Author's Music and vocal and instrumental works on folklore basis "New Bulgarian Music in 7/8 held in October for the last two years.

Of particular importance for the cultural development and the realization of the cultural events on the territory of the municipality are the nine Community centers. They are also entered in the Register of the Community Centers at the Ministry of Culture. Community centers are traditional self-governing Bulgarian cultural and educational associations in the settlements, which perform tasks of state and municipal cultural policy.

There is also a tendency to individualize holidays in the villages in the region - traditional village gatherings in every tourist village are increasingly enriched and directed to creating a memorable and attractive experience for tourists. These are events that have been actively practiced over the past 20 years, apart from the religious celebration and the secular initiatives such as the folklore program, the community table, etc.

Traditional and increasingly popular village holidays with the participation of folklore ensembles and performers in Chepelare municipality are:



Toodorovden, Pustove, Old Martha, Spring Art Carnival	Every year in March
May Cultural celebrations 6-24 may	Every year in May
Celebration of Bogutevo Village (May 6 <sup>th</sup> )	Every year in May
Celebration of the town of Chepelare (May 24 <sup>th</sup> )	Every year in May
Celebration of Pavelsko Village (Spasovden)	Every year in May
Celebration of Progled Village	Every year in July
Celebration of Malevo Village (Ilinden)	Every year in July
Celebration of Orehovo Village, A day of "Nut"	Every year in September
Celebration of Zabardo Village	Every year in August
Celebration of Zornitza Village	Every year in August
Celebration of Ostritza Village	Every year in August
Celebration of Lilekovo Village	Every year in August
September cultural celebrations	Every year in September
National Competition for New Bulgarian Music in 7/8	Every two years in October
Ussim Kerim National Poetry Competition	Every year in October
Celebration of "Potato" (Chepelare town and Zabardo Village)	Every year in November

From the research of the cultural calendar of Chepelare, it is concluded that most of the cultural events are not used as a tool for attracting tourist interest. The cultural calendar of the municipality is not published or published very late and can not serve as a predictor in the planning of organized tourist trips for festival tourism. There is no study on event attendance, visitors' demographics, and other marketing researches.

In 2017, titles such as "FESTIVALS TURNED CHEPELARE IN A TOURIST LEADER" appeared in the media. The municipality is among the Balkan Oscars for tourism. Festival tourism has an increasingly leading role in the development of attractive destinations in Bulgaria and the Balkans. The only municipality in the Rhodopes and in the country that has developed in each of its settlements tourist services - Chepelare, was nominated for the competition by the partners of the Balkan Tourism Industry Awards.

The Festival of hits and old urban song - "Blow of past dreams" is a stage for people of active age. It was created with the help of the legendary singer Hristo Kidikov, as the first festival for this genre in the Rhodopes.

Fans of mountain running and mountain biking challenge the limits of their strengths and skills at the annual Chepelare Trakala Competition in August. In Chepelare was held the first national celebration "Captain Petko Voivoda". In addition to the numerous tourists attracted by the interesting games and retreats and the only Festival in the Rhodope for a haidouk song, there was also an educational campaign for the children to know who Petko Voyvoda was and how heroism and a handful of people barely 300 people managed to stop an Ottoman army of 2000 soldiers. The celebration is part of the autumn cycle.

„Potato Fest in Chepelare“ in late fall is a challenge for those tempted by culinary and the purpose – to attract customers to sell the products of the local population. The Olympic Square becomes a tasting place for tasty Rhodope specialties right from the grandmother's stove, business deals and unforgettable fun with lots of games and music.

The real assessment of these events is the reported growth in tourist flow over the past year. The general cultural calendar of the events for the year in the region supports the promotion of individual tourist destinations under the slogan "Rhodope Mountains - hospitality in four seasons". Numerous advertisements in local and national press releases, commercials and interviews in media and radio are the main means of attracting tourists. Funding of events is mainly with own funds and, to a less extend - of donations.

The events show the mixture of patriotism and culture, attraction and sport, the aim of which is to have both educational effect and an attractive atmosphere for the tourist.

***Chepelare has a great potential based on multiple and diverse cultural resources. Unfortunately, this potential is not fully utilized. The biggest problem is the low awareness among Bulgarian and foreign tourists about opportunities for leisure and combining different types of tourism during skiing and off-season.***

#### **Sport facilities conducive to the development of tourism**

The ski slopes in the territory of Chepelare municipality are of the greatest importance for the development of the sport. The tracks for cross-country skiing and biathlon are:

- Ski Center - Chepelare - Mechi Chal Peak, 1854 m above sea level Length of routes by 1.5 km., 2 km., 2.5 km., 3km., 5km. Biathlon shooting range.

- "Rozhen meadows" - 1450 above sea level. Length of the trails - 1.5km, 2km, 2.5km, 3km, 4km, 5km. Biathlon shooting range.
- Ski Center - Chepelare
- The track "Mechi Chal 1" is for alpine disciplines and is 3 250 meters long, 50 meters wide and 720 meters displacement, the track is homologated and it can be used for international competitions in alpine skiing and snowboarding; It is equipped with the most modern artificial snow system in Bulgaria. The 47 guns can cover the track for 100 hours at a temperature of -3 degrees.
- "Mechi chal 2" - a tourist track with a length of 5 250 m, a width of 25 m and a displacement of 720 m

There are several shorter ski slopes available for skiers with varying difficulty. For skiers and snowboarders there is also a red "hard" track with deep snow and a length of 1.2 km. All slopes are equipped with free wireless internet.

In Pamporovo ski slopes are of varying degrees of difficulty from green - suitable for beginners skiers to blacks - a real challenge for professionals. Their total length is 37 km. Pamporovo is particularly suitable for cross-country skiing. The route has a total length of 25 km. and passes through scenic landscapes from Pamporovo to Mugla village and back. The last extension of the tracks was made during the 2008/2009 season when the 2 new 7 km of ski runs, which extended the ski area of Pamporovo towards Stoykite. The currently functioning snow cannons are 80, 6 plowing machines are used for tracking.

Other sports facilities in the municipality that are important for the development of tourism and the local population are:

- General Physical Education Hall - 408 sq.m. Presentation: Volleyball Sports, Dance, Table Tennis, Chess
- Multifunctional sports playground - 1100 sq.m. Purpose: Handball, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball, Small Door Football
- Multifunctional sports playground Pamporovo - 2076 sq. m. Purpose: Handball, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball, Small Door Football
- Indoor hall for volleyball and basketball
- Indoor table tennis room
- School sports facilities. Purpose: Basketball, Volleyball, Gymnastics, Sports dances, Art gymnastics

- Outdoor playground for football
- Tennis court - accessible to both the local population and tourists

***In order to overcome the seasonality in tourism there is a need for development of the sports that can be practiced during the summer season. This can be achieved with high-profile international competitions in many niche and extreme sports, as well as creating suitable tourism products for the spring, summer and autumn seasons.***

### **Flora and fauna and protected areas**

Over 70% of the total area of Chepelare municipality is occupied by forest territories. According to the phytogeographical division of the country, the territory of Chepelare municipality falls in the eastern parts of the western mountain phytogeographical region and in the southwestern parts of the Upper Thracian phytogeographical region.

In terms of forest zoning, the municipality falls into two zones:

- of the beech forests (between 900 and 1500 m above sea level), characterized by common beech, hornbeam, black pine, birch and aspen, as well as mixed beech and fir beech and spruce and others.
- of coniferous forests (between 1300 and 2200 meters above sea level), with typical representatives such as white pine, spruce, white and black fir. The birch, aspen and fir spruce formations are also encountered, and the bushes have a significant distribution of Siberian juniper, black and red bilberries.

The forest fund of Chepelare municipality is 247 242 decares (mainly spruce, pine and fir), with just over 70% of the forests being private, organized in 22 cooperatives and companies.

Forests with wood-producing and medium-shaping functions predominate (53% of the total forest area). The latter are the source of various secondary uses:

- collecting mushrooms,
- collecting herbs,
- collecting wild berries,
- Yield of resin, pine wood, fiber and other legally authorized activities.

Many shrubs, semi-shrubs and grass species also participate in the plant formations. There is a wide variety of mushrooms.

Medicinal plants with a limited collection regime are: licorice, St. John's wort, and shingle, and potentially threatened with extinction are: yellow gentian, geranium, primrose, whip, autumn crocus, marjoram, mountaineer, ladybug, blade of grapes, cinderella, poultry.

Rhodope Pineapple, Rhodope Cream, Rhodopean Red Tulip, Rhodopean Omeinic, Rhodopean Donkey Thistle are in The RED BOOK and the List of Protected Plants.

The animal world on the territory of the municipality is also diverse. Representatives of the following breeds birds can be seen in the forests:

- Columbiformes - Columba palumbus, Streptopelia turtur, Streptopelia decaocto
- Galliformes – Perdix, Tetrao urogallus.
- Passeriformes – sparrows, nightingales, larks, swallows, wagtail, redstart, tits, white wagtail, jay, crow;
- woodpeckers
- Strigiformes - owls, heard
- Anseriformes - Anas platyrhynchos,
- Falconidae - buzzard hawk, rock eagle;

On the territory of the municipality there are more:

- reptiles - green, brown and meadow lizard, linden, viper, grass snake;
- amphibians - frogs, alpine triton;
- European roe deer, Cervus elaphus, hedgehog, mole, squirrel, bats, badger, mouse;
- fish - river and rainbow trout, black barbel, Leuciscus cephalus.

The Red Book recorded are the Alpine newt /salamander/ some bat species.

Subject to conservation are the following rare animal species:

- Mammals: European wolf, otter, several bat species, chamois, bald, brown bear, Vormela peregusna

- Amphibians and Reptiles: Yellow-tailed Buckthorn, Ordinary Swamp Turtle, Swallowtail Turtle, Swallowtail Turtle, Big-crested Triton
- Fish: Marsh Barbell, *Rhodeus sericeus amarus*
- Invertebrates: *Austroptamobius torrentium*, Mussel, Alpine Rosalie, etc..

The forests are endangered by excessive exploitation of forest resources as well as by illegal logging, which lead to a strong decline in the quality of forest ecosystems, disturb the natural water balance in the area and cause erosion and landslide processes. The high-mountain parts of Persenk are subject to serious investment intentions for the development of renewable energy production - through wind farms and small hydropower plants. The construction of wind farms will hinder the free movement of birds, especially raptors, and will significantly restrict their access to suitable habitats. They will cause direct collisions and killing of birds, as well as fragmentation and loss of valuable habitats.

The categories of protected areas under the Bulgarian legislation are:

- ✓ reserve;
- ✓ national park;
- ✓ nature landmark;
- ✓ maintained reserve;
- ✓ nature park;
- ✓ protected area.

In the municipality of Chepelare protected are several sites in the "reserve", "protected area", "landmark" two "protected zones", and several old trees - "protected natural sites":

- ✓ PA BG0002105 Persenk - the Birds Directive included in Natura 2000. About 70% of the area is covered by forests, mostly of spruce (*Picea abies*), less deciduous and mixed. Persenk is one of the most important places in the country of importance to the European Union for the nesting rock eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, *Picoides tridactylus*, Gray Woodpecker and *Tetrao urogallus*. The Black Woodpecker / *Dryocopus martius* / *Pernis apivorus* / there are also representatives of breeding populations in the area.
- ✓ PA BG0001030 "Rodopi West" - under the Habitats Directive. Subject to conservation are the following natural habitats:
  - Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* и *Fraxinus excelsio*,

- Alpine and Boreal heaths
- Flat or mountain rivers with vegetation from *Ranunculus fluitantis* и *Callitriche-Batrachion*
- Communes of *Juniperus communis* on limestone and others.
- Unspoiled caves
- Different grass and shrub communities
- Beech, oak-hornbeam, Greek beech, Sub-Mediterranean pine forests with endemic subspecies black pine, Acidophilic forests of *Picea* in the mountain to alpine belt (*Vaccinio-Piceetea*), Eastern oak forests, Mizian woods, Rila-Rhodope and Stara Planina white-wooded forests, Mizia forests of silver-linden lime and others.
- ✓ PA “Kutsinsko blato” - a natural locality of Rhodope Cream in the village of Progled and more than 5 centuries-old trees
- ✓ PA “Srednite livadi” – natural pine forests and scenic landscapes

### Transport Accessibility of Chepelare Municipality

There are no motorways and first-class roads running through the territory of the municipality. Access to the territory is carried out only by road transport. The category of built road network in the area is low. The main road crossing this part of the Rhodopes (II-86 / Plovdiv - Smolyan - Rudozem - the border with Greece) is second class. Severe weather conditions and high mountaneous layout are a factor that significantly increases the cost of maintaining and building roads. Public transport is provided by private transport companies. Daily direct bus connection is carried out with Sofia, Plovdiv, Smolyan, Madan, Zlatograd. To larger settlements in the region with varying intensity are performed daily transport links, while in smaller settlements only on certain days of the week.

### Water Supply and Sewerage

One of Chepelare's main concerns, directly affecting tourism, is the water supply and sewerage network. While the share of the water supply is almost 95%, the sewerage supply is about 78%<sup>2</sup>. The discharge of untreated household and industrial waste water is a major source of water pollution in the municipality. The main environmental infrastructures for the protection of water quality - sewerage and sewage treatment plants are inadequate to both the

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<sup>2</sup> По данни на ВИК Смолян

needs (population, business and tourism) and to the requirements of European and national legislation. Despite the existence of two functioning wastewater treatment plants in the municipality (in Pamporovo and Progled) they are not sufficient to cover the needs of the whole population, and the resort of Pamporovo. The sewerage network in all other settlements is discharged into the rivers that pass through them, which pollutes the riverbeds and the environment. There is no drinking water treatment plant on the territory of the municipality. Municipal Administration - Chepelare undertakes measures to improve the state of the engineering infrastructure for water supply to the settlements by allocating funds for targeted interventions through its capital program and by applying and implementing various projects financed by the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

#### Medical service

Another very important issue, especially for the development of sport and extreme tourism, is the state of medical care. Several medical, dental and rural health practices have been registered on the territory of Chepelare municipality. In the villages of Orehovo, Malevo, Zaburdo, Lilekovo, Ostrica and Zornitsa, however, there is no permanent access to medical services because of the unacceptability of medical practices. The inhabitants of the villages have poor health status - the quality of the offered medical services is lower and the access to the health network is limited. The decrease in both quantity and quality of health services is characteristic. Demographic aging puts additional requirements on the structure of health needs, resulting in high healthcare costs.

Primary care in the municipality of Chepelare is funded by the Regional Health Insurance Fund. It is primary and specialized. The primary one is done by the family doctors and the specialized center of "Medical Center - Smolyan" OOD and the new DCC at the hospital - Smolyan AD, where the specialists from the district hospital are working on a second labour contract.

There are no medical facilities on the territory of Chepelare municipality. Inpatient care is covered by the regional center - Multi-profile Hospital for Active Treatment "Dr. Bratan Shukerov" - c. Smolyan.

In Pamporovo there is a Studenetz base of the Mountain Rescue Service, which performs 24 hours a day.

There are three pharmacies in the town of Chepelare.



#### Tourist infrastructure

The material base of the tourist infrastructure in the Municipality of Chepelare is of good quality. Numerous modern hotels, a variety of restaurants and entertainment venues provide the opportunity to accept a much higher number of tourists than actual employment.

In order to facilitate the tourists and guests of Chepelare, two TICs are built on its territory. One is located in the town of Chepelare (near the "Olympic" square) and has two training and meeting rooms, a reception hall and two offices. The second TIC was built in 2006 and operates in the Chudnite Mostove area.

In the settlements on the territory of Chepelare Municipality there are beds, distributed in hotels, family hotels, houses, apartments and guest rooms, holiday houses, categorized by the Municipality of Chepelare and the Ministry of Tourism<sup>3</sup>. The beds in the municipality are distributed by settlements as follows:

- Zabardo – 23 beds
- Zornitza - 14 beds
- Orehovo - 103 beds
- Pavelsko - 27 beds
- Progled - 88 beds
- Hvoyna - 47 beds
- Chepelare - 861 beds

The enormous interest of the Bulgarian and world markets, the unique resources for the development of these types of tourism are the basis of their prospective development. It is necessary to create more and more diverse integrated tourism products that combine these types both with each other and with other types of tourism, preferred for practicing outside the winter tourist season.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Chepelare Municipality

#### **The strengths and weaknesses of Chepelare as a tourist destination, the opportunities and threats to the use of tourist natural and cultural resources and the attractions in the municipality**

In Bulgaria there are conditions in over 30% of the territory to develop these types of tourism, due to the fact that 33% of the country is covered by mountains and 30% is in Natura 2000. On the Bulgarian market the biggest competitors in this regard are the destinations in Vitosha and Stara Planina.

#### ***Advantages of Chepelare to other Bulgarian destinations for natural, adventure and eco tourism:***

- ✚ Modern accommodation base
- ✚ Proximity to resources for many types of tourism, complementing natural, adventure and eco tourism
- ✚ Proximity to Greece and Turkey

#### ***Advantages of other Bulgarian destinations to Chepelare for natural, adventure and eco tourism***

- ✚ Lower prices
- ✚ Greater proximity to the generating markets for domestic tourism (Vitosha, Stara Planina)
- ✚ Greater proximity to major international markets - Stara Planina to Romania, Vitosha - to all international markets
- ✚ Increased recognition among the Bulgarian public for natural, adventure and eco tourism - Stara Planina, Vitosha.

The following table presents the strengths and weaknesses of the Municipality of Chepelare as a tourist destination as well as the opportunities and threats to the use of the tourist natural and cultural resources and the attractions on the territory of the municipality

#### Strengths

Beautiful nature;

Unique cultural identity;

Developing traditions in festivals;

Activity in the development of a tourist brand;

A climate conducive to the development of many types of tourism;

High Competitiveness among Bulgarian and Balkan Ski Destinations;

Potential of Cultural and Creative Resources;

Developing resources for natural, eco-, rural, adventure, sports, cultural tourism;

Tourism is a development priority in all strategies of the Chepelare municipality and the region;

Commitment of Chepelare municipality to the problems of the tourist business;

The high commitment of Chepelare Municipality to the creation of a resource base for sports and event tourism types;

Existence of strong partnerships between municipal, professional and private tourism organizations;

Progressive policy of the Municipality of Chepelare for destination marketing;

Strong will and wish of the administration of Chepelare municipality to address the problems of

#### Weaknesses

Problems with supporting infrastructure - water supply, public transport, medical services;

Lack of capacity and methodology for applying best practices in the development of tourism in mountain and natural areas;

Lack of a tourist brand for the destination;

Uniform tourist product, low level of diversity and diversification of the way of offering tourist products and services;

Low resource use for festival, natural and eco tourism;

Lack of a separate municipal structure dealing with administration, marketing and partnerships in tourism;

Lack of official presence of major resources for tourism on the Internet, social networks and mobile applications;

Insufficient financing of structure-defining activities related to the cultural heritage of the municipality - museum activity, archaeological excavations, restoration of architectural and other immovable cultural values;

Lack of quality standards for both tourist services and satellite-based tourism industries - retail, souvenir industry, cultural and creative industries, etc..;

Outdated vision for the development of mass group

<p>infrastructure and seasonality in tourism;</p> <p>Proven will and capacity to participate in EU programs to finance tourism related activities - reconstruction and rehabilitation of infrastructure, improvement of tourism supply, improvement of resources for cultural and creative industries</p>	<p>tourism rather than tourism of individual experiences;</p> <p>Low technological security for individual tourists (mobile applications, websites and portals);</p> <p>Insufficient administrative capacity of tourism management in the municipality leading to insufficient financing of marketing activities</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Optimal use of the potential for development of cultural and natural tourism;</p> <p>Identification of sustainable sources for financing integrated marketing activities;</p> <p>Creation of highly competitive European tourism "Brand Chepelare" for tourism not only related to ski tourism;</p> <p>Apply modern technological capabilities to increase the effectiveness of digital marketing;</p> <p>Producing quality standards for the tourist product and aestheticisation of the destination;</p> <p>Building a new material base for event, cultural, natural and other types of tourism;</p> <p>Improving communication and partnership between businesses, the public and the public sector</p> <p>Expanding partnership with Greece and other European countries</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Danger of state and EU failure to build new and improve existing cultural tourism sites;</p> <p>Inappropriate use of the financial resources intended for marketing the destination;</p> <p>Continued lack of tools for attracting highly qualified staff for year-round tourism;</p> <p>Shortage of financial and human resources to adapt to innovative methods and technologies in marketing the destination;</p> <p>Lack of centralized state support to improve tourism infrastructure;</p> <p>Competition on domestic and international markets</p>

#### PRESENTATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION OF THE EXPLORED TOURIST CULTURAL AND NATURAL OBJECTS ON THE TERRITORY OF CHEPELARE MUNICIPALITY

To become a competitive destination for adventurous, natural and

ecotourism, Chepelare should improve the awareness among Bulgarian and foreign tourists about all opportunities in practicing these types of tourism. It is also important to make more and more affordable products for year-round tourism combined with other priority tourism types.

Chepelare has the resources for a unique combination of different types of tourism, which combined with skiing, natural and eco-tourism can contribute to higher competitiveness of the Bulgarian market.

***Chepelare should concentrate on the creation and marketing of a diverse tourist product as a combination of several types of tourism in addition to the main priority tourism types.***

The product mix for Chepelare can only be changed after serious and in-depth annual surveys between both Bulgarian and foreign tourists showing the reasons for the visit, their activities during the stay in the destination and, if necessary, updating the communication, information and advertising campaigns.

It is also important to monitor the annual Eurobarometer, [visitbritain.org](http://visitbritain.org), [germany.travel](http://germany.travel) and the statistical sources of the individual priority markets to determine not only the preferences but also the economic trends of the respective markets by type of tourism so that it can make the perfect product mix.

The Tourism Sustainable Development Program in Chepelare, 2014-2020, describes many measures to create a tourist product based on assets for tourism development as well as the mandatory study (testing) of all tourism products.

The tourist destinations, from the point of view of their marketing, are also considered as a product that has to be "packaged" and put on the relevant tourist markets. This means choosing the main assets for tourism and the focus of the destination.

The process of branding a Chepelare destination should focus on this and reflect visually and verbally with all the elements of the brand a holistic image, a sense of spontaneous association with the main assets of the destination.

So far Chepelare does not have a whole brand to meet the focus as a year-round destination for skiing, natural, adventure, eco tourism with rich opportunities for combining with other types of tourism.

Therefore, it is a vital need for Chepelare to begin the branding process, which is a complex process and the establishment of a new brand may last a long time. However, it is extremely necessary for successful marketing, and is one of the first actions to be realized.

Another important point is that the brand includes sub-brands corresponding to the main types of tourism considered from a branding point of view as "products". They have many of the main branding elements - name, symbolism, color range that are clearly distinguishable in target markets. An example of such an integrated brand is that of the city of Kiev (project): <https://www.behance.net/gallery/525928/The-City-of-Kyiv-Identity>.

After completing the process of creating all elements of the brand, this brand must be positioned on the designated target markets. This means a complete set of branded platforms and tourist products - from urban to specific tours and from communications and information to Internet advertising.

#### Advertising of Destination Chepelare

As in the advertising of most destinations in Bulgaria, the Municipality of Chepelare suffers from an inherited ideological model: it is based on enumeration and display of facts and long descriptions: city history, biographies of people who lived there, historical buildings, nature, and other resources. In the advertising of many Bulgarian destinations on the one hand, there is a "learning-cognitive" element, and on the other - the presumption that tourists know all that the inhabitants of the town know about the destination, the history, etc. That is, the destination speaks in the voice of a "teacher" rather than a friend. It explains what she wants to say, not what the tourist needs to hear in order to spend his time there in a superb way.

Therefore, in all ads, regardless of the platform, Chepelare destination should use such a communication tone that meets the requirements of the modern tourist. What is missing in most cases is visualization and verbalisation of what tourists can do during their stay / visit to the destination and what makes this destination the only kind of experience. For this reason, all of Chepelare destination advertising should change its focus - from resource information to thematic advertising of the experiences of different types of tourism.

A huge problem with Chepelare's advertising is the focus on ski tourism. On the largest international markets (Greece, Turkey, Great Britain, etc.), advertising focuses on the

advantages of the destination as a ski area rather than as a year-round destination with many different aspects and advantages. Taking into consideration the tourism profile of the tourists on the priority markets and the types of tourism with which Chepelare municipality can enrich the tourist product, this omission should be completed with a thematic advertisement for complex tourist products combining skiing or natural tourism with the other priority types of tourism.

The one-sided brand of Chepelare ski area also leads to "unrelated" with the other assets of the destination advertising, which in turn leads to low efficiency of the advertisement itself.

The review of the printed, cartographic and other materials at the TIC in Chepelare is

proof of this "diversity" in the visual message. There is no common color scheme, general style of illustrations / photos, general style of the formats, etc. This once again shows that the effectiveness of advertising is closely related to the branding of Chepelare destination.

Destination marketing covers all the activities and processes that are needed to overcome the distance between buyers and sellers of tourism products. The focus of destination marketing is on adapting to tourist demand for products and services. This represents a continuous expansion of the scope of activities aimed at successfully delivering to many potential markets. It includes decision-making on products, brand, price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution.

At present, tourist destinations face growing competition, which implies significant costs for sustainable destination development, attraction of tourism and the need for constant development and attraction through innovation and changes. Competition, technological development and open markets make distinguishing and offering tourist destinations an increasingly difficult and complex process. Tourists today have more and more information, they are interested in additional services, entertainment and products that they could get during their travels, no matter what the purpose is - what is the extra value of the trip.

Sustainable development of tourism is an objective to which each destination aspires in the long run. It is therefore necessary for it to develop gradually, purposefully and focused on the main tourist resource - nature, culture, living environment, etc. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that consumer demand is constantly changing, and the ability of a destination to adapt quickly and timely to these changes makes it sustainable and competitive.

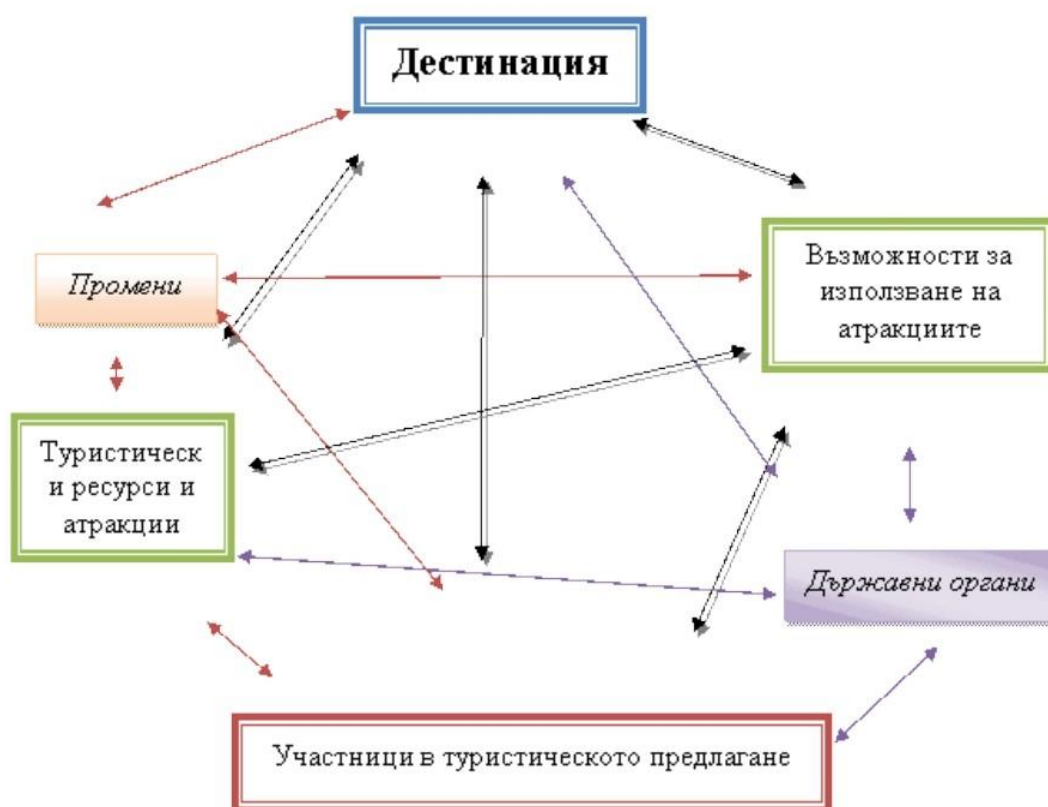


Fig. 1: Model of the competitive advantages of a tourist destination - "diamond".

## Media and Communication

### Traditional Media

Research from priority tourism markets makes it clear that very few tourists use traditional media as a source of information and advice when it comes to selecting destinations. Even in low-use markets, the recommendation of friends and acquaintances, as well as personal experience, is more important than newspapers, radio, TV, brochures, guides, etc. On the other



hand, traditional media for advertising are also the most expensive. They still have an effect among more mature consumers, in more demographically conservative markets and in markets with relatively low purchasing power.

#### **Faces of the Destination**

Many high-profile tourists, in fact, are the best advertisers of the destinations.. These are television stars, journalists in Bulgaria and abroad, representatives of the diplomatic missions of Bulgaria, higher and specialized educational institutions in the sphere of sports, culture, history and ethnography, who often travel to Chepelare for tourism purposes. On the other hand, athletes, ecotourists, diplomatic missions of foreign countries from accredited target markets in Bulgaria, hoteliers, restaurateurs, tour operators and travel agents, souvenir makers and other goods from the satellite tourism accounts are some of the most important channels of influence on the end user. Using them as Faces of "Chepelare Destination" is a type of advertising that, in addition to being very cost effective, is also much more influential than traditional media.

Therefore, high-profile PR actions must be selected to show the experiences of these "faces" in Chepelare destination. The effectiveness of this type of actions depends on the application of some minimum parameters to create a lean structure of IP efforts:

- ④ Choice of topic of the year by type of tourism (one topic for each priority type of tourism) Example: The Year of Adventures in Chepelare
- ④ Choose a face of the destination for the given year by type of tourism. Example (faces): A Greek television star from adventure reality
- ④ Selection of target market for the respective year by types of tourism (one target market per year for a certain type of tourism)
- ④ Choice of tour operators, hotels and restaurants as well as transport companies as main service providers and as main advertisers
- ④ Selection of satellite service providers depending on the target markets and the topic of the year by type of tourism.

#### **Social Media and Networking Society**

Social media are increasingly entering tourism as an important source of information and advertising. They are already extremely important not only for young tourists (up to 35 years of age) but also for those up to 45 years of age. Dynamics, flexibility and the ability to use, unlike traditional media not only in the generating and target markets, but also through mobile

technologies and applications on the spot, in Chepelare destination are very important factors at a relatively low price.

### PR communications in the process of brand positioning and advertising of Chepelare Destination

The choice of the main types of media for advertising and the distribution of the human and financial resources that they suggest are of vital importance for the positioning of Chepelare Municipality as a year-round destination with various types of tourism and with a focus on culture, nature and sports.

Allocation of resources by type of media

type of media	% of the advertising budget	Co-financing and participation of private business
Printed	40%	recommended
Incl.	15% newspapers and magazines	recommended
	60% brochures, posters	recommended
	5% guides and catalogs	recommended
	20% outdoor advertising	recommended
Electronic Media	60%	recommended
Incl.	20% TV and radio	recommended
	30% advertising and information on the Internet and search engines	recommended
	30% social networks and applications	recommended
	20% mobile Internet	recommended

In order for such advertising to be effective, it is necessary:

- ✓ The general event calendar is to be produced 18 months ahead
- ✓ Priority tourism topics have been selected 5 years ahead
- ✓ The Annual advertising plan to be as part of the annual tourism program of Chepelare Municipality
- ✓ The annual media plan is dedicated to the print editions by dates, depending on the target markets (pre-information and booking market characteristics), the ready-made tourist products and the selected sponsoring partners.

The participation of the municipal administration in the traditional media is for the management and control of the quality of the external contractors, while in the case of Internet advertising, mobile advertising and social media - direct.

## Print media

### Newspapers and magazines

Print media advertising should be targeted only at weekend editions (several weekends ahead) in certain thematic editions. Due to the diminishing importance of the print media as a source of information as well as an effective advertising medium, these efforts should focus only on the advertising of certain events - opening of the season, festivals, special weekends for the destination.

Another interesting form that can be used for foreign markets, due to the high advertising prices, are the sponsored thematic articles (advertorial). They are also recommended for magazines with a certain theme - nature, ecology, culture, sports, etc. This type of advertisement (advertorial) can also be used in Bulgarian printed publications as well as in the printed publications for foreigners in Bulgaria (Vagabond).

Chepelare's advertising campaigns must follow a certain structure of the information to be included in the ad. The general ad (photo + destination name) is an ineffective way of advertising. This is a positioning advertisement that is very expensive because it should be used year round. For the rest of the campaigns, it is best to follow the following:

#### **Example:**

- Destination (a specific destination in Chepelare)
- Topic or Event + dates
- Dates to which the subscription is valid or the most appropriate season for the topic
- Photo on the subject (specific and not general)
- Product information (eg Two-day package based on hotel accommodation 3 \* 50 BGN).
- Contact information of the advertiser and the TIC, incl. Webpage, Facebook.com, Twitter.com, etc.

### **Brochures, posters, leaflets and other printed materials**

Apart from catalogs and positioning of general printed matter by type of tourism, other printed materials should follow closely the event advertising (travel excursions, PR actions, etc.) as their

use for consumer-direct advertising is very expensive and very inefficient (penetration only 2%). They serve also for information materials in the TIC. Due to the nature of the print media, it is also inefficient to print in huge quantities, although that would lower the price. The reason is that the information changes much faster than the preparation, financing and printing of such materials.

It is very important for Chepelare municipality before starting to print new materials, FIRST to:

- Make an audit of existing materials and research whether they are effective and produce a list of effective materials
- Make a plan to issue such materials in accordance with the event plan
- Synchronize content with other types of promotional media - incl. and updating information for the Internet and social media

When new materials are created, they should be created on a thematic basis: for priority tourism types: natural, adventurous, etc. , and include on a separate list a list of ready-made tourist products in this type of tourism with prices and details. So this sheet / gadget will be able to change when changing products / prices.

It is recommended that these new materials be printed after the creation of a new Chepelare brand as a year-round multi-profile destination.

## **Banners / Posters**

This type of advertising media is considered both as a print and as an outdoor advertisement, depending on its placement. They are very effective in urban environments, pedestrian zones, airports, bus and train stations where people have more time to view and read content. Particular attention should be paid to the poster design, which should be very impressive, with only one but very attractive photo and very short text. Posters should be thematic on priority tourism types or related to a particular event. Care should be taken not to overburden them with sponsor advertising but to have a dedicated sponsorship place that does not prevent the main message from being understood.

The main places for placing these posters are the TICs, not only in Chepelare but also in the Information Centers in the big cities (Sofia, Plovdiv Bourgas, Varna, Rousse, etc.) as well as:

- Airports in Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas
- The stations and bus stations of the biggest Bulgarian cities

- In certain urban spaces, when it allows in Sofia, Plovdiv and other major cities
- Tourist clubs, branch organizations, associations, etc.
- Embassies and consulates in all targeted markets
- Tour operators and travel agencies on target markets
- Representations of major Bulgarian companies in Bulgaria and in the countries where they have offices and who are on the list of target markets
- Banks (3-4 banks) or joint advertising with banks

#### Outdoor advertising

Very effective both visually and by economic performance is outdoor advertising with billboards and other means ("dressing" of buildings, cars, buses, etc.). For Bulgaria this type of advertising is not so expensive and it is especially necessary for Chepelare destination to spread the advertising on these vehicles to the Trakia and Maritsa highways and especially to Northern Bulgaria (Svilengrad - Rousse axis) and the route of Hemus Motorway. It is especially important that, given the high speed of motorway traffic, the message should be very short (3-5 words), clear, call to action, and the billboard not overloaded graphically.

#### Electronic Media

##### **Radio**

This type of ad platform should be used very limited due to the constantly decreasing share of it as advertising media. Because of the high prices for radio advertising abroad, it has to be limited to the Bulgarian market by focusing on the most listened radio stations for the priority demographics. The radio ad can also be used for brand positioning (slogan and music interstitial) when Chepelare brand is ready.

##### **TV**

The role of television as a source of information in the choice of destination is steadily decreasing. In addition, it is the most expensive communication tool. For Chepelare, it is most important to use TV advertising as the print - on the Bulgarian market and through sponsored broadcasts / reports on the topics of the priority tourism types. As for the foreign media, destination Chepelare such as Eurosport, National Geographic are important channels, as well as channels of nature and tourism, such as those broadcasted during the summer in the sea in languages that are "investment" for the next season. Quality and brand focus are the most important in TV ads. Attention should be paid to the content (short and effective), the resolution of the captured material (HD, 3D), the assembly and the graphic elements. All ads must be subject to the priority types of tourism, as well as event ads, and the materials must

also be transformed into online streaming formats on youtube.com, vimeo.com, vbox7.com, and so on. These materials must also be translated into the languages of the priority markets, or in at least Russian and English.

#### Participation in tourism fairs

Participation in general tourist fairs is a proven ineffective method of advertising and marketing destinations, with the exception of the participation of national tourist offices (in this case, ME). Nevertheless, the participation in Bulgarian tourist fairs is not so expensive and therefore the Chepelare municipality should continue its participation, especially in the specialized ones for weekend tourism (Rousse), cultural tourism (Veliko Tarnovo), etc.

The participation in tourist fairs abroad must be thematic, ie. to select tourism fairs for the types of tourism that are a priority for Chepelare and not the common ones, where the "marketing message" of Chepelare is lost due to the very high competition. Recommended are the international exhibitions / fairs of the Adventure Tourism Association, as well as some of the exchanges in the specific priority markets (Russia, Turkey, Greece, etc.)

#### Internet advertising and communications

The Internet in Bulgaria is used by 58% of the population in one form or another, and 46% uses the world network for obtaining tourist information. However, bookings via the Internet, although increasing, remain below average European levels. Therefore, Internet advertising should focus primarily on markets such as the United Kingdom and Russia, and social media and information - on all priority markets in the relevant language.

***The most important thing for Chepelare municipality is to create its own tourist portal with the municipality's own brand, from which references and reservations can be made to other portals. This will also increase the ranking of the destination in the search engines.***

#### **Official site of Chepelare destination**

**chepelare.travel** – registering this address is very important in advertising through search engines.

From the official site of Chepelare municipality there should be a link to chepelare.travel. Efforts should be made to change and improve the content of Chepelare on the official tourism portal of Bulgaria: Bulgariatravel.org.

**Eventschepelare.bg** - must be a separate address that has a target to the relevant events page of the chepelaretravel.com or welcome2chepelare.com

### Internet search engines

Search engines are the most widely used means of information on the Internet. Google is a world leader except Russia, where yandex.ru is the largest search engine. The presence of a Chepelare destination on the Internet should be in line with the search engines' principle. They no longer count keywords, but words in the main text of the content and in the web address (URL) of the site as well as the external links that enter / go to / from this site. These details are usually taken into account when programming and creating the content of the website.

That is why it is very important that when creating the main text, not just the headlines, there are important keywords in which the main advantages of the destination can easily be found at chepelaretravel.com or welcome2chepelare.com, as well as in all sites and portals related to tourism in Chepelare. За всеки вид туризъм те са различни, но в един текст те винаги трябва да присъстват заедно с думата "Chepelare". Search engines detect not only the text on the pages. They also search in the address of the pages: URL. For example, [http://chepelaretravel.com/page\\_1/1203](http://chepelaretravel.com/page_1/1203) will not give a good result if the tourist searches for eco-tours and paths around Chepelare because the search engine will link the Chepelare page, that is, the result will also be found when searching for a bookstore in Chepelare, not ecotourism. However, if the address is <http://chepelaretravel.com/nature/ecotravel>, then the search engine will detect the Chepelare - Nature - Ecotourism combination that will erect the city in the ecotourism list on the next search. This same principle applies to mobile versions that need to be separated because Google, for example, "punishes" pages without a mobile version, pushing them back.

### Advertising on foreign or international websites of general nature

These are sites that are not related to tourism, but when searching for the word "Chepelare", they appear on the first pages of the results: Wikipedia.org - an information portal that is very important for the establishment of Chepelare as one of the most important European destinations.

### News sites, radio stations and televisions

There are many Bulgarian and foreign sites, however, where advertising is considerably more expensive than in specialized tourism websites. That is why, at this stage, Chepelare municipality should use only news with links to / from these sites.

### **Sites of airports, transport stations, etc.**

The most important thing about all these sites is the brand presence, and if there is advertising, it should be short and effective.

### **Specialized Bulgarian websites and those that sell tourism**

Such are Journey.bg, Nasamnatam.com and many of the collectible shopping sites. For Chepelare, it is most important to provide true, market-friendly information in the Destination Information Departments and to train private operators / hoteliers, etc. which of these portals are most effective for their particular case.

### **Specialized foreign or international websites**

The most important is tripadvisor.com, due to the ability to provide information about the destination, its attractions and services, as well as hotels, etc. For Chepelare municipality it is important to contact the destination center of this portal and to declare its official status as a destination, making the various attractions, festivals etc. Destinations participate free of charge at tripadvisor.com, as well as attractions and events, hotels, etc.

WikiTravel.org is a very important guide and the presence there is also free of charge and allows for a very detailed description of the destination, its advantages and very good practical information. In both portals, the information has to be structured and standardized, presented in the different languages, on priority markets, as well as having rich visual material for illustration.

### **Internet and positioning of Chepelare destination in the Network**

It is very important in Google Maps and other Internet cards to check the exact coordinates of the main attractions to make no mistakes.

### **Social networks**

Social and geosocial networks, as well as blogs, microblogs, social sharing portals for photos and videos, have several immense advantages: they are easy to use, world-wide, and very easy to update content from a single source of distribution. Chepelare Municipality should create such content in advance and use the appropriate software for publishing simultaneously in all distribution channels.



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During the preparation of this paper, only the most popular social and geosocial networks and applications on the Internet are currently being analyzed. In the future, and very soon, new social networks, new Internet portals and other opportunities for Internet communications and advertising may arise. Chepelare Municipality should monitor the characteristics of existing and emerging social networks (configuration, popularity and relevance) and try to be among the "first on the market" if new social networks or technologies arise.

#### **Facebook.com**

For several years, Facebook has been the largest social network in the world and in Bulgaria. It has over 3 million Bulgarians. The Facebook Ads Manager report shows that people living in Bulgaria and using the social network are 3,600,000 people. Around 1 800 000 of them are men (1 200 000 daily users) and approximately the same - 1 800 000 are women (1 300 000 daily users). Its presence must take place in all forms - profile of the town as a consumer, tourism group in Chepelare, pages about the different types of tourism in Chepelare. The use of the word "official group / page / profile" by fans / admirers of Chepelare should be forbidden. In the profiles, groups and pages of Chepelare there should be a uniform standardized information about the destination written in plain language, short, with as many details as possible, etc., as well as all the coordinates of the municipal administration for tourism and TIC Chepelare.

All communications by Chepelare on the "wall" should be at least in Bulgarian and English, or create 2 profiles - one in English and one in Bulgarian. Recommended main account address: Facebook.com/Chepelare.travel and Facebook.com/Welcome2.Chepelare.

Through its own profile, Chepelare destination has to interact with all types of tourism by type - ski, natural, adventure, etc.

The world's largest video sharing network, Youtube.com, is very important for Chepelare destination. The presence of the municipality must be branded as in the address: <http://www.youtube.com/user/Chepelaretravel>, as well as in the visual materials (wall) and content. No videos should be uploaded without title and description, and if they are visited: with business hours, address, phone and GPS coordinates.

Similar are the principles for uploading video content to other video sharing portals such as Vimeo.com, Vbox7.com, and the photo sharing portals: Pinterest.com, Flickr.com, Panoramio.com.

### **Twitter.com**

Twitter.com is the largest network in the world for micro-blogs. Chepelare Municipality has to devote time and human resources to keep daily presence on Twitter.com and to create different addresses in the system: <http://twitter.com/Chepelaretravel>, <http://twitter.com/EventChepelare>, etc.

### **Google Plus**

This is the gmail.com, googleplay.com, panoramio.com, youtube.com users network, Chepelare municipality has to create a tourist information profile with photo albums that duplicate those in panoramio.com. No videos should be uploaded without title and description, and if they are visited: with business hours, address, phone and GPS coordinates.

### **Mobile apps, apps and e-books for tablets and other mobile devices**

Countries such as the United States, Great Britain, France, etc. use the mobile internet, its applications and e-publishing opportunities in tourism marketing for a long time. What PhoCusWright shares is that these technologies are entering much faster in Eastern Europe as well. Even Bulgarian destinations (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna) have several applications and presence in the distribution channels of these applications. It is very important for Chepelare to enter this market as quickly as possible considering not only the enormous possibilities of these technologies but also the preferences of many tourists to make individual reservations and receive specialized and individualized information.

A very important factor for the popularization of Chepelare destination is the information - a satisfactory level of information targeted at different tourist markets at local and international level. To develop an effective information base for the destination easily accessible with good navigation, comprehensive information that is easily understood and offered in several languages with extensive illustrative material.

The destination should be managed as a business system. It is necessary to focus on integrated marketing tools, which requires coordination at all levels and factors in tourism, which in turn will be a prerequisite for the successful development of the destination. As a whole, tourism activities are directly related to trade, which means that all activities of the tourist destination should be targeted, flexible and adaptable to consumers' demand and their constant change.

The municipality should invest in the promotion of the tourist business - a significant number of tourist attractions can be created to attract local and foreign visitors.

Attracting and retaining tourists is a prerequisite for the growth and development of tourism. Marketing involves integration at different levels and different tactics as well as different tourist resources, which significantly contributes to the acquisition of competitive advantages for the destination. The task of marketing the destination is to unify - positioning the market with the tourist markets, the local tourist business and the tourist product to be offered to the consumer.

The principle of impact on the promotion of the tourism business is based on information campaigns aimed at potential tourists in order to position the tourist attractions, tourist events with which local and foreign tourists are not familiar.

#### Sources of information

- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Tourism
- Municipality of Chepelare
- National Strategy for Regional Development 2012-2022
- Analysis of the territorial development of tourism
- Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria, Horizon 2030
- Regional Development Plan for the South Central Region
- Strategy for development of Smolyan region 2014-2020
- Municipal Development Plan of Chepelare Municipality 2014-2020
- Annual Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the South Central Region Regional Development Plan
- Concept for development of the tourist product of the Central Rhodopes region
- Multipurpose Forest Management Plan of Chepelare Municipality
- Program for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Chepelare Municipality 2014-2020
- VIK EOOD - Smolyan
- NSI, Infostat
- RSB - South, Department of Statistical Studies - Smolyan
- Institute for Market Economics

## COVER PAGE

<b>1</b>	<b>Code and title of the deliverable</b>	Deliverable 4.1.2 Joint tourism market research
<b>2</b>	<b>Name(s) of the PB(s) responsible for the deliverable</b>	Municipality of Chepelare
<b>3</b>	<b>Text referring to the funding sources</b>	The Project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and by national funds of the countries participating in the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” .
<b>4</b>	<b>Disclaimer</b>	The contents of this Report are sole responsibility of the Municipality of Chepelare and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the participating countries the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat.
<b>5</b>	<b>Link to the project website</b>	<a href="http://www.integratour.org">www.integratour.org</a>

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## RESEARCH OF TOURIST CULTURAL AND NATURAL SITES ON THE TERRITORY OF CHEPELARE MUNICIPALITY

This research has been created within the framework of the Project “Integrated Tourism Approach For the Development of Cultural and Natural Sites in Chepelare, Bg and Prosotsani, Gr” (INTEGRA\_TOUR), financed under the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Program "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020", Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.01/31.08.2017. The Project is 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 contents of this document are sole responsibility of the Municipality of Chepelare and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the participating countries the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat.

Tourism resources and the potential for tourism development in certain regions of Bulgaria have been the subject of many analyzes and studies at different times. Despite the differences in approaches, criteria and assessments, all surveys reaffirm the fact that there is a rich and varied potential of tourism resources in many parts of the country. With regard to their territorial location for the development of tourism, it is important to note that:

- along with the concentration of the tourist development along the Black Sea coast and in the mountainous regions more than half of Bulgaria has valuable tourism resources whose potential is partly used or not used at all;
- the area of Chepelare is characterized by an exceptional variety of tourist resources for which the above finding is valid; most of them are related to cultural heritage in the Bulgarian lands from ancient times until today.
- there is a number of problems and weaknesses that keep the development of tourism in much of the area under consideration, including: disproportion in the construction and concentration of the tourist base and resources; lagging behind in the development of national and regional infrastructure and the use of modern technologies, information and reservation systems; poorly developed marketing and destination advertising activities; insufficient political coordination at national, regional and local level, between the private and public tourism sector and branch organizations and associations.

This development is the implementation of Activity: Conducting tourist market research, including: Exploring the tourist cultural and natural sites in the municipality of Chepelare within the project "Integrated Tourism Approach For the Development of Cultural and Natural Sites in Chepelare, Bg and Prosotsani, Gr" (INTEGRA\_TOUR), financed under the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020". The aim is to support the analysis and evaluation of information gathered in the implementation of research and disclosure potential attractions related to tourist cultural and natural sites in the municipality of Chepelare and selection of attractions with the greatest potential to attract tourists.

The assessment of tourism development potential in the area should also contribute to achieving a unified position and pooling the efforts of stakeholders and subjects of regional tourism policy to develop sustainable tourism based on cultural heritage, local conditions and opportunities for cross-border cooperation.

Cultural and natural sites identified in various strategic documents of the municipality of Chepelare and Smolyan region as tourist attractions need to meet **the following requirements:**

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a) to be accessible: both transport and financially, in order to provide opportunities for their use, regardless of their uniqueness or importance;

б) to be complex: single resources (with certain exceptions and with equal other conditions) are more difficult to become attractive for visits compared to a group of resources, and their complex location helps to attract tourists and stimulates long-term development of the territory through the tourist system activities;

в) to attract tourists: they can attract with their beauty and exoticness or their uniqueness (size, unusualness, rare resource, etc.), but without complying with the requirement of attractiveness it is practically impossible to take them to the category of tourist resources;

г) to be safe: the degree of their preservation is important in the case - the higher it is, with equal other conditions, the resources will be more attractive (the ruins of a medieval castle in unprotected form attract fewer visitors compared to the well- preserved building);

д) to have a good geographic location: their location is favorably determined in combination with diverse landscapes, natural and cultural-historical features. Also, the origin of the tourist resources is important. Often those of natural origin attract more attention than anthropogenic. At the same time, artificially created ones may have greater attractiveness compared to inherited anthropogenic resources.

The main features of tourism resources are: attractiveness, accessibility, degree of learning; significance (spectacularity); socio-demographic characteristics; potential stock and mode of use. As specific chemical properties are determined:

- integrity (indivisibility) and elements when they exist in a relationship;
- reliability - defined by all social, economic and political conditions within the boundaries of the tourist area;
- uniqueness (rarity, exclusivity) or probability of encounter and uniqueness;
- cognitive value - associated with specific historical facts, personalities, life path and creativity of famous people;
- popularity - among tourists;
- exoticness - the degree of contrast of the site with the conditions of the permanent residence of the tourists, which also investigates the unusualness of the tourist site;
- expression - degree of interaction with the surrounding environment, infrastructure and nature;
- reservation - readiness for organized reception of tourists;
- safety - absence of possible negative consequences of the use of the objects by tourists and the local population

A fundamental requirement for this analysis of cultural and natural sites is to be as objective as possible and based on easily verifiable criteria and indicators. To achieve



greater credibility and transparency, criteria and indicators should be defined that are widely disseminated, verified and used in other analytical materials exploring the tourist resources and potential of a given space.

№	DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS	MEASUREMENTS	WEIGHT (number of points)	
			For the measurement	Total
1	<b>Attractiveness</b>	popularity combined with a beautiful and diverse landscape preservation uniqueness beauty / exotics	5 3 4 5 4	21
2	<b>Importance</b>	world (incl. in UNESCO list) national local ensemble "for information"	8 5 2 2 1	18
3	<b>Accessibility</b>	with all (including wide-range) vehicles/buses only by car only with high-pass vehicles just on foot	5 3 2 1	11
4	<b>Readiness to accept and service tourists</b>	availability of tourist infrastructure and superstructure degree of staffing safety degree of suitability for the formation of tourist products	7 5 3 5	20

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Object	Location	Type	Attractiveness	Importance	Accessibility	Readiness to accept and service tourists	Total result
Chudnite mostove /Wonder bridges/	Zabbardo Village	Natural phenomena	21	5	5	12	43
Cheleveshkata Dupka cave	Orehovo village	Natural landmark	7	3	1	5	16
Spruce constellation "Ardashla"	Pamporovo	Natural Monument	11	4	5	5	25
Waterfall "Duplevo"	Orehovo village	Protected Natural Site	11	4	1	5	21
Waterfall "Skakaloto"	Orehovo village	Protected Natural Site	16	4	1	5	26
Kosten kamak /Bone stone/	Orehovo village	Colossal rock massif	7	4	1	5	17
Vaklite dupki /The dark holes/	Zabardo village	Natural rock formations	16	4	1	5	26
Gluhite kamani /Deaf stones/	Zabardo village	Natural rock formations	16	4	1	5	26
Chelevistnitsa Cave	Zabardo village	Natural landmark	12	4	1	5	22
Cave Slivova dupka /Plum hole/	Zabardo village	Natural landmark	12	4	1	5	22
Cheleveshnitsata cave	Pavelsko village	Natural landmark	8	4	1	5	18
Kutsinskoto blato	Progled village	Natural landmark	12	5	5	5	27
The Zarenitsa Fortress	Pavelsko village	Thracian fortress	7	2	3	5	17
The fortress "Zagrad"	Zabardo village	Thracian fortress	12	4	1	5	22
Tyovnata Dupka Cave	Zabardo village	Natural landmark. Monument of culture of national importance	21	8	3	12	44
Tsirikova church	Zabardo village	Natural landmark. Monument of culture of national	21	5	3	12	41

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		importance					
Church "Vaznesenie Gospodne"	Pavelsko village	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Church „Sv. Iliya”	Hvoyna village	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Church “ Sv. Nedelya”	Orehovo village	Архитектурно наследство	9	2	5	5	21
Church “ Vaznesenie Gospodne”	Malevo village	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Church „Sv. Bogorodica”	The town of Chepelare	Архитектурно наследство	9	2	5	5	21
Church “ Sv. Atanasiy Veliki”	The town of Chepelare	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Church „Sv. Panteleimon”	Progled village	Архитектурно наследство	9	2	5	5	21
Church “ Uspenie na Presveta Bogoroditsa”	к. к Pamporovo	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Uzunskata Kashta	The town of Chepelare	Архитектурно наследство	9	2	5	5	21
Old House in “Mramor” str.	The town of Chepelare	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
House of Dicho Petrov (Takov)	Progled village	Monument of culture of national importance	9	5	5	7	26
Old arched bridge between Hvoyna and Narechenski Bany	Hvoyna village	Built during the Roman era	9	2	5	5	21
Bridge at the entrance of the village of Oreho	Orehovo village	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21
Old vaulted bridge in the village of Oreho	Orehovo village	Architectural heritage	9	2	5	5	21

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Bridge to the Asenets settlement	Near the town of Chepelare	Architectural heritage	9	2	1	5	17
An old bridge	Zornitza village	Architectural heritage	9	2	1	5	17
Monument to the victims of the wars in Chepelare	The town of Chepelare	Consecrated in 1937	21	2	5	20	48
Monument of Captain Petko Voyvoda	The town of Chepelare	Built in 2004	21	2	5	20	48
Monument-fountain in memory of the wartime officers and soldiers	The town of Chepelare	Built in 1936 r	21	2	5	20	48
Monument to the heroes killed in the Balkan and World War I	Hvoyna village	Built in 1933	9	5	2	20	36
Monument to the victims of the Balkan wars	Pavelsko village	Opened 2001	9	5	2	20	36
Monument to the killed people for their country	Bogutevo village	Opened 1950	9	5	2	20	36
Monument of the people killed in the wars	Malevo village	Opened 1933	9	5	2	20	36
Monument of the people killed in the wars	Orehovo village	Opened 1933	9	5	2	20	36
The National Astronomical Observatory "Rozhen"	Rozhen	Scientific complex	21	5	5	20	51

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#### Изложби и експозиции

Обект	Местоположение	Характеристика
<b>Rhodore Karst Museum</b>	The town of Chepelare	Уникален за България; единственият музей на пещерите в Югоизточна Европа; издирва и изучава пещерното природно богатство
<b>Museum of skiing</b>	The town of Chepelare	разполага със ски от началото на развитието на ски спорта до най-новите модели, произведени във фабриката за ски в града
<b>Museum collection at the Aleko Konstantinov Community Center</b>	Pavelsko village	исторически и етнографски материали от региона на село Павелско
<b>Museum collection in the Community Center "Rodopsko badeshte"</b>	Orehovo village	сечива и предмети използвани в бита на ореховеца до средата на XX век; родословните схеми на всички родове в селото.
<b>Permanent ethnographic exhibition at the community center "Hristo Botev"</b>	Zabardo village	голямо количество експонати, които са умело съчетани с пана от дърворезба

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## Greece-Bulgaria

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#### Събития и обичаи

<b>Toodorovden, Pustove, Old Martha, Spring Art Carnival</b>	Every year in March
<b>May Cultural celebrations 6-24 may</b>	Every year in May
<b>Celebration of Bogutevo Village (May 6<sup>th</sup>)</b>	Every year in May
<b>Celebration of the town of Chepelare (May 24<sup>th</sup>)</b>	Every year in May
<b>Celebration of Pavelsko Village (Spasovden)</b>	Every year in May
<b>Celebration of Progled Village</b>	Every year in July
<b>Celebration of Malevo Village (Ilinden)</b>	Every year in July
<b>Celebration of Orehovo Village, A day of "Nut"</b>	Every year in September
<b>Celebration of Zabardo Village</b>	Every year in August
<b>Celebration of Zornitza Village</b>	Every year in August
<b>Celebration of Ostritza Village</b>	Every year in August
<b>Celebration of Lilekovo Village</b>	Every year in August
<b>September cultural celebrations</b>	Every year in September
<b>National Competition for New Bulgarian Music in 7/8</b>	Every two years in October
<b>Ussim Kerim National Poetry Competition</b>	In October
<b>Celebration of "Potato" (Chepelare town and Zabardo Village)</b>	Every year in November

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