



Interreg - IPA CBC
Bulgaria - Serbia



Improvement of winter tourist offer
in Sokobanja and Varshets

"CROSS-BORDER WINTER TOUR VARSHETS - SOKOBANJA"

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Unspoiled nature, wonderful landscapes, the pearl river of Moravica, the two lakes - Vrmdžansko and Bovansko Lake, four mountains, extraordinary climate; there are more than enough reasons why Sokobanja has been a favourite destination for centuries, and more recently it has become increasingly popular among the lovers of good fun, relaxation and active holidays. When the national cuisine and the temperament of local population are added to it, it becomes clear why Sokobanja has become the most popular tourist treat, both for domestic and foreign tourists. Thanks to its magical nature and according to the number of tourists it belongs to the most visited tourist destinations in Serbia.

However, a special experience is to visit Sokobanja in winter, and for that reason we have a few suggestions on what your winter adventure in Sokobanja may consist of.





SOKOBANJA
#sokobanjanje

WELLNESS AND SPA

In the period when temperatures on the thermometer in winter months can reach up to -15°C , a special feeling is the warmth of healing water springs of Sokobanja. Sokobanja is widely known for the healing characteristics of its thermal mineral water springs. There are six thermal mineral water springs, which, in addition to their healing and refreshing features, also rejuvenate, relax, calm and contribute to preserving vitality and good mood.

Turkish Bath (Hammam) from 15th century, was built on the foundations of an old ancient bath, and is a symbol of Sokobanja. Although its interior and exterior remained identical to the edifice which was renovated in the 19th century, today in it there is a Wellness Centre which uses contemporary therapeutic methods. Radon, a noble gas seems to elate and calm you down at the same time, is a part of a separate room for inhaling aerated water and is a part of the Hammam. The Special Hospital Sokobanja, of which the Hammam is an integral part, also offers its guests other services, such as the Finnish sauna, pearl bath, hydro massage, manual massage, bathing in the pool with thermal water or in the jacuzzi, a walk in the fresh air along hiking trails of health. A modern fitness cabinet within the Special Hospital "Sokobanja" offers the guests the opportunity to engage in physical activity under the supervision of medical staff, according to individually composed programmes. "Soko-life" is a weight control programme created in collaboration with experts in endocrinology and dietology. This programme is combined with wellness and fitness programmes in order to achieve optimal results.

Turkish Bath (Hammam) from 15 th century, was built on the foundations of an old ancient bath, and is a symbol of Sokobanja.



"I am all afraid - this place will be known; the world will pile up, and I'll have to run from here and look for another spa. And where can I find this kind of beauty and peace? Just so you know: and here people die too, because everywhere in the world one has to die. But life is more delightful here and I guess it's a little longer. " - Ivo Andric.





WELLNESS AND SPA

#sokobanjanje



WELLNESS AND SPA



Nataly spa is an apartment type accommodation facility with 20 comfortable accommodation units. It has a modern, well-equipped spa centre, with the following services: swimming pool, Finnish aromatherapy sauna, steam bath, hydromassage bathtubs, a salt cave, a tropical shower, waterfall, a tepidarium, a Kneipp bench, a massage parlour (classical massage, targeted massage therapy, royal massage), body and face treatments, etc. With a panoramic view from the apartments and grass-covered terraces, this is a perfect place where you can breathe the fresh air coming from the surrounding mountains.

Wellness & Spa "Soko Terme", built on the bank of the Moravica river, next to the thermal spring, known among the local people as the "Lemon spa". A special experience in the winter months is the water tunnel between the two internal and one external pool where the bathers "swim out" through it into the fresh air from the warm water. For all guests who are eager for recreation and improving the quality of life, health and the general state of mind and body, numerous additional services are available: Finnish sauna, steam bath, salt room, jacuzzi, beauty salon, physiotherapy block (various types of massage - relax, aroma, royal, sports, Thai, Turkish), Garra rufa fish (skin peeling with "Doctor fish"), a fitness room and a mini gym.

Wellness centers and their offer are a continuation of the tradition of spa tourism that has lasted over 180 years.

EVENTS

A special attraction in the winter period for tourists is to take part in numerous events which, in addition to offering the opportunity to become more familiar with the surroundings of Sokobanja, its traditions and folk customs which also contribute to the authentic experience of the destination.

Mountains Ozren, Devica, Rtanj, Krstatac, Bukovik and Rožanj which surround Sokobanja are a true challenge, both for recreationists and professional mountaineers. The "Oštra čuka" and "Ozren" Mountaineering Societies organize mountaineering tours throughout the year, for its members and all interested tourists.

Christmas ascent on Rtanj Mountain, a traditional mountaineering event which has been organized since 1983, every January on the most mystical Serbian mountain. It gathers mountaineers and recreationists from all over Serbia, and also from the neighbouring countries. If you want to feel the magic of Rtanj, walk along its trails or climb to its top, and enjoy the view from this mountain, the Youth Mountaineering and Skiing Society "Dragan Radosavljević" from Zaječar organizes the climbing to the top from the south and north side. The total length of the trail on the north side is 15 km, and the height difference is 1,200m, whereas the length of the southern trail is 14.5 km, and the height difference is 1,000m

The **"Vrmdžila" Mountaineering Action** organized by the "Oštra čuka" Mountaineering Society in the second half of March, gathers a large number of mountaineers who take part in this action in large numbers each year. The action has been named "Vrmdžila" because, according to the local folk stories, Lake Vrmdža is the home of a dangerous monster, which inspired the organizers when they decided on the name of the action. The participants can choose which path to take: the longer or the shorter one. The length of the shorter path is nine kilometres, whereas the longer one is fifteen kilometres long. The path is marked by mountaineering tags and is intended for all age groups. The shorter path has 213 m of ascent and 232 m of descent. The longer path has 389 m of ascent and 407 m of descent.



EVENTS

"Garden of Open Heart", which takes place on the 1st January in the town centre and is organized by the Tourist Organization of Sokobanja, is the right place to continue the New Year's Eve celebration. The Sokobanja guests and the local population are in for a lot of fun with brass bands and entertainers, with free hot drinks and traditional specialities of Sokobanja - potato pie, cabbage pie, pastry and traditional 'proja' with Sokobanja cheese, vanilla cakes ("vanilice"), honey cakes, etc.

New Year's Fair in the centre of Sokobanja, on wooden stands, offers the opportunity to tourists and local people to buy or make the presents for the loved ones. Visitors of all ages will be able to enjoy the unforgettable atmosphere, holiday prices and winter magic. Also, the "ETNOS" homecraft workshop, along with primary school pupils from Sokobanja has a sales exhibition of its works, where one can try out some of the old crafts.



ACTIVE HOLIDAYS

Favourable altitude, fresh air with the highest concentration of negative ions, a place where the mountain and river air is mixed, numerous sports competitions, all these are ideal conditions to make Sokobanja an oasis for holidays, sports and recreation.

The sports grounds and the Sokobanja surroundings are the right place for all those eager for sport challenges and achievements.

Cycling

The surroundings of Sokobanja are ideal for riding bicycles, both for recreationists and professionals. There is over 400km of marked bicycle routes for all mountain biking (MTB) lovers.

Marked bicycle routes:

1. Circular route on Rtanj: Vrmdža-Gornja Mala-Pakleš-Vasiljevac-Glavica-Vlaška Mala-Latingrad-Vrmdža, length of route: 15 km.
2. Circular route on Ozren: Kalinovica-Košavsko-Troroga-Resničke livade-Svinjci-Jovanov kamen-Jermenčić-Ozrenske livade- Borkovo čekalište-Željini kamen-Košavsko, length of route: 15 km.
3. GPS-Bike route (west-east MTB corridor), from Bukovik in the northwest of Sokobanja municipality, over Ozren, Devica and Rtanj to Rujište in the northeast: total length of route: 118 km.
4. GPS-Bike routes (Tour de SOKOBANJA):
 - a) LITE - 9 km
 - b) EXTREME - 11 km
5. GPS-Bike route (Sokobanja-Ozren-Sokobanja), total length of route 17 km
6. The tourist map of Sokobanja municipality 2013 included all major MTB-routes on the Sokobanja municipality territory with total length of about 400 km.



Mountaineering

The mountains which surround Sokobanja represent a real challenge, both for recreationists and the professional alpinists. There are marked footpaths for beginners and steep and inaccessible mountain peaks for professionals.

Marked footpaths:

1. Sokobanja-Kulin Vrh-Oštra Čuka, length: 7 km
2. Sokobanja-Kalinovica-Oštra Čuka, length: 8 km
3. Grudonjske vodenice-Ripaljka, length: 4 km
4. Vlasina- Oštra Čuka, length: 2 km
5. Vlasina-Leskovik, length: 6 km
6. Sokobanja-Prisad, length: 8 km
7. Tomić hut (foot of Rtanj mountain)-Šiljak, length: 6 km
8. Vrmdža- Nikolin kamen, length: 3 km
9. Milušinac-Krstatac, length: 6 km
10. Milušinac-Slemen, length: 8 km
11. Trubarevac-Vrh, length: 2 km
12. Vrbovac-Đurkov vrh, length: 5 km
13. Novo Selo-Radenkovac, length: 7 km

Skating

Sokobanja has the most modern complex of summer scenes in Serbia on which during the summer months numerous events are held. Between the two scenes there are decorative lakes, the biggest of which is used in winter as an ice rink, so that those who adore winter sports and adrenaline addicts on skates will be able to revise, improve or master the skating technique.

An additional attraction or an offer for the winter period is the ice rink with toboggan run in the very centre of Sokobanja. This prefabricated sports facility consists of an ice rink and a toboggan for sledding. The toboggan run has a protective ring made of synthetic ice panels and barriers which form the trail will be a true challenge for the youngest guests.



WINTER PERIOD SPORTS ACTIVITIES

PREPARATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

Favourable climatic factors, ideal altitude, unspoiled nature, numerous mountains and rich hydrographic resources are ideal conditions for the development of sports and recreational tourism and basic preparations of athletes. For that purpose, a number of sports facilities and grounds have been built or renovated. Numerous professional sports clubs have their preparation camps in Sokobanja because it offers outstanding opportunities for conditioning trainings, with the use of sports fields and tracks on various altitudes.

There are sports fields in Sokobanja available to athletes at an altitude of 350-400 m, and using the forest path - shortcut they are able to reach the sports field at an altitude of 800 m in just half an hour, and there they can train in entirely new training conditions. Such form of training process, with the availability of auxiliary facilities (gyms, pools, sports massage centres) enables extraordinary fitness and readiness of athletes for sports challenges.

Football

Ideal natural and climatic features for basic preparations and good quality sports infrastructure make the Sokobanja municipality an ideal destination for numerous football clubs from our country and abroad.

Sports infrastructure:

- Football stadium "Bata Nole", with a capacity of 1,500 spectators
- Mini pitch with artificial turf

"Podina" complex of sports fields has a complex of football fields with reflector lighting and consists of two auxiliary football fields, three fields for younger categories and a mini pitch with artificial turf.

The "Podina" complex of sports fields is suitable for all kinds of sports preparations, organizing matches and sports events. The fields are 1.5 km away from the centre and cover an area of 4 ha. As part of this complex there is a facility with fully equipped locker rooms and showers and a separate space with a modern gym, suitable for athletes and recreationists.

Basketball, volleyball, handball

Sokobanja offers very good conditions for the preparations of basketball, volleyball, handball and other sports players. In the very centre of Sokobanja there is a sports hall with a capacity of 1,000 seats which is open throughout the year. The tradition of basketball camps and traditional basketball tournaments rank Sokobanja among the most popular tourist destinations for basketball players and teams from all parts of Serbia.



CONGRESSES, SEMINARS AND TEAM BUILDING

Thanks to its long tradition, considerable accommodation facilities and several different conference halls in the hotels, Sokobanja offers very good conditions for the organization of congresses, seminars and other professional meetings and conferences and also the organization of team building.

There are offers of the "Moravica" and "Banjica" Hotels available, and also a number of smaller objects.

When the Sokobanja feeling and its events and also possibilities of having good fun are added to the accommodation facilities and conference halls - the result is a perfect destination for congress tourism...



CULTURE

Homeland museum

The testimonies of the remains of material culture in the area of present-day Sokobanja, from the first settlements to modern times, have been presented by more than 50 artifacts, objects, photographs and parts of authentic furniture at the Homeland Museum located at the beginning of the pedestrian zone.

The museum building was built in the old Serbian Moravian style and, with only minor reconstructions, completely retained its original appearance. It was built at the beginning of the XIX century and was the home of the famous merchant family Živadinović from Sokobanja. The tour of this treasury of tools, weapons, jewelry and clothes starts with the memorial room of Stojan Živadinović the most prolific Serbian writer between the two world wars. The museum contains an area with an archaeological exhibition from the Sokobanja basin, an ethno kitchen and a large gallery in which the process of making hemp fabric is demonstrated. In the larger part of the gallery there are dolls-mannequins, dressed in the traditional national costumes of the Sokobanja region...



Gallery – Legacy of Milun Mitrović

The Legacy of Milun Mitrović is located in the pedestrian zone in the very centre of Sokobanja. In the large gallery of the Legacy there is a permanent exhibition of paintings which is changed every two years. In the small gallery there are exhibitions of a large number of renowned national and international artists throughout the year.



APARTMENT 144

"I do not know what there is here, but I know that after 15-20 days of being in Sokobanja I am able to work all year in Belgrade like reborn. I have no health problems. What could it be? The air or these people, or the staff of the "Moravica" hotel, the curdled milk from village Jezero or these doctors of mine... I simply cannot explain", this was the impression of the only Serbian Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić who was a regular guest of Sokobanja

Ivo Andrić, a Nobel Prize laureate in literature and one of our most significant writers of the XX century, often came to Sokobanja, sometimes several times in a year, and stayed up to a month. He always stayed at the "Moravica" Hotel, in apartment 144, which has been adapted to be this writer's memorial room. In the hall of this three-room apartment there are authentic items used by the writer: a typewriter, a fountain pen, sheets from notebooks, parts of furniture, notes, drawings and sketches that he made in Sokobanja. The apartment is open every day from 09:00 to 18:00 h.



GASTRONOMY AND NIGHTLIFE

Having a good time in Sokobanja is guaranteed. In addition to its various daily offers, Sokobanja also offers evening fun, primarily on weekends. A large number of cafes and restaurants compete in the quality of the service, and there is something for everyone's taste, both in music and gastronomy.

We recommend you to visit:

- ✓ ***"Župan" Restaurant***
- ✓ ***"Zelengora" Tavern***
- ✓ ***"Vidikovac" Restaurant***
- ✓ ***"Amam" Caffèpiceria***
- ✓ ***"Dablin" Irish Pub***
- ✓ ***"Čikago" Restaurant***
- ✓ ***"Lav" Pizzeria***
- ✓ ***"Boni" Tavern***
- ✓ ***"Stanković" Tavern***
- ✓ ***"Sokače" Old Serbian Tavern***



ACCOMMODATION

Sokobanja offers a wide choice of accommodation from hotels to more intimate in private villas, houses and holiday apartments, for all tastes and budgets. A large number of catering and leisure facilities also accompany the accommodation.



HOTELS

Name and Address	Contact	Category	Beds	Other	Restaurant	Note
SOKOBANJA +381 18						
Hotel „Moravica“ Timočke bune br. 4 rezervacije@hotelmoravica.rs www.hotelmoravica.rs	830-602, 830-622	*** 3	200	TV, internet, air condition,	Restaurant indoor: 400 seats, banquet hall, national restaurant, 2 aperitif bar	Location: 600 m from the city center Facilities: Parking space provided, table tennis, swimming pool, trim cabinet, football field, basketball, volleyball, conference room with 220 seats Credit Cards: Visa, Master, Maestro
SB „Banjica“ Milutina Pejovića 40 www.banjica.co.rs	830 204; 830 244		270	TV, internet, telephone	Restaurant Hall: 220 seats	Location: 500 m from the city center Facilities: Parking, massage, health block, sports facilities: basketball court, football, volleyball, 100-seat conference room Credit Cards: Visa, Master, Maestro
SB „Sokobanja“, Vojvode Mišića 48 i Svetog Save 3 www.soko-banja.rs	830-144		530	TV, internet, air condition, telephone	Restaurant: Old Institute: Hall: 250 seats Garden: 250 New Institute: Hall: 250	Location: Old Institute "Sokograd" and villa "Dalmacija" in the city center, Vila Bota 500 m from the city center and "Novi zavod" 800 m from the center Facilities: Secured parking space, massage, sauna, salt room, pearl bath, fitness room, 1 indoor pool with thermal water, sports fields, health trail, wellness, fitness and falcon life program, beauty salon Credit Cards: Visa, Master, Dina
Hotel "Turist" Svetog Save 20	830-510	* 1	120	TV, telephone	Restaurant Hall: 250 seats, coffee bar	Location: city center Facilities: Parking space is provided Credit Cards: Visa
Garni hotel „Soko terme“ info@sokoterme.net	884-856	*** 3	22	TV, internet, air condition, telephone	Restaurant In door: 40 Garden: 40	Location: 500 m from the city center Facilities: Secured parking space, massage, sauna, salt room, fitness and mini gym, 2 indoor and 1 outdoor swimming pool, beauty salon Credit Cards: Visa, Master, Dina
Nataly spa, Vojvode Mišića br. 22 a, info@natalyspa.com	830-240	**** 4	50	TV, internet, air condition, telephone	Restaurant indoor: 40 Terasse: 40 Terasse: 30	Location: city center Facilities: Parking space provided, massage, jacuzzi, steam bath, Finnish sauna, tropical rain, kneipp benches, warm benches, salt cave, pool with whirlpools, restaurant. Credit Cards: Visa, Master, Dina

PANSIONS

Pansion "Župan" Jabukar 1 www.zupan.rs	830-325	24	TV, Internet, air condition	Restaurant: Indoor: 60 terrace: 40 seats	Location: 200 m from the city center Facilities: Parking space provided, possibility to prepare food in the app, free Wi-Fi, air conditioning, credit card payment, pets allowed, NA, HB and PP
Pansion "Čikago" Ljube Didića 22 www.restoran-chicago.co.rs	884-400	40	TV, Internet, air condition	Restaurant indoor:80 seats terrace:30	Location: 1 km from the city center Facilities: Secured parking space, internet, credit card payment,
Pansion "Palma" 27. marta 30, www.palma.rs	837-096	57	TV, Internet, air condition	Restoran: indoor: 70 seats	Location: 300 m from city center, Facilities: Credit card payment options
Pansion "Splendid" Kralja Petra I 2 www.s-banja.rs	830-634	19	TV, mini bar, air condition	Restoran: In door: 50 seats Terrace: 100 seats	Location: City Center, Facilities: Credit card payment options
Pansion "Kaskade" Ozrenska 13 www.apartmanikaskade.rs	837-719	10	TV, Internet, air condition	Restoran: In door: 40 seats terrace: 100 seats	Location: 800 m from the city center Facilities: Parking space provided, accepts credit cards,
Pansion "Sany" Mitropolita Mihaila 2	065 8339077	30	TV, Internet, air condition	Restoran In door:60 seats	Location: City Center Facilities: Credit card payment, Free Wi-Fi, Pets allowed, NA, HB and PP available
Pansion „Lav“ Hajduk Veljkova 15	063 410556	31	TV, Internet	Restaurant: Sala: 50 seats terrace: 50 seats	Location: 250 m from the city center Facilities: Free Wi-Fi, receives credit cards

TOURIST AGENCIES

<i>Name</i>	<i>e mail</i>	<i>Web site</i>	<i>Adress</i>	<i>Telephone(018)</i>
„Sokoinfo“	tasokoinfo@gmail.com	www.sokoinfo.com	Karadordeva bb/3	833-232
„Soko-turs“	sokoturs@gmail.com	www.sokoturs.com	Čair 1	880-100
„Palma“	info@palma.rs	www.palma.rs	27. marta 30	830-096
„Mogi-turs“	mogitours@gmail.com	////	Omladinska 1	830-247
„Sokograd-turs“	puckosb60@hotmail.com	http://apartmani-sokobanja.rs/	Alekse Markišića 37	880-228
„DM“	markovicdm@gmail.com	www.apartmanidm.com	Trg Oslobođenja 3	830-322
„Velja-turs“	m.veljkovic87@gmail.com	////	Trg Oslobođenja 5	833-143
„Balnea turs“	mima82mladenovic@gmail.com	www.facebook.com/balneatours.sokobanja	Sv. Save bb	062 8426503



"Here in Sokobanja, looking at this splendour of nature, this beauty of the light of earth and sky, I am often overwhelmed by some inexplicable sadness or rapture, so I thought so relaxed that it would be nice, at least for a moment, to return to romanticism again." - Ivo Andrić, 1960.



VARSHETS

OUR WINTER OFFER

The snow cover of "Todorini kukli", the green rug of "Ivanchova polyana", the crimson sunrise above "Cherveni kamuk" – this is our tricoloured national self – confidence for the eternal nature, which had fascinated poets writers, who had visited Varshets.

You can touch the magnificence of our nature, take a sip of our wonder water, relish the crystallly clear mountain air and experience the beauty of Varshets during all seasons of the year! Here, peace and harmony will overwhelm you and the picturesque nature will positively fill your body and soul.

Enjoy your winter adventure in Varshets! Explore the wealth of an unconventional winter destination!

Varshets is located in northwestern Bulgaria, on the northern slopes of Stara Planina, 395 m above the sea level, along the river Botunya, which defines it as a climate resort. The greatest wealth of the Varshets valley are the numerous SPAs and the strong curative effect of its waters.

The temperature of the warmest spring is 36,2°C, and the one of the so called "cool" spring is 32°C. The lack of limestone in the water of Varshets makes it one of the softest in Bulgaria. Varshets valley is a wonderful place for relaxation, sports, SPA, climate and balneotherapy. All this together with the closeness of century-old woods, strange rock formations, beautiful and various landscape of the mountain Koznitsa makes it a great attraction for health tourism.



*Varshets – the green pearl, evergreen and fragrant
with freshness and health!*

HEALTH TOURISM IN VARSHETS

BALNEOLOGY, SPA AND WELLNESS

The town of Varshets offers a variety of accommodations - both guest houses and three and four-star hotels where you can use mineral pools, SPAs and other relaxing treatments. They are equipped with consulting room, physiotherapy and kinesitherapy rooms, mineral baths, rooms for sleep therapy, relaxation and aromatherapy. A few kilometers from Varshets, in the Minkovi Bani area, in the village of Spanchevtsi, spa treatments can also be performed, as well as a mineral water swimming pool.

After a warm and relaxing spa treatment, you can take a short or long walk through the snowy park alleys. The alley along the main waterway for the area - the Botunya River is a wonderful place to walk. The tourists can reach the Ivanchova Polyana locality. Not only the history of this meadow, but the road there is unforgettable.

The "Raiski kat" provides excellent conditions for relaxation, even in the cold winter - have a picnic around a barbecue built by local enthusiasts, sip a glass of red wine and have fun.

It is as if Ivancho and Todorka's love legend had moved along the path to the meadow, leaving behind only white beauty and calmness. A few kilometers beyond the Ivanchova Polyana is the area "Raiski kat".

Take a walk along the romantic Sycamore Boulevard

The Sycamore Boulevard is a pedestrian area, about 2 km long. The trees are almost 100 years and their large crowns shaped green (snowy) tunnel from the center of Varshets till the end of the town. Since the beginning of last century, this is the traditional place for walking. On both sides of the boulevard are some of the most beautiful villas in the town, built in the early twentieth century.

In the neat wooden houses you can enjoy the talent of local craftsmen and artists - bring with you a beautiful painting, an icon, a souvenir from Varshets, taste homemade sweet cakes, homemade sweet pancakes, warmed wine with fruit and cinnamon, all offered with a lot of love.

Admire the snow glow of the Park "Sunny Garden"

In 1934, Dr. Damyan Ivanov, the first director of the baths and a founder of forest park, created the so-called "Sunny Garden" within the park, whose alleys built in the form of rays from a special stone that reflects sunlight.

"To me, Varshets is a symbol of health, because with its life-giving waters it heals bodily ailments, and with its magnificent nature revives the tired soul, helps to restore harmony between body and soul." (Dr. Damyan Ivanov.)

In the immediate vicinity of the Park "Sunny Garden" are the Mineral baths, part of the Architectural Ensemble "The Baths" – Park "Sunny Garden".

The buildings of the past with white snow cover have magical radiation.

The impression of the Secessionist-style windows of the Old Mineral Bath (1910), as well as the wreath of olive branches on the facade (probably a reference to Ancient Greece, where the olive was considered a symbol of immortality and well-being).

The New mineral bath opened in 1930. It is more modernized, more extensive and with much more refined (but still similar to the Old Bath) architecture. Its central façade is adorned with a huge clock and the roof is decorated in the four corners with small sculptures of boys riding giant snails - symbols of speedy recovery and guardian nymph masks on the apses. The pool is reminiscent of Roman baths and is full of Romanesque mosaics, and several balconies are specially equipped to enhance the healing power of the sun's rays.



The Bansko Casino is located in the center of Varshets and is also part of the Architectural Ensemble. It was built in 1924, and was electrified in the mid-1930s. In the years before World War II, the casino attracted wealthy Bulgarians and foreign guests who arrived on the Danube river. The casino was visited by Prince Cyril, because of this it is still called "Royal Casino". There existed a tumultuous social life. Especially popular were dancing at the "Vienna salon" of the casino. In 1938 one of the first beauty competitions in Bulgaria was held, named "Miss Varshets".

Also visit the Municipal Museum of Varshets

The museum was founded in 1999. The building it is housed in was built in the 1930s as a private home with unique architecture. The museum contains 4 sections: "Antique", "Archaeological finds and coin collection", "Balneology" and "Ethnography". The finds that are exhibited in the "Antique" section are from Thracian and Roman times. A rich ethnographic collection is also presented, consisting mainly of clothing and lifestyle items from the people of the region. Varshets' most recent history as a balneological resort is presented with a rich documentary collection and numerous archival photographs.

As well as the City Art Gallery, which has 250 paintings. The gallery's fund is raised by donations made by participants in the Plein Airs held during the traditional "Holiday of the resort, mineral water and the Balkans" in August every year.



ACTIVE RECREATION

There are modern playgrounds and outdoor fitness facilities in the Park "Sunny Garden" and the "New Park". Here you can sport and have fun with your children in winter.

A great place for walking, recreation and sports is the Urban forest park, which is the second largest artificially created park in Bulgaria after the Boris Garden in Sofia, with an area of 800 acres. The Urban forest park is one of the largest treasures of Varshets, preserved over the years. It was established at the beginning of the last century (1911-1912) with the voluntary work of the local people under the leadership of the first Bulgarian balneologist Dr. Damyan Ivanov. Afforested with coniferous trees, as well as other valuable plant species - lyre, cedar, fir-tree, silver spruce, ginkgo biloba, magnolia, paradise apple and more. Its atmosphere recreates a fragment of the ancient history of Varshets - the Roman steps and the arbor of the goddess of health Hygeia remind of the distant past, since the healing power of mineral waters is known. The park is a 5-minute walk from the town center.

The favorable climatic factors, 395 m above the sea level, the unspoiled nature, the mountain range and the rich water resources are ideal conditions for the development of sports and recreational tourism and the preparation of sports clubs.

In the multifunctional Sports Hall Varshets, the sports field is intended mainly for volleyball, basketball, handball, tennis. The Hall has a swimming pool, fitness center and relaxation area. The sport hall is also a stage for display of talents of all ages in the field of various arts.

In the town park you can find a sports complex with a fitness center, a football field with the possibility of playing tennis and a multifunctional volleyball and basketball playground.

Another place for sports and recreation is the built-in ice rink. The facility is a 30 square meter teflon-coated terrain and a fence that can be used as an ice rink at any time of the year.

There are mapped and marked eco trails of different length and difficulty for lovers of mountain tourism on the territory of Varshets municipality:

- Varshets – Ivanchova polyana – Raiski kat – Bialata voda (6 km)
- Varshets – area Vodopada 4 km)
- Varshets – village of Spanchevtsi – Klisurski Monastery (12 km)
- Varshets – Zanozhene – village of Spanchevtsi (7 km)
- Varshets – Zanozhene – Todorini kukli (25 km)



EVENTS

The tourists can get acquainted with local livelihoods and authentic customs, variety folklore and cuisine, and become part of the emotion of the winter holidays included in the municipal cultural calendar.

JORDAN DAY

It is held annually on 06 January. Jordan Day or Epiphany is one of the biggest Christian holidays in the Bulgarian folk calendar. On this day St. John the Baptist baptized the Son of God in the waters of the Jordan River. The Bulgarian believes that on the night before the holiday the sky opens and the God fulfills the desires. Holy baptism is one of the seven sacraments of faith, whereby one is cleansed of sins. The ritual for the salvation of the Holy Cross and the Great Epiphany, which has become traditional for Varshets, is organized by the municipality of Varshets and the church board of St. George at the area "Banski vir" near the mineral fountain. The residents and guests of the resort town can see the unique "men's round dance" in the icy waters of the Botunya River.

HOLIDAY OF WINEGROWERS AND WINEMAKERS-TRIFON ZAREZAN

It is held annually on February 14th. From time immemorial, the colorful and distinctive holiday of winegrowers and winemakers - Trifon Zarezan, has entered the way of life of our people. In no other country is such a day marked by the love of vineyards and sparkling wine. In the beginning of February, it opens the agricultural year in the vineyards with the first work in them - the pruning. In Varshets, the Trifon Zarezan holiday has been celebrated for many years without interruption and has traditionally been eagerly awaited by both young and old. The day of the winegrower and winemaker comes alive with songs, dances and brass music on the square. A procession escorts the king of the vineyards into a colorful donkey cart along the central town square. There is a traditional competition for the best homemade wine tasting by an expert jury. The festival is accompanied by performances of brass band, dance ensembles, vocal group. A ruinous wine is poured from the barrel of the central square, and the fun and good mood are complemented by the aromatic grill, friendly talks, toasts for abundance this year and the wishes to keep alive the tradition of the holiday, the love for the land, and the magic of wine that brings people together and has been present in our lives for millennia.

THIRD OF MARCH - BULGARIAN'S NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Hundreds of residents and guests of Varshets gather annually at the central town square to participate in the celebration of Bulgaria's National Holiday organized by Varshets Municipality and mark the anniversary of the country's liberation from Turkish slavery - March 3rd. There is a ceremony for raising the national flag, as well as the concert part with the participation from the municipality.



EVENTS

CROSS-BORDER HOLIDAY "WINTER, STARS AND WINE"

The main purpose of the holiday is to extend the tourist season and to enrich the winter cultural calendar of the municipalities of Varshets (Bulgaria) and Sokobanja (Serbia). The cross-border festival was held for the first time on February 29 and March 1, 2020 in Varshets and is implemented under the project "Improvement of winter tourist offer in the municipalities of Sokobanja and Varshets - Winter tourist tour Varshets-Sokobanja", co-funded by the EU through the cross-border cooperation Interreg-IPA Bulgaria - Serbia. The program of the festival includes an exhibition-bazaar of local producers and guests from Sokobanja, producing traditional dairy, meat and herbal products, honey and bee products, wine and souvenirs, as well as a rich concert program. Advertising films for the destination "Varshets - Sokobanja" presented the beauties and tourist attractions of the two related spa resorts, presented throughout the magnificence of nature in different seasons.

TODOR'S DAY

On the first Saturday of the Lent in Varshets Municipality, Todor's Day, also called Tudoritsa, is celebrated. It commemorates the memory of Saint Theodore Tiron and pays tribute accordingly to the animal that has been a part of our lives since ancient times. It is celebrated with a solemn homage to the horse and stormy Bulgarian horse racing. From ancient times, at sunrise, men braid the tails and manes of horses, decorate them with beads, tassels and flowers and take them to drink water. The women knead and give out ritual bread to each other, giving them to the horses as well. The wheat is being boiled, which is blessed in the church temple. Then comes the attractive horse race. The winner in it is rewarded - the horse is usually given a bridle, and its owner - a shirt or cloth. The winner of the race walking around with his horse to all the homes to celebrate the holiday. The ritual meals for the holiday are bread with yeast, mushroom soup and lentils.



ACCOMMODATION

Varshets offers a wide variety of accommodations - hotels, guest rooms, guest houses, bungalows, etc. The beds in the municipality of Varshets are 1108 beds, which are located in:

HOTELS: Four stars - 2; Three stars - 4; Two stars - 2

GUEST HOUSES: Three stars - 4; Two stars - 6; One star - 3

BUNGALOWS: Two stars - 3; One star - 1

REHABILITATION HOSPITAL: 1

GUEST ROOMS: Two stars - 11; One star - 8

The total number of restaurants and entertainment establishments is 52 with a capacity of 2994 seats and categorized as follows: 1 star - 26, 2 stars - 15, 3 stars - 11.

A detailed information about the accommodation and restaurants can be found at the Tourist Information Center - Varshets with address: 3540 Varshets, 90A Republika str., Tel. +359 9527 3156, e-mail: tic_varshets@abv.bg







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