



These areas have been for centuries the main communication between East and West. Dimitrovgrad - Caribrod is a small municipality in southeast Serbia, on the border with Bulgaria. Trn is in its neighborhood, across the border. Caribrod-Trn area represents a natural entity, an area of exceptional beauty and rich cultural heritage. It's the area of playful landscapes and people, dynamic music, rich flavors, colors and smells, gorgeous shapes; a valuable mosaic of rocks, water, grass and sky, interwoven with real hot Balkan soul.



# The Heart of the Balkans – Time Gate

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## TOURIST GUIDE TO DIMITROVGRAD AND TRN



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## DIMITROVGRAD AND TRN

### - THE RICHNESS OF THE DIVERSITY

Dimitrovgrad and Trn are located in the beautiful surroundings -preserved and diversified nature which is testified by the highest level of protection of Stara mountain and legislative protection of the Jerma River Canyon and Petraska cave. Their protection includes not only the valuable geological and bio-diversity, but also traditional lifestyles and culture springing from its foundations - the tradition, rich musical heritage and live family traditions. The whole area is a treasure trove of geological heritage, manifested in a number of sediments of different age. Only on Stara mountain there are 52 described plant communities with more than 1190 plant species. Grassland communities which have a high degree of biodiversity are of special value, some of them, such as *Agrostio-Asphodeletum alba*, are only present on Stara mountain. They also have an exceptional diversity of birds, about 200 species. There are about a hundred species of day butterflies which is 40% of the butterfly fauna of the Balkan Peninsula, 18 species of reptiles and 25 species of fish on Stara mountain.

Stara mountain was legally protected in 1977. as a Nature park and in 1996. was declared a Peace Park between Serbia and Bulgaria. Thanks to the preservation of traditional life and cultural heritage and its correlation with the preserved natural environment, Stara Mountain is a candidate for the UNESCO-MAB reserve - "Man and Biosphere".

In the area of Dimitrovgrad and Trn there are other mountains as well: Vidlic, Greben, Vlaska and Ruj which are famous for their beauty. With their breathtaking lookouts, peaks and cliffs, they are the target of many mountain and alpine tours. In the region of Dimitrovgrad through their most attractive parts the horse, bicycle and hiking tracks are passing. The eco paths are leading to most parts of the Jerma and Jablanica rivers canyons, they also include combination of wooden bridges and tracks, hanging over the rapids and waterfalls of extraordinary beauty.

The connection between nature and human activities in rural areas of the municipality of Dimitrovgrad and Trn is extremely high. It is reflected in the vibrant connection between traditional livestock grazing-mowing systems, as part of the production chain of high quality traditional dairy products and wool and lamb meat. The brand of these products is on the national market directly attached to the name of the mountain – Stara mountain lamb, cheese, yogurt ... The link between high biodiversity and livestock, expressed through high quality products is of crucial importance for the further development of the economy of the mountain.

## TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

### - NATURAL WARMTH

Traditional folk architecture of Dimitrovgrad and Trn area is very simple and adjusted to the basic needs of a family. The houses are made of materials from the surrounding nature - earth, straw, wood and stone. The most common type of house is bondruk consisting of a wooden skeleton filled with a mixture of straw and mud on a stone basement, covered with stone slabs or tiles. Often, the traditional house is decorated with arches and multi-part windows, and very rarely there are embossed decorations or year of construction on the walls. The most common house is with hip roof, except for the stone house covered almost always with gable roof. On the roof there is usually an attractive chimney covered with stone slabs. Houses usually have one or two bedrooms and an iza – a room with a fireplace. Moravia type of house, one of the most beautiful, is also very common. There is a wooden porch and a chimney called "komin."

The fences around households are also very interesting. The massive gates, made of huge laminated stone or compressed in up to one meter wide walls, are very common in Visoko. Gates were built with particular attention. They are usually solid wooden with stone pillars and covered, the same as roofs, with stone slabs or tiles. Building of houses is cheap and simple and the construction technique is simple.

In Dimitrovgrad municipality there are two types of villages: compact and mahala. Mahala - broken into small hamlets, are common in Burel and Derekul, while in Ponisavlja, Visko and Zabrdje, the majority are compact villages. Mahala type of village originates from the need of defense against the Turks. Mahala usually belonged to one family. They were formed on the hills in such a way that they could communicate visually among themselves and thus be informed about the coming danger. Typical village that belong to mahala type are Dragovit and Trnski Odorovci. Typically compact village is Senokos. Although it has parts that are called mahalas by families that inhabit them, they occupy less space and form one whole, so they belong to another type

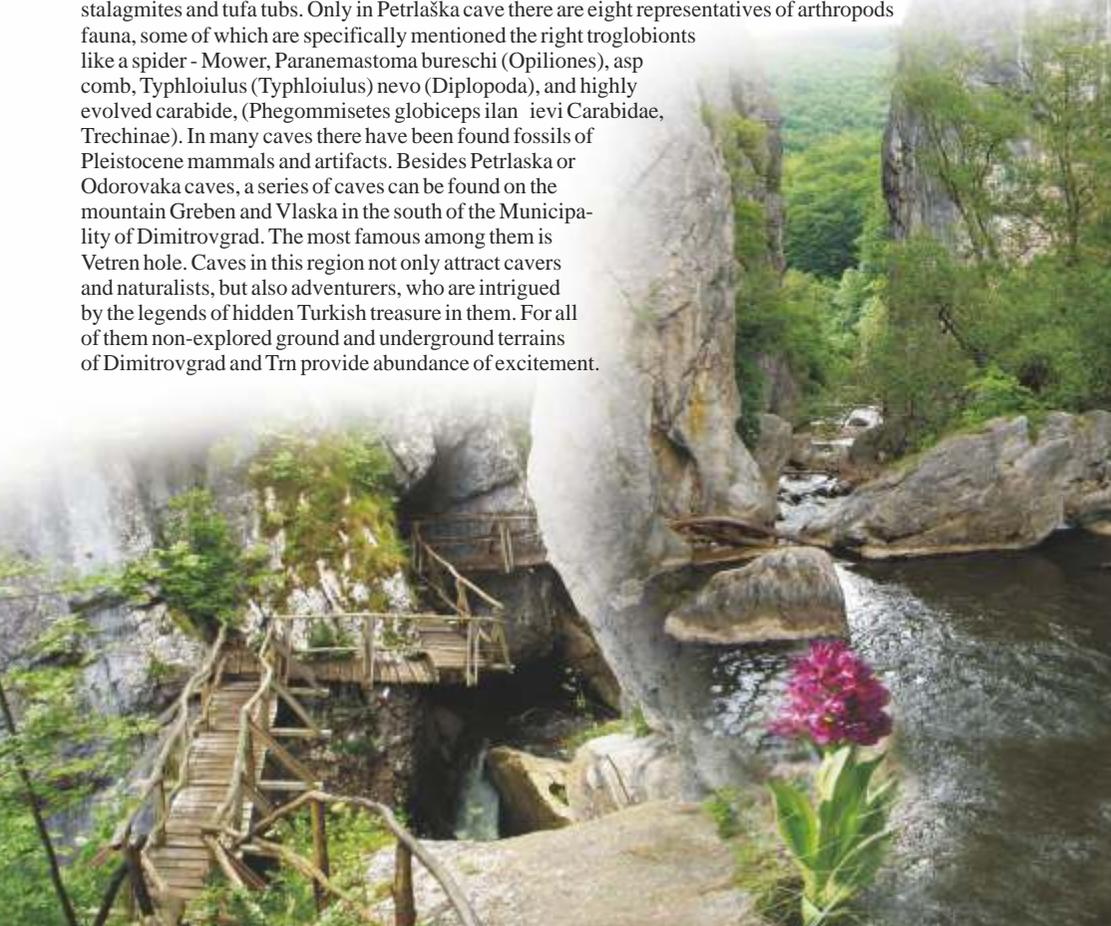
Traditional architecture is scarce in this region and there are less and less well-preserved buildings, particularly economic, which were first abandoned with a change in the rural economy. A valuable contribution to their preservation is provided by a young local artist, architect, Dejan Mitov from Dimitrovgrad, who has been developing from his childhood models of houses and farms of this region. One of his most successful works is a model of the entire rural household.



The Jerma River valley stretches through the entire southern part of Dimitrovgrad and western part of Trn municipality. On its way between the Derekulske and the Burelske Mountains - Vlaska (1442 m) and Greben (1338 m) in Serbia, it formed the two canyons of extraordinary beauty - Odorovsko and Vlasko gorge. The most interesting breakthroughs are formed of sedimentary limestone, sandstone and other rocks about 4-5 km in length, and depth, which in some places reaches 500 m. In the Bulgarian part it broke through the canyon up to 200 feet in depth, with a narrowing of the river up to 4-5m and waterfalls up to 4 metres in height. Jilava kamak and Manastiristeto rocks are declared for national climbing directions in Bulgaria.

Jerma's excellence is not only based in geological forms, but also in various forms of life and cultural heritage which it contains - over 20 described plant communities, out of which 10 are forest, including the relict communities from the tertiary period and 40 woody species which they are made. The landscape is extremely rich in wildlife. The waters of Jerma are salmonid resulting in fishing reserve. The heights above the river are dominated by the golden eagle, which nests on rocks and reefs of Vlaska and Greben. The canyon of Jerma in Serbia is for this reason is protected as a nature reserve, and it is under the protection of the Monastery of St. John the Divine from the fourteenth century, which is located within the reserve. The Jablanica River, a tributary to Jerma, forms a beautiful canyon in the municipality of Zvornik. In this region, there are often dozens of trees and herbaceous species on several square meters, some of which are extremely rare, for example Rajhenbahova iris.

Near Trn, in Trnska Banca village there is a mineral spring, known since Roman times, and in the region Derekula there are unused hot springs. In the area of Dimitrovgrad and Trn, there are many caves, some of which are, for example Petrlaska cave, protected as a first class monument of nature - natural resource of great importance because of various interesting forms of very attractive speleothem, mainly stalactites, stalagmites and tufa tubs. Only in Petrlaska cave there are eight representatives of arthropods fauna, some of which are specifically mentioned the right troglobionts like a spider - Mower, *Paranemastoma bureschi* (Opiliones), asp comb, *Typhloiulus (Typhloiulus) nevo* (Diplopoda), and highly evolved carabide, (*Phegommisetes globiceps ilan ievi* Carabidae, Trechinae). In many caves there have been found fossils of Pleistocene mammals and artifacts. Besides Petrlaska or Odorovaka caves, a series of caves can be found on the mountain Greben and Vlaska in the south of the Municipality of Dimitrovgrad. The most famous among them is Vetren hole. Caves in this region not only attract cavers and naturalists, but also adventurers, who are intrigued by the legends of hidden Turkish treasure in them. For all of them non-explored ground and underground terrains of Dimitrovgrad and Trn provide abundance of excitement.



# CROSSROADS

## - TIME GATE

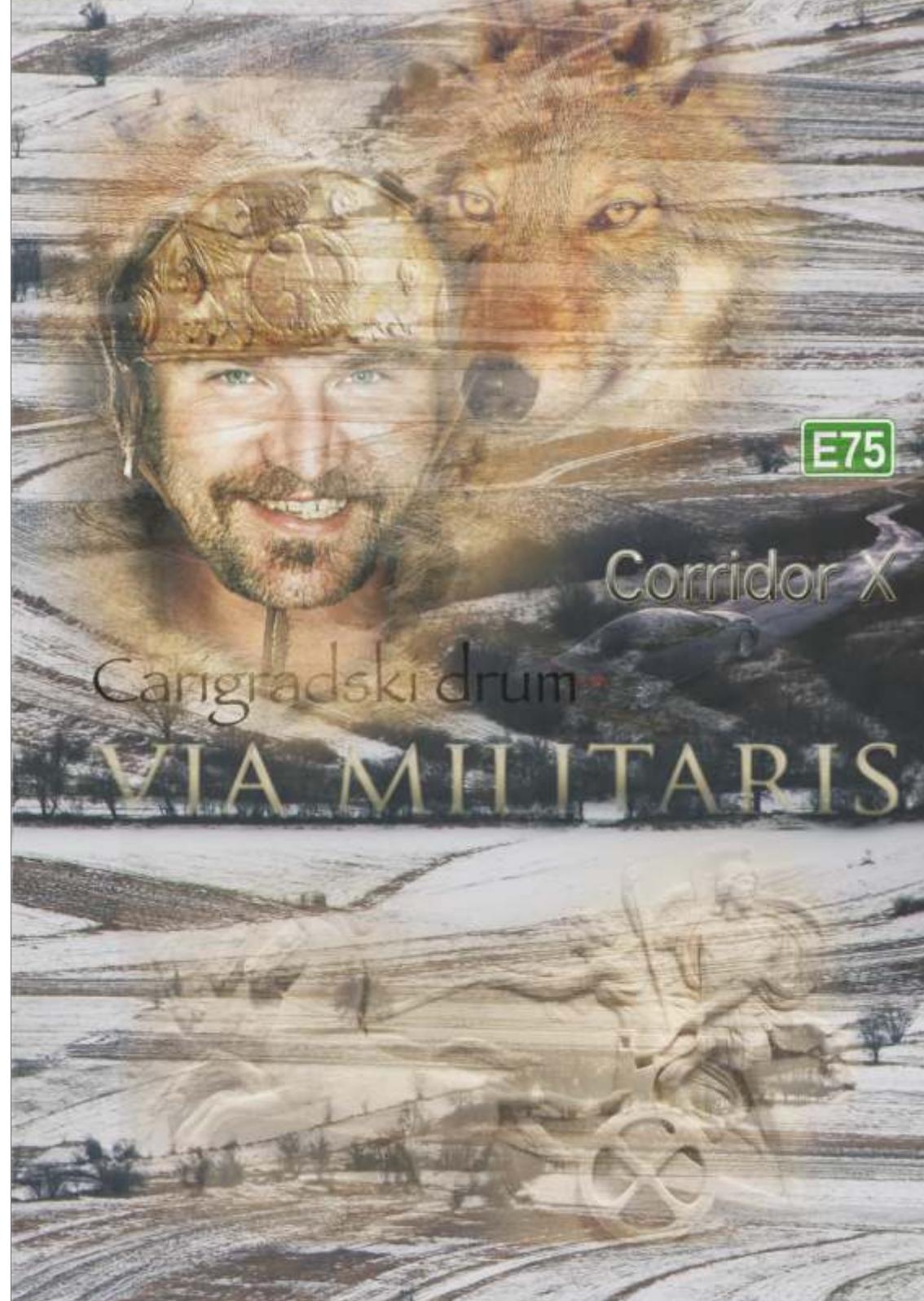
Archaeological findings on the territory of Dimitrovgrad and Trn municipalities testify that the life in this area was intensively developed in ancient times. The area of Dimitrovgrad, was once a place of rest "Mansiones" and the station for changing horses "Mutationes" of the Roman military road VIA MILITARIS. In ancient times, Dimitrovgrad was called Balanstra. Today's route E-75 literally follows the former route from Singidunum to Bizantium. The presence of the ancient Romans is also confirmed by reliefs of Hecate, Jupiter and Mithra from the villages Bachevo and Poganovo. Gojindolsko kale - early Byzantine fortress built in the fourth, and renewed in the sixth century at the time of Justinian on the imposing hill overlooking the village Gojin dol, originates from the late antique period.

According to certain sources, Dimitrovgrad could be the crossroads of three important roads MILITARIS VIA, VIA BESIKA (which led to the homeland of Sapeji and Besi, probably today Burel, Derekul and Znepolje and went onto Via Egnatia) and VIA METALIKA (which ran over Zabrdje to Visoko, along the dividing line between the cultures of herdsmen-farmers - Visok and peasants-Zabrdjei further to Montana - the home of Tribals, masters of Hemus- Stara mountain). The area between Zeljusa and Grapa, where VIA Rustica was passing, is the site of the first clash of conquering armies of Alexander the Great and the Tribals, the people of miners, metallurgists and farmers, in 337. godine BC

Burel, Derekul and Znepolje are also rich in findings from the ancient period. In the surroundings of the village Planinica, a Roman military diploma was found. During the works on Corridor X in June 2009, a crossing was discovered of a small road, which comes from the hills, with the Roman military road - Via Militaris, above which a well-preserved fortress was found with several gates built in the fourth century and reconstructed during sixth century in the era of the Emperor Justinian. A road, 8 metres wide, was found. It was made of large stone blocks, with two lanes. Many artifacts were also excavated including horseshoes and parts of carriages.

Caribrod area went into Turkish hands in 1433. At that time, Dimitrovgrad was named Zarin or Carski brod (Imperial ship). This name is linked to the legend, in which the imperial caravan faced here an insuperable river, so the king ordered to build a bridge - the ship. With the arrival of the Turks, the settlement was named "Tekvum Binari," and the area, according to the legend, became a refuge for refugees from Kosovo and parts of Bulgaria where the Turkish oppression was the hardest. Ethno-psychologists, believe that the reason for this could only be gentle character of the local population. A monument to the local spahija (landlord) Murtizan in the village Izatovaci, could be a confirmation of this opinion. In 1866, according to the legend, the local population built to their landlord, whom they admired for his kindness and justice, a monument - a unique monument, which enslaved people built to their conqueror. True or not, the image of a peaceful and gentle people, survives and captivates today.

Turkish fountain in Boljevdolu is one of the rare well-preserved monuments from the period of Ottoman rule. According to the inscription in Arabic, the fountain was built by Spahija Hussein in the seventeenth century for a medal. About a mile above it there is the church of St. Archangel with layers of frescoes from 17th - 19th century. The rest of the legacy of the Ottoman period is largely immaterial and largely composed of legends about outlaws and of hidden treasure. The fact is that there was a road along Greben mountain used for bringing tax to Trn during the reign of the Ottomans, and along valleys of nearby Nišava and Visoka rivers, the Turks retreated from Serbia after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Beliefs, legends and truths have been intertwined for centuries, and the searchers for gold are still the most numerous visitors to the surrounding mountains, caves and caverns.



## SPIRITUALITY

### - THE UNIQUE SPIRIT OF THE BALKANS

Dimitrovgrad and Trn areas abound in churches and monasteries. Although their number is far less than in pre-communist times, when every village had a place of worship, their significance is not thereby diminished. In the area of the two municipalities the greatest influence belongs to Poganovski monastery.

According to the legend, the construction of Poganovski monastery started in 1395 by Konstantin Dejanovic Dragas, nephew of the Emperor Dusan. The monastery was completed after Konstantin's death by his daughter Jelena, Byzantine empress. The monastery church is dedicated to St. Jovan Theologian - the patron saint of love, and as such is unique in Serbia. The church is small with all the features of Moravian architecture. The inscription above the entrance says that the church was painted in 1499. Frescoes which are among the best preserved in Serbia belong to Kosturska post-Byzantine school, and the iconostasis to Greco-Aegean and the Ohrid School. One of the peculiarities of these frescoes is a byzantine blue - a rare color (a color kilo of paint was worth a kilo of gold) whose tones are still preserved on the walls of the church. Poganovski monastery has been since 1979 in the list of world cultural heritage. The monastery has never in its history been demolished. In the past, it was almost inaccessible, which preserved it from destructive Turks. Today, its attractive location in the valley of Jerma is accessible by asphalt road, which is on the former narrow gauge railroad between the slopes of Greben and Vlaska mountains.

Dimitrovgrad is known for its talented artists - painters, writers, sculptors, photographers, film artists ... There is no municipality in Serbia, which has according to the number of inhabitants so many academic painters. There is no other small town that is able to set up and perform »Kostana" play on the stage of the Yugoslav Drama Theater, and that has been for over 120 years, as of 1888, drawing from inexhaustible treasure of life of this area and staging it. The immense talent of Dimitrovgrad citizens is noticed even in elementary school. The halls of high school and primary schools in Dimitrovgrad are full of the works of talented students. Some of teachers are well known fresco painters. Every year in early August, the gates of the monastery of St. John the Divine open up for artists from around the world. The monastery became the center of the events connected with the international art colony, organized by a local cultural center. The event is traditional and is the culmination of events related to art culture of Dimitrovgrad municipality.

Of the many known and recognized artists from this region we will mention only a few: Director Zlatan Todorov Silk; painters: Free Georgi Sotirov Masev, Vladimir Sokolov, Ljuban Belmustakov, Ivan Petrov, Nikola Denkov, Nicholas, Antov, Georgi Georgiev, Milorad Gerov, Veselin Denkov, M. Jotov, Zorica Nikolova Kostic, Ivan Kolev, Ljubomir urov, Bogdan Nikolov, Georgi Gocev, Metodi Petrov, Nada Velez, Milovan Velkov, Novica Mladenov, George Joseph, Perica Donkov, Mirjana Denkova, Branko Biscan, Welch Velchev, Dimitrova, Cedimir Iliev, Nebojsa Milcev, Milovan Pankov, Momir Aleksov, Brandon Neykov, Daniela Gakovo, Radmila Mitkova, Georgi Dimitrov, Elica Donkova-Ašanin, Branko Nikolov, Dusan Nikolov, Irena Ilieva, Mica Mitic, Branko Boskovic; sculptors: Dimitri Iliev and Dusan Donkov; writer Detko Petrov, biologist, scientist, publicist Spas Sotirov, journalist and artist Bogdan Nikolov, Miroslav Antov photographer ...



# SOPSKA FOLKLORE

## - LIVE LINESS, ELEGANCE, WARMTH

**Folk music** from the region of Dimitrovgrad and the Trn and Sopska areas in general, is one of the most beautiful, dynamic, and for performers the most difficult and beautiful dances in the Balkans. The basic form of the dance is an open kolo (dance), but dancing in pair is also common. Holding a hand, relaxed downwards. Often, holding the belt, which is an older form of binding players. The technique of playing is based on small jumps, with little separation from the ground. The dance step is with the whole foot, and when playing the upper body is tilted forward or sometimes gently rocking left and right. It is a dance with a song and when the song stops the rhythm accelerates with instrumental accompaniment. The melodies are mostly in two quarter or four quarter rhythm, but there are also more complex rhythms. A large number of dances are characterized by an arrhythmia, because the music and dance phases do not match.

**National costume** originates from ancient times, has long kept its basic features and it has very slowly changed. In Dimitrovgrad and Trn area there are several types of costumes. Costumes vary in materials, components and method of decoration, and even colors. Male costume is extremely rational and well suited to harsh climate. Male "beletine" are dominant - modestly decorated, but very beautiful costume of white aba, woolen cloth typical of Stara mountain and livestock community. Loose-fitting pants or **breveneci**, around waist and the at bottom of the legs are decorated with black ribbons, as well as long waistcoats, over which a woven belt is put and embroidered black or red socks are put on. Black or white fur caps are worn on the head, and on feet typical pork opanci (pork leather shoes). Shirts are usually embroidered around the neck and sleeves. Gunj, opandžaci, navosta (thick canvas that is wrapped around the legs in the winter) are other usual garments. Another variant of male attire - black breveneci decorated with red ribbons in combination with a white shirt, is a characteristic of Ponisavska villages and other farming communities.

Female costume is very beautiful and elegant, usually very richly decorated. Female costumes are "litaci", "cloth", "zubun", shirts, "dzubeta", aprons, scarves, socks and leather footwear. **Litak** was made from a thin black woolen cloth, variously decorated mostly on the chest and the lower part. In Zabrdje and in Visoko, the decorations are cords and ribbons, mostly golden yellow and deep red color combined with colorful woolen strings. Litak from Trns area is made of gold and silver sequins in combination with braids and ribbons and is called pulen. **Suko** - coth is made of thick canvas always widely cut towards the lower part, sleeveless or with short sleeves, open and closed. The decorations are mostly bands and cords orange and red. **Saja** is typical of the southern regions Shopska - Bosilegradska, Krivopalanacka and custendilska, but can be found in Dimitrovgrad as well. It is a long elegant buttoned dress, with short sleeves, richly decorated on the chest and sleeves with colorful yarn and silver thread embroidery. It is made of thin black woolen cloth. **Zubun-Zabno** is made of black or maroon velvet or domestic cotton so called "Alidza", but there are examples made of silk. Zubun has no sleeves, it is widely cut towards the lower part or completely open. It is mostly decorated with silver yarn or sewn rhomboids wit braids around pockets. **Dzube** is made of black or dark red velvet, and inside and around the neck there is lamb fur. Around the neck there is marten fur. **Shirts** are linen or cotton, sometimes woven with silk threads and a rich lace is attached around the neck, sleeves and to th bottom seen under Litak. **Aprons** were woven or embroidered. Most beautiful examples are woven with silver thread. **Webbing** is worn around the waist, wrapped or simply passed through "clasps"-metal buckles. **Scarves** or samije, are usually made from fine cotton, silk or marquissette. The most common are white, brown and yellow-green "zejtinlija", but there are also in gently-pink color. Rarely are the edges decorated with sequins. They are tied in various ways, depending on the region, and even villages.



## CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

### - FROM PAGAN TO CHRISTIAN

Customs and beliefs of people in Dimitrovgrad and Trn represent a real historical mixture of pagan and Christian. For centuries, the religions and beliefs intertwined, and the people would forget the essence and keep the external manifestations of the former deep beliefs. Practices which have for centuries passed on from generation to generation, once again attract attention. Again the "obroci" and "records" are brought up and the people once again gather around the holy sites, in order to reach higher powers through prayers in these hard times which are as he believes the only able to help

In Dimitrovgrad area there are a lot of customs related with Orthodox holidays, but also with weddings, births, baptisms and deaths. Families celebrate slava - family saints, and the villages celebrate village saints. Characteristic feature of this area are "obroci" crosses placed close to the village, on the estates of each family. Family and guests gather around them during family slavas. Other attractions are the "records", the covenant or "Mirosan", dedicated trees, mostly old oak trees, rarely black pine and other trees. There are usually one or more obroci next to them. The records are visited during village slavas and religious holidays, when there is a procession and usually a visit to all records in the village is organised (usually 4 on the main parts of the world)

The most interesting customs are related to the celebration of St. George - St George. This holiday, which falls every year on the same day – 6th May and the beginning of the summer, is followed by a series of rites, which reveal their pagan origins. St. George is the most celebrated slava in Eastern Serbia. As in all mountainous regions, where the life of the people is closely associated with nature, the residents of Dimitrovgrad area also celebrate St. George – a slava related to the start of vegetation period. The holiday of St. George is the time of sacrifice and prayer for fruitful year, family and village gatherings. It is usually celebrated among the shepherds and the Roma, and is often referred to as shepherds' or Roma slava.



Mandatory part of the celebration of St. George is a sacrificial lamb "Dzurdzila", and then the ritual milking and making of garlands of various herbs with magical properties. The holiday of St George is a kind of adoration of nature and its powers, the festival of youth and friendship. In its most original, unmodified form, it is kept and practiced in the Stara mountain, and one of the most attractive celebrations of St. George's is the one in Radejni and Visoko Odorovci under the oak tree, which is, according to local residents' beliefs, six centuries old.

Also interesting is the celebration Sv.Todora (Todoric), when the proud owners of a horses climb their stallions and proudly parade the towns and villages. In Dimitrovgrad, this custom is preserved to this day, although only a few years ago, thanks to the program of preserving indigenous breeds the number of horses in the municipality increased again. So now local mountain horse and nonius regularly participate in major events and with their owners are preserving the village tradition although it is not that important for their economy any more.



# TRADITIONAL AAGRICULTURE

## - HIDDEN TREASURE



Balkan goat



Bardoka



Domestic mountain horse



Domestic donkey



Pirot sheep

Dimitrovgrad and Trn area are known today mainly for mixed farming on small farms. In the past big livestock, particularly sheep production related to grassland complexes of Stara Mountain was dominant. Nomadic animal husbandry and its main products - lamb and cheese, and sour cream and the inventor of the bacteria with which it is prepared - Stamen Grigorov, spread the glory of these regions around the globe. Regardless of the extent of local production, livestock, fruit and agricultural products are very good. Most important for the region is sheep, goat and beef production, then accompanying production of animal food, growing of raspberries, plums, and various vegetables. They are the raw material for famous sopska kitchen and meals which are today mastered and known by chefs around the world.

A great effort is invested in the construction and promotion of high value natural farm systems, which through their actions shape and support the diversity of landscapes and species. The success of local agricultural production practices has always been closely related to the breeding of indigenous stock. Breeding and selection of these animals was the question of the survival of local people and nomadic tribes that stayed here seasonally for centuries. Dimitrovgrad, as one of the most important centres for the preservation of agro-diversity in the Balkans, is especially active in the preservation of these, now endangered animals. Rare breeds of sheep - domestic Pramenka, Balkan goat, domestic mountain horse and donkey, nonius, busa, mangulica and many other are kept here as a potential for the future. They are exhibited each year during the fare of Balkan agrobiodiversity and village heritage in Dimitrovgrad, and the public is reminded of the genetic material. The fare has been annually organised since 2003. on the International Day of biodiversity and on the Day of the municipality of Dimitrovgrad in September. Rich cultural and artistic program is performed by many artists from the Balkan region.



Mangulica



Nonius



Pulin



Karakachan sheep



Sharplaninac



## NATURE TO GO

### - WILD FRUIT, HUNTING AND FISHING

Dimitrovgrad and Trn region are located in the area of Balkan Biodiversity Center, one of six in a temperate climate zone. A beautiful combination of valleys, plateaus, mountain peaks and steep rocky sections, canyons and mountain streams, marshes and dry fields and rocky coves, combined conifer forests and plantations are of outstanding beauty of the landscape, but they are also the habitat of many plant and animal species that the man has used from time immemorial to survive.

There are several well-known herbalist and healer in the area, and large number of **medicinal plants** are known and used for treatment and refreshment by the population. The beliefs about magical properties of certain plants are very interesting. During the celebration of St. George, wreaths made of geranium, basil, wild roses, dogwood, etc. are used in the rituals in order to insure the health of all animals, people and crops.



There are also abundant resources of **wild fruit**, especially strawberries, blueberries, dogwood, elder, pears, raspberries, blackberries and many others. Valuable traditional recipes for their preparation and storage are still preserved.

Resources of "fruits of nature" are extremely rich in various types of **mushrooms** such as porcini, chanterelles, oyster mushrooms, pine mushroom, sunny mushroom, elm mushroom, willow, poplar mushroom, that the local population knows and uses. There is information that in fall farmers used to look in the forests for with mycelium of these fungi, and brought them home and put in a corner of the barn with the cattle, so that they would have fresh mushrooms during whole winter. The traditional pickling and drying technology mainly of porcini and chanterelles are still preserved.

Probably the least used resource of wild nature is forests and their inhabitants. **Hunting** is very popular. Wild boar, roe deer and rabbits, and predators such as wolves, jackals, foxes and wild cats are mainly hunted.

The biggest **fishing** attraction is the Smilovska lakes, and the lake near Jarlovci. Types of fish that can be fished in these lakes are catfish (up to 50kg), carp (up to 20kg), tolstolobik (up to 30kg), pike (up to 15kg), carp (up to 20kg), crucian carp, roach etc.. Fishing competitions are often held on lakes. In Nisava the following fish can be fished: chub, gudgeon, carp and barbel, and in Jerma: trout, chub, gudgeon. Spotsko fly fishing on the principle of "catch and release" is the most common in the canyons of Jerma. Mountain streams are still attracting the few enthusiasts who are willing to demonstrate the traditional way of fishing hunting with bare hands.



## TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

### - NATURAL MATERIAL



**Weaving** The most characteristic product of Dimitrovgrad and Trn area is crga - wool blanket, whose production is preserved even in mainly industrial conditions. Woolen carpets from Pirov and Ciprovso have been made for centuries. They are known far beyond this region for their beauty and durability. In recent years, interest for making of Pirov carpets and other artifacts is higher, so the number of weavers has increased. In the village Gulenovci near Dimitrovgrad there is a workshops for their training.

**Felt and cloth**, as the simplest forms of wool processing, are present in the area of Dimitrovgrad and Trn from time immemorial. The technique has improved and the home industry has grown into a craft. The majority of rolling mills for cloth were on Stara mountain, because of the availability of water as a power and wool as raw material. When in the mid-twentieth century the last rolling mills for cloth were closed, pressed wool products were waiting to return to popularity until the beginning of the XXI century. Felt technique (souvenirs, hats, scarves, slippers, etc.) together with traditional knitting, brought new life to wool. In Dimitrovgrad felt is made, and soon one original rolling mill driven by water will start working in the village of Kamenica.



There are two schools of **pottery** in the region- Pirov and Busino. Busino pottery and ceramics is one of the three most famous in Bulgaria. Its source is the village in Busino in Trn Municipality, famous for its craftsmen and all kinds of pottery products. Out of several hundred of workshops in the nineteenth century, only a few have survived. There is a pottery museum in the village and a training center where, among other things, a traditional annual arts colony is held. As of recently, there is a workshop in the village Gulenovci, near Dimitrovgrad, for training future potters.

**Making of traditional wooden instruments** is an activity that died out in Dimitrovgrad and Trn area. This skill requires from the master not only knowledge of the craft but also of playing. The talented individuals who used to make for own needs and for the needs of neighbors pipes of elder, are still remembered in the area. More recently the craft was somewhat revived by the course for making supeljka – short pipe and by organizing future trainings in the village Gulenovci near Dimitrovgrad.



**Knife making** was once a common activity that also included the sharpening service or was interwoven with the carpentry. In Trn area every village had such a workshop. Today there is only one – of Vladimir Spirov in the village Vrapca. His specialty are knives of various shapes, with handles, horn, bone and wood. Each blade is unique and has a special price.



# SOPSKA ART OF FOOD PREPARATION

## - WARM HEARTH BENEATH STONE ROOF -



Shopska cuisine is famous and popular. It is characterized by a combination of dairy products and vegetables such as “sopska salad” (tomato, cucumber, hot pepper and crushed white cheese), “tarator” (cucumbers and yogurt with dill), “suspe s's urdu” and so on. Some of the favorites are "cooked piper", "ljutenica", dishes made of corn, "sprinkled polenta", "moruznica", "belmuz", dishes of wheat flour, cheese or spinach pie - "banica", "zeljanik" and meat dishes such as stuffed dry peppers - "pl'njene suspe", "zaduseno", "burn", "janija", "mutton prepared on steam" and other.

The quality of food from this region was best advertised by the notorious Stara mountain lamb and cheese. High-quality dairy products are: raw and melted butter, “ovcenik”, sour cream, white mature sheep cheese slices and other.

For the holidays lamb is obligatory food, either grilled or baked, or even red meat and liver prepared “na skaru” or “na kamik” - baked on a stone surface posted on an open fire. "Mushrooms and fish are also prepared “na skaru”, especially by the Jerma and Visocica rivers, where gudgeon and trout are popular.

Meat is coated in lamb jowl “scrama” in order to preserve the juices and taste. One of interesting ways of preparing food is baking or cooking in “vurnija” – furnace made of natural material – bricks, stone and earth. Lamb and goat meat prepared in vurnja a specialty. Traditionally, it is prepared by cleaning the edible parts of bowls and returning them inside, stitching and then cooking them inside while the meat is being baked outside in the heat released by the walls of vurnja. Meat of local breeds is very tasty, which is due to pastures rich in plant species. Homemade bread, baked in vurnji, is delicious as well as other local homemade food, which is still regularly prepared in the old way.



