

DESCRIPTION AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Location:

Some of the most beautiful and picturesque places in Bulgaria.

NAO Rozhen is located in Smolyan Municipality in the Rhodope Mountain. Lush meadows in unbelievable nuances of green alternate with dark coniferous forests, steep cliffs and picturesque canyons. If there is a destination, which is worth visiting by every tourist in every season of the year, then this is certainly the Rhodope mountain. The mountain spreads on a vast territory and occupies a large part of Central South Bulgaria. It is conditionally divided into Western and Eastern Rhodope. The town of Smolyan is located in the Middle Rhodopes, Southern Bulgaria. It lies 104 km south of Plovdiv and 98 km west of Kardzhali. The town stretches over a huge part of the valley of Cherna River (Black River). The town of Smolyan was founded in 1960 when the three large hamlets Smolyan, Raykovo, and Ustovo merged together. The population of the town is approximately 32 000 people.

The oldest archaeological evidence discovered in Smolyan Region date back to the end of the Bronze Age – 13th century BC. The Rhodopes are believed to be a sacred Thracian mountain, the birth place of Orpheus. The Thracians converted to Christianity in the 4th – 5th centuries, a fact proven by the presence of many early Christian basilicas (7th – 9th centuries).

Description:

Rich culture and traditions – Customs, rites, national costumes, and songs are specific to each region, but are united by the 13-century history and have helped the preservation of the Bulgarian national spirit throughout the centuries. Bulgarians are skillful with textile, clay, wood, stone, and metal. The customs exceed the number of 11,000 – a plentitude of rituals accompanying Bulgarian peoples' lives from the cradle to the grave.

NAO Rozhen

The Rozhen National Astronomical Observatory was officially opened on march 13, 1981, while the regular observations have begun since September 1980. NAO Rozhen is the biggest astronomical facility on the Balkan Peninsula. There is a visitor center open during the year.

Asen's Fortress is the most interesting and most often visited tourist attraction in the Asenovgrad region. It is located three kilometers from the city on the top of a cliff, on the left bank of the Asenitsa River. There is a scenic route to



the fortress branching off the road just south of Asenovgrad heading toward Smolyan. The natural cliff massif where the fortress is situated comprises an area of 12 hectares. Its strategic location and natural defenses explain why it has been used since the days of the Thracians, who fortified it in the 5th century BCE. Asen's Fortress has seen three periods of substantial construction – during the 9th, 11th, and 13th centuries. .

In 1231, Tsar Asen II (reign 1218-1241) completed the largest expansion and rebuilding of the fortress, as proclaimed on a carved stone monument. This is the reason why the fortress was later named after him, and why the inhabitants of Stanimaka, the city beneath the fortress, renamed

Ecopath "Canyon Falls" The beginning of the trail starts from an old Roman bridge. The eco-trail winds through the woods, and wooden bridges transfer it, then left, then right on Elena River. The path can be seen around 46 waterfalls, with significant and large are 5 of them. The largest - vod. Orfey - a drop of water of 68 m. A few places are places for recreation, but also there are several scenic sites

PAMPOROVO- Four season active

The tourists come to Pamporovo mostly in wintertime because the resort is designed primarily for skiing. Almost all ski runs here start from Shezhanka (the Snow White) Peak and their altitude ranges from 1926 m to 1400 m. The tourist season begins in December and lasts well until the end of April.

Climbing Persenk Peak (June, July, August, September)-Golyam Persenk (2091 m) is a beautiful pyramid-shaped peak, the highest in Chernatitsa – the Western Rhodopes. Don't forget to taste homemade yogurt with honey.

Shiroka laka village is located in the Rhodopes, 23 km northeast of Smolyan and 16 km away from Pamporovo. The name of the village derives from the old Bulgarian word "laka" – curve, bend, meander. Shiroka laka was founded in the 17th century and has now become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Bulgaria. The village has preserved its architecture from the Bulgarian Revival Period, its musical culture, beautiful landscapes, and rich history. Shiroka laka is famous for its beautiful, authentic Rhodope houses that lie amphitheatrically on both sides of the river.

Superb wines with the oldest history – In fact, Bulgaria is the oldest documented wine producing region in the world. Viticulture and wine producing in the lands of present-day Bulgaria are dating back to 6,000 BC. It is only in Bulgaria, that the wine of the ancient Thracians is still produced and drunk – the full-bodied red Mavrud. The Mavrud vine grows only in this region of Bulgaria and nowhere else.

"Asena Chateau" is located in the village of Cherven, 15 km east from the town Assenovgrda. So located winery enjoys wealth and traditions of renowned wine region. Historians call the area "inexhaustible paradise on the Balkan Peninsula." These lands can be traced throughout the history of the people of the appearance of their first culture today.

First permanent prehistoric dwellings here are from the late eighth and early seventh millennium BC. Excavations in the area prove that fermentation, preservation, processing and storage of wine have been known to people in the Neolithic. The wine was divine elixir, probably because of the visions that cause.

From ancient times to the present day winemaking present in each stage of the history of the area around the town. It bears many legends and tells the story of Bulgarian wine culture. Centuries of history, the richness of the soil and the benefits of climate in the area are natural prerequisites for the creation of vineyards and wine production.

"Winery" AD ASENOVGRAD- Wine Plant "Asenovgrad" Ltd is and an inheritor of the winery cooperation named ""Stanimashki mavrud" founded in 1947. The grape gathering compain of Wine plant "Asenovgrad" starts during the first days of September with the early ripening grape sort Rubin which is a cross-fertilized/hybrid/ between the French sort of "syra" and Italian sort of "nebiolo". Furthermore continueing with delivering and processing of such sorts like Cabernet, Merlot and finalized at the end of October with sort of mavrud type.

The techonology of processing and production of red wines of the limited company is a combination of the latest achievements of contemporary wine sience and accumulated through the years by expertise of the specialists working in the Vinery/ Wine Plant.

The investment of 6 mln leva through the Sapard program during the 2003-2004 gave the possibility for the wine cellar to be equipped accordingly with the newest machines and inventory for delivery, processing, fermentation of raw grape and furthermore fixing and innovation with modern equipment for wine bottling.

Delicious and healthy cuisine, made with fresh organic products – The variety in Bulgarian cuisine is based on the long history of the country, as well as on the long-lasting migrations of the tribes that founded Bulgaria more than 1300 years ago. Lactobacillus Bulgaricus, the bacterium responsible for giving Bulgarian yoghurt its unique flavour and consistency exists only in Bulgaria

Protection category:

- not applicable

ACCESSIBILITY

1. Accessibility of the resource (universal):

Aspects of social interest, access conditions to people with reduced mobility (disabled, elderly, children), equipment or specific services for these groups, etc.

NAO Rozhen is not accessible for people with mobility difficulties.

There is a public parking lot on a long distance from buildings.

Disabled parking facilities are not available close to the main entrance to the observatory building.

There are steps in front of the main entrance and there is no platform or lift.

Inside of the observatory there is a lift but it does not go to the last floor.

2. Resource Signaling:

Outside.- Road signs to reach the resource (guidance) and to identify the resource (position) – not much, none at all outside of Smolyan municipality, improvement desired

Indoor.- indoor signs for the visit . well developed with information, pictures the telescopes have taken.

3. Level of accessibility:

Outside.- Sofia is very well connected and accessible city.

There is an international airport- <http://www.sofia-airport.bg/>, many train and bus stations.

There are trains and buses from Sofia to Plovdiv traveling several time per day.-

- by train form central train station-<http://razpisanie.bdz.bg/>
- by bus - from central Bus station- - <http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/>

There is a regular public bus line form Plovdiv to Smolyan and from Plovdiv to Pamporovo. In each town there is a central bus station and where you could check details.

There is no public transport going directly to NAO Rozhen. The tourists could ask in the hotel for a shuttle or in central bus station. Usually there is a small private microbuses going to NAO Rozhen after a special request

You could rent a car or ask for a taxi.

From Pamporovo to Shiroka Laka- there is a bus 6 times per day.

The public transport is not accessible for people with movement difficulties, especially for people with wheelchairs.

Only underground in Sofia is fully accessible.

Inside.- NAO Rozhen- there is no toilets for people with disabilities.

There is no places a parenting room is not available for parents with small children.

In general in all 3 an 4 star hotels there is a rooms for people with special needs, lifts, ramps and The main stairs have handrails on both sides.

MARKETING

Astro tourism in Bulgaria is not particularly well developed. It is a niche, in which marketing could be greatly improved on. The Smolyan region is mainly marketed as a place for winter tourism, with several world class ski resorts such as Pamporovo. As a mountainous region it is also promoted for the trekking paths it offers. Astro tourism, however, is not so popular despite the facilities that provide an excellent base for its development. Information about it can hardly be found unless you search specifically for it. There are not any advertisements about the Rozhen observatory and the planetarium in Smolyan in the main-stream media. The observatory, however, is part of the movement called "100 tourist sites of Bulgaria", which gives it some popularity especially among people who are keen to collect the stamps from all the sites. Although this movement popularizes the observatory, it alone is does not make enough of a difference so that Astro tourism in Smolyan is as popular and profitable as it could be.

1. Marketing profile:

Smolyan region is well known as a tourist destination for tracking for skiing and for rural tourism.

Astro-tourism is still not popular in Bulgaria and there is no special advertising at all. NAO Rozhen is not included in tourist packages.

Some time we found Smolyan Planetarium as a part of tourist packages for children.

No special brochures available about astro-tourism in the hotels or in Tourist information centers.

2. Information available of the resource:

NAO Rozhen publishes videos and information about group visits on their own website, unfortunately this is all of the information available.

In Smolyan municipality there is a Tourist information center, which is managed by the municipality administration. Information regarding NAO Rozhen can be found there. The observatory, however, is viewed just as something that can add to the winter tourism in the municipality and not as a place, which could be a tourist site all on its own.

There is also information both about the NAO Rozhen and the planetarium in Smolyan on the website <http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/>. However we could not find any brochures issued related to Astro tourism. What is more there is no information regarding the NAO and the planetarium in the hotels in the big ski resorts in Pamporovo and Chepelare and this is a perfect way for the tourists to inform themselves about the possibility to visit them, as they are in close proximity.

Unfortunately there is no brochures, videos or other advertising materials for NAO Rozhen and Smolyan planetarium.

Available information on internet:

- Planetarium Smolyan- www.planetarium-sm.org;
- National astronomical observatory Rozhen-www.nao-rozhen.org;
- Pamporovo Ski resort- <http://pamporovo.me/>
- Smolyan municipality- <http://www.smolyan.bg/bg/home> (only BG language)
- <http://eservices.smolyan.bg/tic/>
- Official tourism portal of Bulgaria- <http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/>
- www.turistbg.com; (only BG language)
- <http://www.ranica.eu/>

VISITS

1. Capacity of the establishment:

NAO Rozhen - visitors per year – 9000 visitors per year (this data is from annual report of NAO Rozhen, Bulgarian academy of sciences)

Smolyan observatory - about 40000 visitors per year (this data is from official presentation of Smolyan observatory, published on lll.mon.bg/uploaded_files/planetarium_smolyan.pdf)

Places for accommodation in Smolyan municipality- 269 , bads-10878

There is no special hotels related to astro tourism.
<http://www.nsi.bg/>

2. Schedule and Availability for visitors:

NAO Rozhen is open all year round. Time schedule is different according the season.

There are special events. The schedule is published on website www.nao-rozhen.org; It is possible to get a guided tour in English.

Usually scientists are working like a guides during their free time.
At the moment volunteers or astronoms- amateurs doesn't work as a guides.

3. Admission:

NAO Rozhen - visitors per year- about 5 Euro per adult and 2 Euro per students and children.

4. Limitations:

Possible problems (infrastructure, access...). Possible improvements that can be performed.

There is very little information about the possibilities for astro-tourism and related resources.

The information is in general in Bulgarian language. .It could be on different languages.

Problems- access for people with special needs, disabilities, movement limitation.

Improvement of infrastructure (roads, maps and signature),

Improvement- of cooperation between stakeholders, people working in tourist sector, municipality administration, and NAO Rozhen. To develop stronger and larger network.

5. Visit the resource:

Guided tours. Usually groups from 6 to 25 people.

TOURIST RATING OF THE RESORT

1. Hierarchical level of resource:

• **Level 2:** Attractive with exceptional features in a country, able to motivate a stream of foreign or domestic visitors (current or potential), either alone or together with other adjacent resources..

2. Tourism demand:

	Nationality	User profile	Seasonality
Smolyan region/ municipality including Smolyan town and another small villages		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people, students, families with children • Adults and elderly 	90% in Winter 10% tracking in the Summer or rural tourism
Pamporovo ski resort	39% foreigners-most of them from Greece, Romania England and Turkey www.nsi.bg 61% Bulgarian tourists	Young people, students, families with children, adults	90% in Winter 10% tracking in the Summer or rural tourism
Rozhen NAO	No available data	Young people, students, families with children	Summer and early autumn A few people coming during the winter