

# Protecting Lake Ohrid

## TOWARDS STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE OF THE SHARED TRANSBOUNDARY NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE LAKE OHRID REGION

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Dear readers,

It is a pleasure to say a few words in the last issue of this newsletter, on the occasion of the successful completion of such an important project. The Delegation of the European Union to Albania welcomes the important work done by the Albanian authorities and the UNESCO Advisory Bodies for the preparation and submission of the nomination file of the Albanian part of the Lake Ohrid to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The preparation of the file was one of the major conclusions of the project -Towards Strengthened Governance of the Shared Transboundary Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region - co-funded by the European Union. The Lake Ohrid region carries extraordinary cultural and natural values. Lake Ohrid itself is one of the oldest and deepest lakes in Europe, while the region around has been inhabited since ancient times. The part of Lake Ohrid region situated in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been listed by UNESCO since 1979. We look forward to the Albanian part - one third of the entire lake - to receive the same designation as our world's heritage before long. We hope that the entire region will soon enjoy joint protection and management from the two countries that share the lake.

During Europe Week 2018, together with the Minister of Culture, Ms Mirela Kumbaro, we visited the region and its unique natural and cultural assets, including the Royal Illyrian Tombs of Selca e Poshtme, which is also nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List. The cultural and touristic potential of this region and its historical contribution to European civilisation were apparent. The European Union is committed to continue its support towards the protection of the area, as well as the promotion of sustainable tourism throughout the Lake Ohrid region.

Sincerely,  
*Romana Vlahutin*  
EU Ambassador to Albania



## The last phase of the Lake Ohrid region project

The Lake Ohrid region is known for its outstanding natural and cultural heritage and a large part of it is already recognised for its Outstanding Universal Value through the inscribed World Heritage property "Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region" in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In order to strengthen the integrity and protection of the existing World Heritage site, UNESCO initialised an Upstream Process for the inclusion of the remaining part to the World Heritage List. UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies joined their forces with the corresponding authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania in a common effort to safeguard the heritage values of the region. The realization of the pilot project was feasible thanks to the generous financial support of the European Union Delegation to Albania and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania.

The project is now reaching its close, having achieved important results that serve as a solid basis for the protection of natural and cultural heritage of this remarkable region. One of the prerequisites for the success of this project was the transboundary cooperation and exchange of knowledge among the involved countries. A number of Transboundary Platform Meetings brought together the relevant stakeholders, in order to draw the main principles and strategies for a joint management of the Lake Ohrid region. The management plan and the nomination file that were submitted to World Heritage Centre, constitute the greatest achievements of this transboundary cooperation. Another major accomplishment of the project is its capacity-building programme. Several workshops and thematic trainings were organised with the active participation of local and national representatives of both countries and the local community.

Many of these project activities' outcomes supported the preparation of the nomination dossier, submitted by the Albanian authorities in January 2018. The World Heritage Committee will examine the nomination file for the extension of the World Heritage property 'Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region' to the Albanian part of the lake at its 43rd session in 2019. In this newsletter, you will find some of the closing activities that were implemented during the last phase of the Lake Ohrid region project, aimed at the long-term sustainable management and protection of the region that will allow the transmission of its valuable heritage assets to future generations.

## Project Activities



### Contribution of ICCROM,

## Community consultation in the Lake Ohrid region

A two-day workshop led by ICCROM has marked the beginning of a consultation campaign in the Lake Ohrid region, involving a local team of volunteers from the entire Lake Ohrid region. This campaign supports the EU-UNESCO project 'Towards strengthened governance of the shared

transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region'. It sought to offer a final 'transboundary' contribution to the future management of this World Heritage property and its proposed extension by drawing on stakeholder knowledge and capacities. The aim is to highlight opportunities that will bring benefits to both the communities and the heritage in the Lake Ohrid region in line with Sustainable Development Goals.

Held in Ohrid (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and in Pogradec (Albania), the launch of the workshop brought together the transboundary team of volunteers together with ICCROM consultants to ensure that the proposed methodology was adapted to the regional situation and local needs. A strong base for the research already existed thanks to previous ICCROM collaborations in the region, including a trial questionnaire, values mapping and the insights gained from a course on People-Cen-

tered Approaches to the Conservation of Culture and Nature.

The team has carried out a questionnaire with local residents, aiming to increase the understanding of the local socio-economic situation, community assets and stakeholders' aspirations that

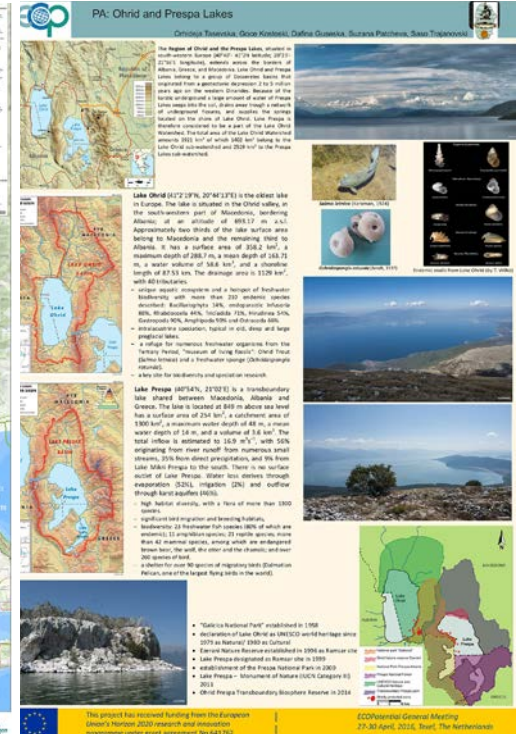
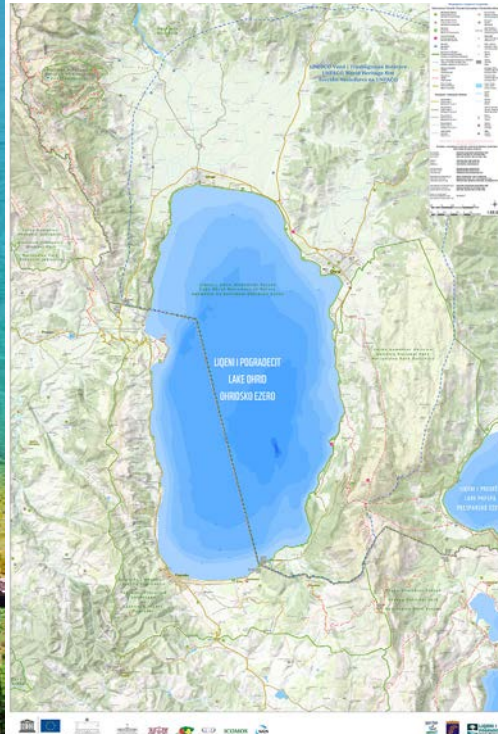
could contribute to better participatory heritage management. New insights were brought to the table, regarding the array of heritage values that define the Lake Ohrid region today. While local community members were the main target of this research, selected interviews with institutional stakeholders and a logbook capturing the views of visitors to the region, provided complementary data.

Based on the survey analysis, new participatory management planning processes were suggested, across the proposed mixed transboundary World Heritage property, identifying existing and potential capacities that reside within the local community and can contribute to heritage management and conservation. It is also hoped that this campaign will help inform future capacity-building initiatives in the Lake Ohrid region within the World Heritage Leadership Programme.



*Two-day workshop led by ICCROM*





## Contribution of IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and central Asia (ECAO)

# Waste awareness campaign

### Short film and video spot

The waste management awareness campaign, that took part during the summer and autumn months of 2017, was marked by various community activities as well as the cleaning up of illegal dumpsite along the Ohrid lakeshore. The final activity of this campaign focuses on reaching out to a wider audience by presenting a promotional short video and a 30-second animation clip. The focus of the two videos is to sensitise the inhabitants of the Pogradec region about the values, beauty and the threat of waste to the lake, with aim to inspire and motivate all generations to better manage their waste by reducing, reusing and recycling it.

In order to ensure local ownership and sustainability, the entire waste campaign was designed and implemented in close partnership with the Municipality of Pogradec, and in consultation with the local NGOs 'Une, Gruaja' and the sustainable tourism operator Explore Pogradec.

The promotional materials will be displayed on local TV and during various events organised by project partners. The short film, as well as other outputs of the waste campaign will be available at <https://www.iucn.org/node/25373>.

### Soft tourism infrastructure

In support of the Lake Ohrid nomination file for the extension of the transboundary World Heritage property, the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern European and Central Asia (ECAO) coordinated the preparation of a number of documents with a view to enhance the profile of the region, by offering sustainable tourism opportunities such as hiking and biking, as well as visiting protected areas. All materials and information are available in three languages (English, Albanian and Macedonian) and are available in Tourism offices in and around Pogradec and can be downloaded at <https://www.iucn.org/node/25373>.

### Information boards

Information boards for walking and cycling paths give information about trail length, level of difficulty, overall ascent and descent distance, with a concise narrative description of the trail and terrain specifications, such as water availability. The following destinations have been developed with information boards installed at starting and finishing points of the paths: Alarup - Mali Thate - Dolna Gorica; Qafe Thane - Memelisht : Qafe Plloce - Guri I Kamje - Singletrail - Qafe Plloce: Pogradec

- Tushemisht; Pogradec - Pogradec castle (Kalaja); Pogradec - Guri I Kamje - Pogradec; Tushemisht - Blace - Alarup - Singletrail - Tushemisht; Qafe Polices - Qafe Thane (Shebenik-Ohrid connection)

### Brochure

"Begin your Lake Ohrid journey" is a colourful brochure describing historical, cultural and natural destinations and influences of the whole region. Available in three languages, it looks to serve as a comprehensive guide for visiting the entire Lake Ohrid region, offering an overview of heritage and points of interests, such as the St. Naum Church, Lin Peninsula, Protected Areas as well as various leisure activities, like hiking, biking or enjoying tranquil days on the beach.

### Map

Complimentary to the brochure and the information boards, a detailed geographical map of the Lake Ohrid region has been produced. It allows visitors to plan their journey around the lake, and to explore the region according to their own skills and interests.







## The measures taken by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for protecting Lake Ohrid

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has taken decisions and measures in accordance with the recommendations of the Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission report, approved by the 41th Heritage World Committee in Krakow, Poland 2017. In April 2017, a Reactive Monitoring Mission was organized in the Lake Ohrid region, on the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In accordance with this report, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia initially established an inter-ministerial working group to address all the recommendations and draft an action plan to meet these requirements. This action plan is perceived as a confirmation by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for their dedication to preserve the integrity of cultural and natural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region. In this regard, the State Party will review the relevant documents and will intensively cooperate with the local authorities and other institutions for the efficient management of the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia strongly supports all the processes for the protection of the Lake Ohrid region, especially to prevent the different possible negative impacts on natural and cultural heritage.

They will continuously cooperate with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN, for the achievement of these goals. The submission of the nomination file for the Albanian extension to the existing World Heritage property in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a milestone of the common effort to safeguard the heritage values of the Lake Ohrid region for future generations.

*Ylber Mirta/Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning*



### Field mission ICOMOS/IUCN will visit Albania in September

After the submission of the nomination dossier for the inscription of the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid region on the World Heritage List, the Permanent Delegation of Albania to UNESCO was notified that the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN will realize field evaluation missions for the proposed Albanian extension of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of Ohrid Region. ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites, while IUCN is the International Union for Conservation of Nature. ICOMOS and IUCN will conduct their work in accordance with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, concerning the inscription of new properties to the World Heritage List. Both advisory bodies will appoint their experts to conduct the technical evaluation of the Nomination Dossier in the field. The State Party of Albania, via the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment will draft a programme for the field evaluation team and will send it back to get the approval from the Advisory Bodies.

The evaluation team will visit the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid region to collect facts on the ground, which will feed the evaluation report. This report is one of the review mechanisms for the potential inscription of the Albanian side of Lake Ohrid on the World Heritage List. The final decision will be taken by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.



### Enhancing the visibility of the Lake Ohrid region project

#### #OurLakeOhrid Photo Album

A beautiful photo album was printed featuring all the winning photographs of the summer 2017 #OurLakeOhrid Social Media contest. The fifty selected photographs represent the life around the Lake Ohrid region, its natural beauty, cultural heritage, underwater species, and the people living by the area and other characteristic scenes of the area. 500 copies of the album were printed, and each of the winners received a copy. Some of them posted a photo of the album on social media, expressing their enthusiasm and pleasure that their photographs are featured. Other copies were distributed to the donors, institutions of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other organizations related to the Lake Ohrid project. The photo album was printed in the framework of the project: "Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid Region" a project co-financed by the European Union and the Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

#ourlakeohrid  
Capturing the rich natural and cultural heritage  
of the Lake Ohrid region

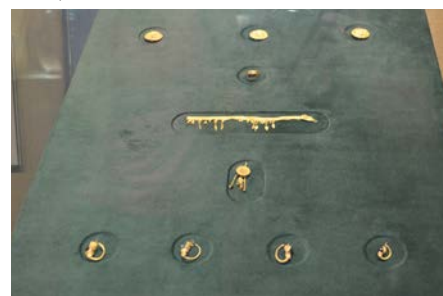


# Illyrian Tombs of Selca, a 'master piece' of culture heritage

The Selca Tombs are a masterpiece of human ancient settlements, witnessing the traditional way of life in Illyria in 4th - 3rd century BCE. The area is very close to Lake Ohrid, just 40 km from Pogradec. The royal tombs belonged to Illyrian princes and princesses of the ancient city 'Pelion'. These two-storey monumental tombs are situated inside the rocks, in a very beautiful hill of the village Selca e Poshtme, Pogradec. They were first discovered in the 1940s and were fully explored in 1971. The findings were very impressive and exciting for historians and archaeologists at that time. There are 5 tombs in the area, four of them are inside the rocks, and another one is separated and located in a field nearby. The first tomb belonged to a princess, which was buried with her golden accessories, such as her earrings and a tiara. All the elements found inside the tombs are now displayed at the National Historical Museum in Tirana. One of the most interesting findings of the tombs is a decorated belt buckle. The original one is silver and it is protected behind a vitrine in the Museum. A replica, in bronze and enlarged 17 times compared to the original, is placed at the entrance of the National Museum, because of its importance for the Albanian ancient roots. The buckle is decorated with a combat scene, where two equestrians are fighting with an infantry army, showing the Illyrian triumph over the enemy. The object is also decorated with mythological elements such as a dragon, a griffin, a fish and a bird.



*The original belt buckle*



*Golden jewelleryes of Princess*

It seems as an interpretation of Cadmu's legend, which helped the Illyrian tribe of 'Enchelei' to win the enemies, by transforming into a dragon. The other jewelleryes that were found in the tomb of the princess are a fibula brooch, earrings and a tiara. They are decorated with the figure of Athena and other ornaments made by filigrees. Amongst the objects found during the inventory of these tombs are Illyrian warriors' weapons, helmets, shields, an iron shirt, handcuffs, and surprisingly enough a pan in bronze. The architectural quality of the Illyrian tombs in Selca e Poshtme can still be testified, de-



*The replica of belt buckle*



*Illyrian warriors' weapons*

spite the scars of time. One of these monumental tombs has the shape of an amphitheatre, which represents a rare typological example. The architecture is Ionic, typical for ancient Greece and Rome. Some preliminary excavations made by archaeologists concluded that beneath Selca and Gradishta hills, there could be remnants of an ancient city. The history of an important ancient civilisation could be waiting to be discovered. The Selca Tombs are included in the Tentative List of UNESCO since 1996. See here: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/909/>.



*Selca Tombs*



# Mokra region, a travel to ancient villages

The best place to observe traces of the ancient settlements around Lake Ohrid region, is Mokra. The mountainous region of Mokra is situated in the west side of Pogradec, in a large area with more than 40 villages, all of them located above 1.000 m from the sea level. The area is divided into two parts by Shkumbini river, Mokra e Siperme dhe Mokra e Poshtme. It has been inhabited since the Neolithic age. Some archaeological findings include tools that belong to the 2nd and 1st century BCE. People were living here continuously. This is because of the favourable climate, the forests, the pastures, and the very fertile land. It seems that this part of rural Pogradec still lives in the past, with clay houses and very narrow streets, where the inhabitants breed cattle and work on their land. Our tour started from Kalivac to Potqozhan, Trebinje, Proptisht, Golik and Selca e Poshtme. The road was made of dirt with gravel and very narrow, accessible only by 4x4 vehicles, but the nature is rewarding. The highest peaks of Valamar, Kamje, Rrajce, Kozice and Polis were visible, as well as the beautiful panoramas of Lake Ohrid from above.



Golik Bridge

Our drive continued amid the beautiful green valleys, pastures and other villages with characteristic stone houses. In this area one can find some traces of the famous Via Egnatia, which dates back in the 3rd century BCE. Via Egnatia was constructed with stone to link Rome with the Byzantine Empire. The most prominent monuments of Via Egnatia in Albania are Ura e Golikut (Golik Bridge) and Ura e Terziut (Terziu Bridge) in Proptisht, Llenqa and Nica bridges. Golik Bridge is still very strong and functional for all the locals. It is surprising how this bridge resisted until nowadays. It is 17 m long, 3 m wide and 10 m high. Golik Bridge was built in the 2nd century BCE and is classified as a first-grade cultural monument at a national level. The bridge has two semi-circular arches, built with carved stones, where the lower part has big, well-curved stones, which are not meant just for aesthetics, but to make the structure more solid and stronger. Apart from the bridges, there are also some stone parts, belonging to Via Egnatia,



*Churches of Potqozhan and Shen Bitri*

near Llenqa village. There is also a legend about a hidden treasure of the Illyrian Queen Teuta, which was brought to this area during the first Roman-Illyrian battle. Local people love to speak about this story and what happened in the last decades. It is said that many people often came to this area to try to discover the treasure, but that despite all the research, nothing has been found yet. The Mokra region is very rich in ancient artefacts, waiting to be discovered. Some weeks ago, young explorers from 'Visit Pogradec' discovered a cave in Velcan village, Moker, called 'Bear Cave' by the locals. The discovery of these young people includes a cave with many stalactites that were probably created thousand years ago. The Ministry of Culture has been informed about this discovery to restrict the access in this cave and study the age of stalactites. This area is very unexplored and hides a huge potential for cultural and natural assets.



# The legend of Mali i Thate in Lake Ohrid region

Once upon a time, millions and millions of years ago, there was a fisherman who was fishing by the Lake Ohrid. His net caught a very beautiful sylph, which was crying and asking him to let her free. The



fisherman was amazed by her beauty and didn't want to let her go. She fought inside the net and managed to escape, but unfortunately her dress was stuck in the fisherman's net. Her dress was part of her body and helped her to swim deep into the lake waters, so she pleaded to him to give her dress back, but he refused. Instead, he asked her to marry him, if she wanted to have her dress again. In the end, they got married and had two children. The boy was called Mali i Thate, while the daughter was called Prespa. She was a good mother, and loved her kids, but every day she was looking for her dress, because she was missing her underwater world. One day, when the fisherman wasn't at home, she found her dress, wore it, dived into Lake Ohrid and never turned back. Little Prespa cried and cried every day. She was so desperate so no one could stop her tears. Her brother wanted to protect her, so he became strong and started to build a wall to stop her tears. The legend says that the brother became a Rocky Drain Mountain fighting all the time to stop the tears of his sister. No plants or trees could grow on the mountain. While Prespa was sunken in her tears, she created Lake Prespa. She still cries, and her tears are flowing underneath the mountain in channels ending up in Lake Ohrid, where her mother is. This legend is part of the intangible heritage of Pogradec, which is passed to new generations.

## The story of Shen Marena Monastery

The Shen Marena Monastery is situated near the village Llenge, in the Lake Ohrid region. It dates back to the 18th century and it was built for the saint 'Marina the Monk'. Now, it is a cultural monument protected by the state of Albania. The view from outside is outstanding, with mountains, fields and a meadow. Close to the monastery, a large torrent flows to the Shkumbin river. Inside the church, there are murals from the painter Konstandin Shpataraku that were finalised 10 years after he painted the icons of the famous Monastery of Ardenica. He painted all the walls of this monastery in 1754 A.D., upon the request of the local community of Llenge.

***But what is the story of Marena, the Saint of the monastery?***

Marena was a beautiful girl born in the Qesan village, in Asia, in 270 A.D. She was one of the youngest saints and well known for her miracles. According to the legend, her father was pagan, and he did not want his daughter to be dedicated to spread Christianity. Marena came to Mokra e Siperme, in Llenge, where she lived by begging for food. Her father sent people to kill her, but she deceived them by entering to a cave, which they thought was too narrow to fit a person. Since that day, Saint Marena came out from the cave every day and washed her face at the fresh spring in front of it, which is called Najazme. It is now believed that the water is blessed and it that it can be preserved for a long time. Saint Marena helped the believers in the area to spread Christianity and as a gratitude to her miracles, they decided to build a monastery for her. It is said that the indigenous people who were living abroad decided to collect the necessary funds. Due to the long time needed to achieve this goal, they neglected it, even though they had returned back to the village rich enough. Saint Marena showed up one day to the girls of the village saying: 'I am Marena. Didn't your brothers tell you about me?'. Right after, the girls spread the message to the rest of the villagers. One of the men, named Nikolla, together with other locals decided to build the monastery. Marena showed up again and asked them to follow her to the cave where she lived, but the villagers wanted to build the monastery in another place. They



Sait Marena Monastery and Cave



were convinced when they found all the working materials in the place of her wish. This action was conceived as a miracle. The church was built in 1660 at the indicated location. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed the it, after which it was rebuilt in 1754. The cave is still there. The different paths of various widths end up in a cross at the end of the cave. The memory of Saint Marena is celebrated each year on 30 July. Numerous pilgrims gather from the nearby villages, but also from Korca, Pogradec, Librazhd and Elbasan. Some of them even spend the entire night inside the monastery, praying for the miracles of Saint Marena.





# A trip to the Prespa Lake region



Prespa Lake is like a unique setting, which seems not yet discovered by tourists. A blue lake surrounded by beautiful green hills, while in the middle of it, there is a small island called Maligrad. If you travel towards Prespa from Pogradec, you will pass some beautiful villages, green fields, beautiful hills and rural areas, where locals live their own life in the same way as some decades ago. The vernacular architecture is simple, not impacted from the modern life in the cities. People in these areas live with what their land provides them. They cultivate the land, working as a family in their fields, or they take care of their cattle. The nature in this area is breath-taking. There are very few cars, some agro-machines, but there are donkeys and some bikers. Arriving close to the sign National Park of Prespa, the beauty of Prespa Lake is visible from above. A spacious green area, where the white houses of Bucimas (Liqenas) are concentrated only in the left side of the lake. We entered in the village, where a big church in the heart of a pedestrian area is its main monument.

All the signs are in two languages: Macedonian and Albanian. We could speak Albanian with everyone, including the national minorities who live there. This is a perfect example of the respect for the rich cultural diversity of the Lake Ohrid region. We travelled around both sides of the centre, just to have the closest view of Prespa Lake. We stayed just for some photos, turned back driving to the other part of the lake, to have a closer look at the Mali Grad island (small city in Slavic). To visit the island, just ask a local and they will offer you a trip by boat for a small fee. The island is about 5 hectares and contains some caves, trees and an area of sand. The main monument here is Saint Mary Church, which was built by the local noble Qesar Novaku, in 1369. Inside the church beautiful murals exist, which were created in three different phases with numerous inscriptions, and the family portrait of No-vaku. It explains the artistic taste of people that time. Mali Grad is a geological monument, 900m above the sea level, 700-800m long and 180-200m wide. It is made of calcareous stone and represents the remnants of the sinking of the Prespa graben.

The high biodiversity which characterises the region, includes species such as the enormous bird the Dalmatian Pelican. Prespa is the name of two freshwater lakes shared by Albania (46.3 km), Greece (36.4 km), and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (176.3 km).



Foto: Prespa Lake, rural life and Saint Mary Church





# Tourist for a day in Sveti Naum and Ohrid



Tourists in Ohrid Castle

The city of Ohrid and the Sveti Naum Monastery are the most visited places by tourists in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. One of the main reasons is that both destinations are surrounded by Lake Ohrid. Coming from Tushemisht and driving amid the National Park of Galicica, it is hard to see buildings and other human settlements. Once we arrived in Ohrid, we mainly encountered a high number of tourists, not locals. Our first stop was the castle that offered us also a panoramic view of the city. It is also known as Samuel's Fortress, which was once the capital of the first Bulgarian Empire, during the rule of Tsar Samuel in the 10th century. In fact, it was an earlier fortification, dating back to the 4th century BCE, probably during the reign of King Philip II. Our tour continued down to the lively streets of Ohrid close to the shores of the lake. The ferries kept coming and going all day long and people were taking pictures of the impressive landscape. A new destination in the area was the Museum of Bones, which is a museum standing on piles on the water. It is an installation with small buildings constructed as old pile dwelling settlements,



Sveti Naum

similar to the ones belonging to 1200-700 BCE. The name Bay of Bones comes from the numerous animal remains and fragmented vessels that found underwater. There is an exhibition of some relics, and photographs of the foundations of the installation.

After leaving Bay of Bones we headed to Sveti Naum. The road was passing through green mountains and hills, green fields and fresh air. Sveti Naum is considered a holy place, where people come and pray. This monastery was established during the Bulgarian Empire in 905 CE, but it was destroyed by the Ottomans in the 15th



Bay of Bones

century and rebuilt between 16th and 17th centuries. According to the legend, if someone puts his ear on the tomb of Sveti Naum, one can still hear his heart beating. The view of the lake from the monastery is very rewarding. Other inhabitants of the monastery are the blue and white peacocks, who climb on the roofs, or hide somewhere when there are a lot of tourists, but their long colourful tail can be easily spotted. Besides the visit to the monastery, a boat trip is a popular activity. Visitors can also enjoy drinks or meals in cosy restaurants situated amid the springs and the canals that 'feed' Lake Ohrid.

## Why is Lake Ohrid so clear?

The water transparency reaches up to 21m, and the lake's euphotic zone - the area receiving enough light for photosynthesis - extends down to 150m, due to its exceptional purity. While the water is always crystal clear, the winter months offer the highest clarity. Different species have been able to evolve and adapt to the underwater spaces who would not be able to survive in less light-filled lakes. But why is Lake Ohrid so pristine? One reason that makes Lake Ohrid stand out is the beautiful inflow. Unlike many inland waters, little water comes from sediment-shouldering rivers - it was less than 10% before the River Sateska was diverted in the 1960s. Instead, the biggest individual sources (approximately 50%) are rare underground pathways that run through karstic Mount Galicica on the lake's

eastern shore and emerge as coastal and sub lacustrine springs. These subterranean channels bring water from both rainfalls and Lake Ohrid's sister, Lake Prespa, leaving some of the waters' nutrients (about 65% of phosphorous) along the way. This procedure helps to hold back a process known as eutrophication, which can instigate algal growth and cause diminish of the water clarity. At the same time, by running through underground rock pathways, water does not accumulate impurities that an over ground journey would risk. It is a fine balancing act. If all the nutrients were diminished, the rich underwater world of Lake Ohrid, especially at the springs-where there are often micro-metropolises for unique species, would not be possible. The spring system has another trick up its sleeve too. Entering

the lake, the spring waters are cold, so they tend to plunge deep in the summer time, which takes those limited nutrients away from the surface level, where they would otherwise set off light-blocking processes. This is in contrast with the water coming from the rivers that often flows in at a higher level. Additionally, alongside the karstic channels that deliver premium-grade water through Mount Galicica to incorporate in Lake Ohrid springs, the natural infrastructure for water clearness also includes Studenchishte Marsh, which acts as an additional buffer to prevent overly eager nutrients entering the lake. The consequence is optimum clarity that contributes to the wildlife and the beauty of Lake Ohrid.

Source: Ohrid.Sos





# partners



UNESCO  
World Heritage Centre - Project coordinator



The European Union  
main financial contributor



The Ministry of Tourism and Environment  
of the Republic of Albania, co- financier



MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
of Republic of Albania



MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
of the former Yugoslav Republic  
of Macedonia



Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning  
of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



ICCROM  
(International Centre for the Study of the  
Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property)



ICOMOS  
(International Council on Monuments and Sites)



IUCN  
(International Union for Conservation of Nature)



## Protecting Lake Ohrid

*This is a quarterly newsletter published by the project "Towards strengthened governance of the shared transboundary natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region".*

Languages: English, Albanian, Macedonian.

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