



EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE!



GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA



GOVERNMENT OF BULGARIA

Route 1 "Tourism and culture for travel lovers"

*The unforgettable places that are hidden in the forgotten Eastern European territories -
the modern world, through the eyes of the past*

SOUTH OF DANUBE - WHAT WOULD THE VRATSA REGION TELL US

1. **Community centre "Razvitie" (Development), Vratsa** (Vratsa town centre;
GPS: 43°12'09.90"N 23°32'56.89"E, tel.: +359 92/ 62-47-40; + 359 92/62-15-73)

Community centre "Razvitie" is one of the oldest of its kind in the country. It was founded in 1869 at the discretion of the teacher Simeon Podbalkansky. Originally called "Bulgarian Cultural Centre squib in Vratsa", it went through different names over the years, when in 1884 the name "Razvitie" appeared. The community centre has gradually expanded its activities and from a place for learning and literacy, it has become a cultural centre, where a theatre, cinema, music society, archaeological society, museum collection, children's art school, etc. have been functioning. The building, which houses the organization today is a monument of culture and was built between 1939 and 1941 with donations of patriotic citizens. Elena and Todor Balabanovi donated the courtyard in the centre of the town, in which the building was constructed.

2. **Ethnographic-Revival Complex "St. Sofronii Vrachanski ", Vratsa**

(GPS: 43°12'05.40"N 23°33'02.95"E; tel.: +359 92 627 097; www.vratsamuseum.com;
vratsamuseum@mail.bg)

Working hours: Monday-Friday 9.00 ч. – 17.30 ч.; weekend and holidays 9.00 ч. – 12.00 ч.;
13.00 ч. – 17.30 ч.; with prior request between 12.00 и 13.00; Free day: Monday

Automobiles of the 19th and 20th century and which are some of the most environmentally friendly vehicles

The exhibition "Traditional vehicles and modern carriages" shows some of the oldest vehicles, produced in Bulgaria, as well as what was modern and traditional for the beginning and the first quarter of the 20th century. Visitors can see a "wooden" ox car, a car with iron axes and a painted



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donkey carriage. The production of vehicles in the area dates back to 1883, when Mityu Orozov, famous for his diligence and innovations, opened a small chariot workshop. With high-quality materials, workers produced carriages, bikes, brackets, convertibles, horns and sanitary cars, according to customer needs.

Fashion trends in the past

Expositions at the Ivan Zambin's House-Museum are arranged in several tours. The goldsmith's exhibition shows „arpalii" earrings made by filigree technique with a different number of beads, granules and rosettes; collections of belts made of cast or forged metal or fishbone decoration; belt buckles - also cast or forged; exquisite hairpieces, earbuds, brooches and “tepelak”. Guests can see also bronze „divit” (special metal box with two separate storage facilities – for ink and feather), powder boxes, silver boxes for squibs and church requisite. The local goldsmiths also decorated the rifles and the handles of the pistols, made gold and silver inlays on their metal parts and also on scimitars, knives, daggers and swords. The visitors of the exposition can also get acquainted with the goldsmith's tools, shapes and moulds, which the Vratsa goldsmiths worked with, in the fully equipped goldsmith's workshop with workbench.

"Traditional and modern silkworm growing, silk and silk fabrication" exhibition shows the oldest way of cultivating worms, original dome for home-brewing of Vratsa-type silk, domestic horizontal weaving loom and cocoons wound on a bush. Attention is paid to modern methods of silkworm growing, as well as to the achievements of modern genetic and biotechnological methods for the creation of new mulberry cultivars and hybrids with higher stability and shorter growth periods. What is remarkable is the collection of silk fabrics produced in the Vratsa factory.

"Traditional viticulture and wine-making" exhibition includes labels of Bulgarian wines; authentic wine “carriages” - barrels with 5000 litres capacity; traditional wine-making equipment with weighing scales and trays for stomping grapes; wine jugs and more.

Dimitraki Hadjitoshev's House-Museum is a remarkable cultural and architectural value, a model of Bulgarian's Revival architecture. The elements of the interior are made very precisely and



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give grace to the overall look of the house. A silk weaving loom and silk fabrics, traditional for the region, are shown in the women's working room.

3. Regional History Museum - Vratsa (2 "Hristo Botev" sq., Vratsa, tel.: +359 92 620220; www.vratsamuseum.com; GPS: 43°12'02"N; 23°32'50"E)

Working hours: Monday-Friday 9.00 ч. – 17.30 ч.; weekend and holidays 9.00 ч. – 12.00 ч.; 13.00 ч. – 17.30 ч.; with prior request between 12.00 и 13.00; Free day: Monday

The Regional Museum, which is part of the Palace of Culture in Vratsa, is one of the few buildings in the country that is specifically designed and constructed for the needs of a museum. Regional Museum Vratsa has many expositions among which Archaeology and Thracian Treasures, including a separate hall for the Rogozen Treasure, which is the largest Thracian treasure found in Bulgaria. Separate exhibitions present important samples and exhibits from "Bulgarian history in the 15th-19th century period" and "New History". An interesting part is the "Zn Art - Museum of Paper" exhibition, which shows multi-layered reconstructions of selected exhibits from Bulgarian museums, artefacts from the prehistoric and antique epochs, contemporary monuments of culture and author's works. One of the latest expositions is the museum's "Lapidarium" – it is built outdoors and shows the four-colour mosaic from the village of Galatin, architectural details, tombstones and epigraphic monuments from the Roman epoch, the late antiquity and the Bulgarian Middle Ages.

SPIRITUAL ENERGY

4. "St. Ivan Rilski – Pusti" and the Big Cave, Bistrets village (GPS: 43°14'37.87"N 23°27'46.58"E, The monastery does not offer accommodation, there is a pavilion to relax)

The monastery of Bistrets, also known as "St. Ivan Kasinets" and "St. John Theologian" was founded at the end of 11th and beginning of 12th century and during the Ottoman Empire was destroyed and restored a lot of times. The monastery had a goldsmith's workshop, run by students of the famous Chiprovtsi goldsmith school who created many exquisite works that became famous beyond the boundaries of the Vratsa region. At the base of the rocks beneath the monastery lies the Big Cave. It is assumed that the monks initially inhabited this and the surrounding caves before building the monastery. There was a church in the cave, a prove for which are the rock icons,



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frescoes and wall-paintings scenes from the lives of saints. More Thracian ceramics were found in the cave, which testifies that it was a sanctuary in the pre-Roman era – 4th – 1st c. BC.

5. Cherepishki monastery (There is an exit for the monastery 5 km before Mezdra; GPS: 43°05'45.15"N 23°36'16.07"E; Working hours: 07:00 – 20:00 during the whole year)

The last stop in this route is Cherepishki (comes from “cherep” – skull) monastery, which is named after the skeletons of the perished warriors during the battle of Tsar Ivan Shishman with the Ottoman Turks. It was destroyed during the same battle and was restored at the beginning of the 17th century at the discretion of Pimen Zografski. The famous St. Sofronii Vrachanski lived for a short time in the monastery at the end of the 18th century. Ivan Vazov also visited the place and was inspired to write the story “One Bulgarian woman”.

THE SYMPHONY OF NATURE

6. Fun park „Ledenika” (17 km from Vratsa, through the Vratsata pass, tel: +359 92 623553 – cashier; +359 877 419 253; GPS: 43°12'16"N; 23°29'25"E)

Working hours: summer season: 01 June - 30 August: 9.00 – 19.00 /last entrance 18:00/; winter season: 01 September - 01 June: 9.00 – 17.00 /last entrance 16:00/

One of the most picturesque and visited caves in Bulgaria is on our way. On a picturesque asphalt road, which passes through the Vratsata pass and winds through the Vratsa Balkan, we reach the Ledenika cave, named after the icy stalactites and stalagmites, which form around the entrance of the cave in the winter. Among the most beautiful formations are the "Plazniata" passage, the small hall with almost round shape, The Little and Big Gap, The Lake of Desires, The Pass of Sinners, etc. There is incredible acoustics in one of the halls - "Concert Hall", and symphonic concerts are organized there. There is a scheduled show "Sound and Light" in one of the halls. The entrance of the cave is a starting point for an attractive tourist route from/to Vratsa. A fun park named Ledenika is located close to the cave. It offers the following services:

- "Mom, Dad and Us" includes rope structures, wooden constructions and Via Feratta attractions, children's playground;

- "Ledenice" is a model of the most interesting cave organism in Ledenika - Svetlomzrazec;



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- "The bat" is a contemporary projection hall;
- "The fairy-tale alley" is a promenade with dolls - familiar fairy-tale characters and an open-air theatre;
- Attraction trains on different routes.

THE SYMBOLS OF VRATSA

7. Meshchii Tower (Town centre of Vratsa)

One of the famous landmarks and symbols of Vratsa, the Meshchii Tower, was built as a residential defence facility in the 16th century and was converted into a clock tower at the end of the 19th century. The tower cannot be accessed; it can be viewed from the outside during the whole year.

8. Kurtpashova Tower (Town centre of Vratsa)

The tower was built in the 17th century, but its architecture was borrowed from the late Bulgarian Middle Ages. It is open for visitors, there is a museum boutique for souvenirs and copies of the museum exhibits on the first floor.

WATER – THE FORCE OF NATURE

9. Skaklya waterfall (GPS: 43°11'10.96"N 23°33'07.69"E)

The waterfall is the highest, non-constantly flowing waterfall in Bulgaria and on the Balkan Peninsula. It is situated 1.5 km away from Vratsa and is a crossing point of several tourist routes. From the top of the waterfall, you can see unforgettable views of Vratsa and the Vratsa field.

ADDITIONAL PLACES:

If you have time and desire to feel more of the spirit of the region, you can visit the Art Gallery "Ivan Funev" (part of the Regional History Museum), Drama-Puppet Theatre - Vratsa, Nature



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Conservation Centre "Natura" (in the building of Eski Mosque in Vratsa, which is an architectural and art monument of culture).

NORTH OF DANUBE - WHAT WOULD PIATRA-OLT REGION TELL US

ROMANIAN CUSTOMS AND CULTURE IN THE AGES

- 1. The Olt County Museum** (Slatina, Olt County, 1 Ana Iaptesku str., tel: +40 249 415 279; working hours: Monday – Friday: 10:00-18:00, weekend: 9:00-17:00; GPS: 44°25'48"N 24°21'36"E)

With its four expositions and more than 25,000 artefacts, the museum reveals the customs, culture and civilization that developed in the county. Guests of the museum can see the famous sheepskin of Vadastra, Olt carpets, a collection of ceramics from Boga, Corbeni and Roman and a collection of decorated eggs from Oboga. There is a collection of over 260 covers - carpets, tablecloths, quilts, decorated in a variety of colours. Visitors can see exhibits from the time of Ghetto-Dacia, the Roman Empire, such showing a connection with the Byzantine Empire, as well as tracing the life of the rulers of Olt County during the Middle Ages. An interesting fact is that the museum operates a restoration laboratory where ceramic and metal objects are handled.

THE HEART OF LIFE - THE LEGEND TELLS

- 2. Brâncoveni Monastery** (DN64, Brâncoveni, Romania; tel: +40 249/417.244; working hours: every day 8:00 - 18:00; GPS: 44°18'14"N 24°18'20"E)

The history of Brâncoveni Monastery is very interesting – it was built in the 15th century by boyars as a sanctuary and was destroyed and restored several times. There is a healing spring where the monastery was founded. The story tells that the spring cured Matei Basarab, after which he and his grandson Preda Brâncoveanu restored the monastery. After a fire and an earthquake in the 18th and 19th centuries, the healing spring was moved beyond the enclosures of the monastery where guests can find it today.

- 3. Neamtu Manor** (Olari, Olt County, Romania)



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If you want to see an example of urban architecture, you should visit Neamtu Manor. His latest owner, Constantine Neamtu, restored the mansion by adding interesting arches and balconies in a style strongly influenced by Art Nouveau. Currently, the building is not accessible for daily tourist visits. The owners regularly organise cultural and social events to raise funds for its maintenance.

4. **Heroes monument in Barza** (Barza, Olt County)

The monument in the village of Barza was built by the locals to perpetuate the memory of the fallen warriors. 25 people brought an oak tree from the forest - 12 meters long and 1.2 m wide in diameter. A monument was made of it, which was later dressed in marble and then inaugurated.

5. **Medieval tower and Hotărâni Monastery** (Hotărâni, Fărcașele, Olt County, Romania; GPS: 44°09'49" N, 24°24'47"E)

Hotărâni Monastery was built in 1588 on the ruins of an ancient Roman city of Romula. It was robbed and destroyed by the Turks and later restored. A very massive tower with a three-level bell tower was constructed at that time. The tower had a strategic watchtower role - the Olt Valley could be seen from the top of it. Later, the Church of Saint Archangel Michael and Gabriel was built in the shape of a rectangle with an apse for an altar. Its door is one of the first examples of the influence of Montenegrin architecture in Romania. Today, the church and the tower have an urgent need of restoration, only ruins remained from the monastery. They are closed for visits for the safety of visitors. The monastery was turned into a parish church.

6. **Princely church** (3 Mihai Viteazul str, Caracal, Olt County, Romania; GPS: 44°06'49"N, 24°20'38"E)

The Princely Church is the oldest temple in Caracal. It was built on the hill of Protos by stone blocks and bricks brought from the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Romula. The church has undergone many reconstructions since its foundation. A very detailed study was conducted in 1975 in order to restore the church in its original form as far as possible. There are preserved icons around the altar probably from the 1890s.

7. **The house of Iancu Jianu** (26 Intrarea Muzeului str., Caracal, Olt County, Romania, tel.: +40 249 511 344; GPS: 44°06'32"N 24°20'56"E)



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Iancu Jianu is a famous personality for the region of Caracal, heir of an old boyar family, he became a defender of the weak and the poor, went on the other side of the law and applied his own justice. The house has a special shape in the style of a fortress mansion and all the objects found in it give important information about the way of life and social activities at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century.

8. Romanati Museum (26 Iancu Jianu str., Caracal, Olt County, Romania; Working time: Monday-Thursday: 8:00-16:00; weekend: 09:00 – 13:00; Friday – closed; GPS: 44°06'34"N, 24°20'52"E)

The museum has four expositions - Archaeology and History; Iancu Jianu Memorial; Fine Arts; Ethnology. There is a Lapidarium at the entrance of the museum, where visitors can see sarcophagi, tombs and vessels. The most remarkable exhibit is Julius Julian's sarcophagus, covered with beautiful ornaments. One of the most attractive collections is the precious stones collection. The Roman bronze statues also deserve attention, including those of the goddesses Diana and Fortuna, god Jupiter and others.

9. National Theatre in Caracal (10 Piața Victoriei str., Caracal, Olt County, Romania, tel: +40 249 511 384; GPS: 44°06'48"N, 24°20'41"E)

Working hours: Monday-Sunday: 10:00-21:00

The theatre touches with its eclectic-style architecture, bearing a Neo-Baroque and Neo-Renaissance print that impresses with its richness and beauty.

DANCE, THEATRE, MUSIC - WHEN SHOULD YOU VISIT THE REGION

In order to witness the day, which celebrates Bulgarian talent, Bulgarian spirit and the efforts of all who help to save Bulgarian traditions, customs and culture, you should visit Vratsa on 1st March. Every year a concert, dedicated to the amateur artists is organized.

To feel the art of dance of the different regions in Bulgaria and foreign countries (Italy, Greece, Russia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Croatia, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Indonesia) you can visit the International Folklore Festival "Vratsa Spring", which is held annually within 4 days in **April**. In **May**, in Draganshi-Olt, traditional and wedding Romanian songs are



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presented at the "Lica Militaru" Folklore. Music festivals can also be visited in **September** - the Golden Ship Music Festival at Corabia and the Radio Festival "Radu Sherban" in Caracal.

In **May**, theatre lovers can visit the Festival of Small Theatre Forms in Vratsa, also known as the Chamber Festival - a unique theatrical forum with established traditions, which aims at popularizing and stimulating chamber dramaturgy. In **May**, the Theatre Festival "Stefan Iordache" is held at the National Theatre in Caracal. Within 9 days, residents and guests of the town can watch theatre performances of different genres.

National Folklore Council is held in **June** in the Ledenika Cave. It includes dance and singing groups for authentic and stylized folklore and individual performers. Craftsmen from all over the country present their hand-crafted works.

If you have planned your trip for late summer, the Vratsa Autumn Fair is held on 14th - 19th **September**, where apart from traditional folklore ensembles and individual participants there are places for merchants, attractions and craftsmen who present traditional products from the region. A "Tasty Bulgaria" stand is built, where all guests can taste authentic dishes from the region of Vratsa - liutika, kachamak, broths, etc., cooked by chefs from the surrounding villages.

If you visit Piatra-Olt in **January**, you will witness the Slatina Day Celebrations accompanied by an exhibition followed by a variety of cultural and artistic events. The Day of Piatra-Olt is celebrated on **May 21**, where many local artists, singers and music groups take part.

One of the biggest and most anticipated events in the region is the festival of humour - "Oltenia and the rest of the world", held in Slatina in **September**. You can see musical performances, traditional crafts fair and traditional craft stands.

An interesting event is the Walnut Festival in Curtișoara, which is named after its venue - the park of the town. Called "The Summer Garden - under the shade of the old walnut", it presents horse races, football tournament, performances of famous folk formations, etc. Scornicești Day is also known as the Feast of Bread when in **September** residents and guests of the town receive a bit of spiritual charge, returning to the roots and traditions of kneading bread and having fun with the artistic program proposed by the organizers. A special moment is the awarding of couples celebrating a golden wedding in that year. In Șerbănești a Feast of Harvest is held in **July** on the



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day of St. Elijah. Each year a magnificent exhibition of baked goods is organised and it is devoted to rituals, customs, various holidays - bread for the bride, bread for the mother-in-law, kolaci, kozunaci, etc.

WHERE TO STAY:

Vratsa region

Hemus hotel (centre of Vratsa); Tourist complex Ledenika – next to Ledenika cave; family hotel Kiparis (Teacher’s colonies 14 km away from Vratsa); hotel complex Hashove (in a picturesque country next to Boteva alley); family hotel Flamingo (750 m away from Vratsa centre); family art-hotel Zora (next to Vratsa centre); family hotel Momina salsa (Zgorigrad village, 4 km away from Ledenika cave and 20 km away from Vratsa); hotel Chaika (on the way to Vratsata pass, 500m away from the town centre); Hotel Leva (5 min away from the town centre).

Piatra-Olt region

Boulevard Prestige 3* - Slatina centre; Parc hotel 3* (500 m away from Slatina centre, 50 m away from the town park); Zytto hotel 3* (1 km away from the centre of Slatina and 200 m from the railway station); Senator hotel 3* (1 km away from the centre of Slatina); City hotel 4* (500 m away from the centre of Slatina); Horse farm Epona, Bobicești.



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