

# Legend

-  Biotourism spot
-  Historical Monument
-  Natural Monument
-  Hidrography
-  Religious Monument
-  Museum
-  Cross-border point
-  City
-  Village
-  National Border
-  Study Area
-  Main Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Protected Area

## Biotourist map of Korça Region



Join us in the Preservation and Promotion of the Traditional, Cultural and Natural Resources of Korça.

Ky projekt është bashkëfinancuar nga Bashkimi Europian dhe nga Fondet Kombëtare të Greqisë dhe Shqipërisë 2007-2013  
 FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD TO PARTNERSHIP

Innovative Practices in Biotourism project emerges as a natural consequence of the need for coordinated economic cooperation between Greece and Albania. Sharing cross border resources involves cooperation and common management practices to ensure social and economic benefits for the local people which minimize environmental damages. Sustainable economic development must be promoted with the intention of increasing cooperation in common business initiatives for the support of the local communities of Prespa in Greece and Korca in Albania. Funded by the European Territorial Cooperation Programme “Greece – Albania IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013” and by National Funds of Greece and Albania, the project runs for 18 months, from April 2012 to September 2013.

The primary goal of the project is to promote sustainable economic development in order to increase the standard of living and to facilitate cross border relations of Prespa in Greece and Korca in Albania, through the enhancement of the quality of tourism in the intervention areas.

The coordinator of this cross border project is the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) and the members of the consortium are: the Biologists of Albania Organisation (ALB), Erymanthos (GR), the Cultural Triangle of Prespa –CTP (GR) and the Regional Council of Korca (ALB).

*Note: Photos are courtesy of Kliti Kallamata and Regional Council of Korca*

## CONTENT

KORÇA REGION ATTRACTIONS .....Page 5

KORÇA CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS .....Page 11

BIOTURISM POTENTIALS.....Page 20



# KORÇA REGION ATTRACTIONS

The Region of Korçë, is situated in the south-eastern part of Albania at an average altitude of 850 m above the sea level, is 16 km across, from the west to the east and 35 km long, from the south to the north with a total area of 300 km<sup>2</sup>. Characterized as a sub-alpine Mediterranean zone, Korçë has a continental climate with cold winters and relatively higher temperatures during summer.

The region of Korçë has 220,357 inhabitants ranking 5th among the 12 Regions of Albania. Situated between common trading routes (FYROM 47 km and Greece 35 km), Korçë is in an economically strategic position. The area displays a unique landscape along with a number of natural monuments which need to be recorded, upgraded and promoted. Korçë's historical heritage, local products, sights and actions can develop an undisputable dynamic to trigger Biotourism within the cross-border area. Around 26000 visitors have visited the Region of Korca in 2012.

## Activity Calendar

French spring from Alliance Francaise, March  
Pottery fair, 29 April-5 May  
Earth day, 22 April  
Book fair, May  
Biodiversity day 21 May  
Kid's Day, first of June  
Environment day, 5 June  
Korca Carnival, 8 June  
Pie fest, 27 July  
Beer fest, 14-18 August  
Cultural Heritage Day, 29 September  
Wine Pogradec fest, 21 and 22 December  
Santa Claus Parade, 31 December  
The International Painters Colony "Mio's Days"  
The International Symposium "Sculpture Of The Park"  
"Sotir" International Photography Competition

- Monuments of Nature

# Monuments of Nature

## Protected Areas of Korce Region

### Natural Protected Areas in the Korce Region

IUCN Category		Town	Name of the Protected Area	Area (ha)
National Park	Korçë	Korçë	Prespa	27,750
Managed Nature Reserve	Korçë	Korçë	Krastafillak	250
Managed Nature Reserve	Korçë	Devoll	Cangonj	250
Managed Nature Reserve	Korçë	Kolonjë	Gërmenj-Shelegur	430
Protected Landscape	Korçë	Devoll	Nikolicë	510
Protected Landscape	Korçë	Pogradec	Pogradec	27,323
National Park	Korçë	Korçë	Bredhi i Drenoves	1,380
Resource Reserve	Korçë	Kolonjë	Piskal-Shqeri	5,400
Resource Reserve	Korçë	Pogradec	Guri i Nikës	2,200

*Protected Areas Network and Monuments of Nature, September 2010, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Waters Administration, Albania*

## Registered Fauna of the Albanian Prespa Basin

<b>Invertebrates</b>	16 endemic species registered
<b>Fish fauna</b>	23 fish species recorded -5 endemic to Prespa -2 endemic to the Balkans.
<b>Amphibians</b>	11 amphibian species recorded -2 species Balkan endemics -4 subspecies Balkan endemics None is directly threatened.
<b>Reptiles</b>	22 reptile species recorded
<b>Mammals</b>	4 in need of immediate protection measures (wolf, brown bear, otter, chamois).
<b>Avifauna</b>	261 bird species Rare species like the Dalmatian pelican, the White pelican, the Pygmy cormorant

## National Park of Prespa

Situated 45 km northeast of Korça the National Park of Prespa extends over an area of 27,750 hectares. It covers the cross border area with Albania, Greece and FYROM including the lakes Big Prespa and Small Prespa. The varied landscape is characterized by mountains, forests and pasture lands. The park includes unique flora and fauna species: 56 kinds of flora, 8 of endemic fish species (carp, eel, Merena, Skobuzi, Karasi, bleaks) plus the exceptional bird species of the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelicanus Crispus*) located only on the Albanian side of the park and in Karvasta, Greece. Recreation activities involve fishing, gathering of medicinal plants, bird watching and water sports.

## Maligrad - The Small Town

900m above the sea level, 700-800m long and 180-200m wide and located in the Big Prespa Lake, it is built from limestone and created by the waste of grabeni's swamping of Prespa. On the southern Cave of the coast is located a church of the XIVth century. Source: Biologists is a small island situated deep in the Albanian part of Lake Prespa and it only extends to an area of approximately 5 hectares. On the island there is a site of a ruined 14th century monastery dedicated to St. Peter. Its geological formations –caves and a circular cliff-host the rich wildlife of the area. Shaped like a tadpole, it is mainly characterized by trees plus a sandy area. The island is also known for the Saint Mary cave Church, built by Kesar Novak (Qesar Novaku), a local noble, in 1369.

## Prespa's Lake

Great Lake Prespa is one of only seventeen ancient lakes on earth estimated to be more than five million years old. 42 square km of the lake lie on the eastern border of our study region in Korçë, crossing into FYROM and Greece. The clear water of Great Prespa and its sandy and rocky shores support a variety of precious lifeforms. Great Prespa is closely connected to Lake Ohrid, a large lake to the north, through subterranean channels. Notably, around 46% of the water entering the Ohrid Lake originates from the Prespa Lake and according to scientists the two lakes should be considered a single hydrological system.

## National Park of "Bredhi i Drenovës"



*Stone of Capi*

Situated in the region of Korça, 10 km away from the city of Korçë on the back of the mountain of Morava is the National Park of 'The fir of Drenova'. Its total area is about 1.380 hectares. Bozdoveci, Guri i Capit, and Çardhaku, are the most attractive points. The entire park area is rich in water springs (Plaka, Shengjergji, Pllica) which appeal greatly to the visitors. The park offers great potential for natural tourism and sustainable development for the whole region. The National Park of Drenova Fir incorporates a conglomerate-sandstone block, of 25m length, width and height of 10m and the reduced form of the camel was created by erosion and wind. This mountain peak is a rare geo-monument of nature. It is located at an altitude of 1,573 metres, on a conglomerate rock about 30-50 metres high, very steep on one side. It has a very interesting shape, proof of the work of natural factors. The area also includes the Fir tree of the Spring of Veranda. Location: Bozdovec, Komuna Drenove.

## Monuments of Nature



*Lenies Lakes*

Are located on the Lenies Mountain, around 2000 meters above sea level and nearby the village Lenie (Shën e Premte). There are several lakes of ice age origin mainly fed by snow melting. Itinerary: Gramsh-Lenie-qafa e Mushkës- the monument. Also, at the same spot there is the Bosnian pine of Lenie ( Rrobulli i Lenies).



*Cut stone*

Located near the village Gurrarez in Korçë, its height is 16 meters, and it lies around 1300 meters above sea level. It has a round shape, white and grey colour, and is surrounded by the striking scenery. It was created by erosion. It can be visited via the route Çorovodë-Gjerber-Zhepe-Gurrarez.



*Zhombrit's Pyramid*

This monument is located near the village in the valley of the Zhaborit stream, 600 m above the sea level. It is 2-3 m high and 1.5 to 2 m wide representing the remains of erosion with a pyramid-like shape. Location: Road to Lavdar, Voskopojë Commune



*Pheasant Forest*

This Natural Reserve is also known as Krastafillak or the Pheasant Forest. It is close to the Drithas village of the Libonik Commune and nearby the Maliq town. It lies 813.5 m above sea level. It is an area of 45 ha with a mixed seminatural forest. The tallest tree is 22.7 m and the largest diameter for a tree is 80 cm. There are 8 types of trees including poplar, willow, lime tree, fir and pine tree. Location: Bashkia Maliq.



*Carstic Cavity (Prespe)*

On the western side of Great Prespa Lake, close to Gorica e Vogel village lies a carstic cavity which marks the start of one of the communication channels between Great Prespa lake and Ohrid. It is formed at the junction of two tectonic boundaries. Notably the cavity is still unexplored. It is one of the largest karst cavities in the area. Accesible through the road Korçë-Goricë.



*Prehistoric Cave of Tren*

The Cave reflects a rare combination of natural and spiritual values. Situated on the edge of Lake Prespa, under a small hill near the Tren village, Wolf Gorge, 706 m above sea level. It is a karstic formation from the Triassic-Jurassic period. The Cave represents part of the archeological heritage of Korçë. Stalactites and stalagmites still preserve the natural beauty of the interior despite the use of explosives

Shipcka Church in Voskopoja



# KORÇA CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

- Religious Tourism
- Cultural Attractions
- Cultural Events
- Historical Monuments and Sights
- Folklore and Local Tradition
- Urbanistic Architecture



Religious Tourism

This special form of tourism has gained particularly dynamic and global significance in the region of Korçë due to its multicultural past.

The religious legacy of Korçë is a mixture of ancient and recent cultures. It has actually been a midpoint for both Orthodox Christians and Muslims for centuries. Several religious buildings have gained the status of cultural monuments from the Albanian State (State Committee on Cults: website).

According to Albanian legislation the following have been declared religious cultural monuments in the respective years:

- The Mosque of Iljaz Mirahorit, Korçë, 1948
- The Monastery of St. Prodhromit, Voskopoje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Athanasios, Voskopje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Kollit, (Nicholas), Voskopoje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Jovani, Boboshtice, Korçë, 1963
- The Cave of Maligrad, Korçë
- The Church of St. George, Shipcke, Korçë 1963
- The Church of St. Mitrit, (Dimitri), Bezmisht, Korçë, 1970
- The Church of St. Mëhillit (Michael), Vithkuq, Korçë, 1963
- The Cave of St. Mary, Bezmisht, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of St. Mary Monastery, Lubonje, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of St. Mëhillit (Michael), Voskopoje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Mary, Voskopoje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Mitrit (Dimitri), Boboshtice, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of Ristozi, Mborje, Korçë, 1948
- The Church of St. Trinity, Lavdar of Opari, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of St. Mary, Vithkuq, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of St. George, Dardhe, Korçë, 1963
- The Church of St. Ilia, Voskopoje, Korçë, 1963



Orthodox Cathedral



Korçë's Orthodox Cathedral of the Resurrection was completely rebuilt in 1992 after the previous church on this site, St. George cathedral, was destroyed by the Communist authorities in 1968. This cathedral belongs to byzantine style with an accompanying chapel.

Ottoman Heritage - Mirahor Mosque



Korçë's honored mosque dates back to 1484 making it the oldest in Albania. It was founded by Iljaz Bey Mirahor. The minaret of the building was damaged by an earthquake and was recently restored. While the temple is usually locked, visitors have the opportunity to get a tour in the interior with depictions of Islam's holy cities Medina and Mecca, before and after prayer time (ibid).

St. Peter's and St Paul's Monastery



The monastery complex of St Peter and St Paul includes a number of buildings. The main church of the monastery is dedicated to the saints Peter and Paul and was built in 1710 and rebuilt in 1759. The church was decorated in 1764 by the eminent painters of the 18th century Konstantin and Athanas from Korçë (also known as "Zografi").



## CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Medieval Art Museum



The Medieval Art Museum has a unique collection of 6,500 medieval and modern icons from Southern Albania. 1,500 other objects are also included in the collection comprising 200 icons and 50 metal objects. The museum is host to icons dating back to the 14th, 16th and the 19th century. Many of them come from Voskopojë one of the main iconography centers around the Balkans in the 17th Century.

Bratko<sup>1</sup> Museum of Oriental Art



is housed in an impressive futuristic building which combines the traditional Japanese torii gate with modern glass architecture and concrete wave patterns. Opened in June 2003, the museum hosts the art collection of the Albanian-American Dhimitër Boria (1903-1990) which includes artifacts from Japanese and Oriental tradition. Muzeu Bratko was the first Oriental Art Museum of the Balkans with exhibits starting in the cellar (oriental carpets) and continuing upstairs (pottery, jewellery, textiles and furniture from 17 Asian countries). The exhibition also includes Tibetan tanka cloths, Indian Hindi and Buddhist statues, silver lobsters and chickens, Indonesian and some African masks.

Archaeology Museum



Korçë's Archaeology Museum hosts 1,200 Hellenic, Roman and Paleo-Byzantine objects from 6000 BC to 600 CE. Apart from the displayed treasures visitors will be charmed by the Ottoman-era buildings located around the paved courtyard. Highlights of the museum are a Byzantine-era floor mosaic and various Roman graves.

## CULTURAL EVENTS

Beer Festival



The Beer Festival of Korçë takes place each August and it is considered to be the biggest beer festival across the Balkan Peninsula. According to local estimations a respectable number of visitors take part in the festival (around 20,000/ year). Various, mostly Albanian, beer companies exhibit their products although the greatest focus is given to the local beer 'Birra Korçë'. The festival includes comedians and well-known rock bands.

The Carnival of Korçë



A series of events take place in Korçë annually, namely the Pie Fest in July based on Korçë's traditional Lakror pie, the Beer Fest in August, the local Carnival in June, The International Symposium, and the Carnival before Easter. During Carnival Korçë's cobbled streets are 'flooded' with musicians, actors, traditional dancers, clowns, acrobats and people wearing masks.



# HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

Kamenica



Kamenica Tumulus dates back on 12-6 century BC. The ancient central tomb originates back on Bronze era; the story of this tomb goes on for 6 centuries up the beginning of iron age which testifies the existence of an prehistoric site. This tumulus is important not only because it is the eldest in the Region, but also for the archeological wealth offered to visitors. Kamenica tumb represents an unique archeological discovery, witness of an prehistoric inhabited centre. The graveyard is shaped as a “Big Circle” with a central grave in the middle. The tomb was first discovered in early '60 of last century, but significant archeological discoveries were carried out in 2000-2002.

The first Albanian school, Education Muzeum



As an emblem of the Albanian national awakening under the Ottoman imperative, the first secular school in Albania opened in Korçë on March 7, 1887.

French Cemetery



Close to the Rinia Park, the French military cemetery holds 640 tombs of the French soldiers who died in Korçë in the conflicts of the First World War.

The Old Bazaar of Korçë



The Old Bazaar is a distinct collection of markets rooted back to the early 16th century. Situated at the heart of the city it is amongst the best well-preserved bazaars in the Balkan Peninsula, eminent for its particularly rich cultural and architectural heritage. The Bazaar of Korçë has been declared as a Monument of Culture.

## FOLCLORE AND LOCAL



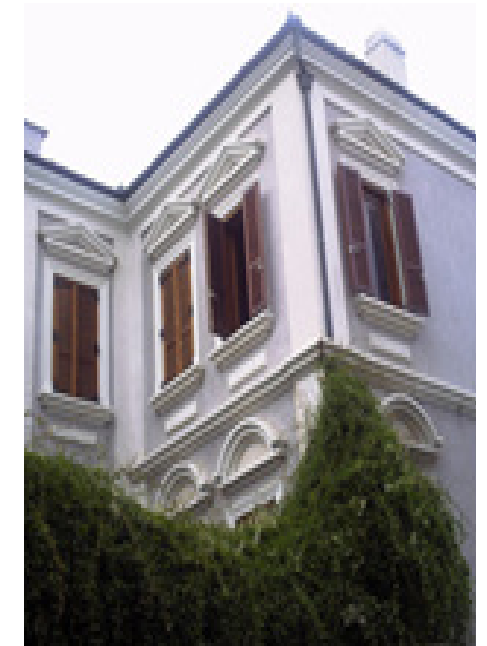
The artistic traditions of the region are visible in the works of painters, in stone and wood carvings, poems and novels of famous writers. Furthermore, a variety of cultural events take place each year. The festive character of the city of Korçë is omnipresent. An interesting element of the culture and tradition is the variety of folk dresses. For example, in Dardha women's dress (unikla) is characterized by black and red colors.



Delicious "Pie of Dardha"

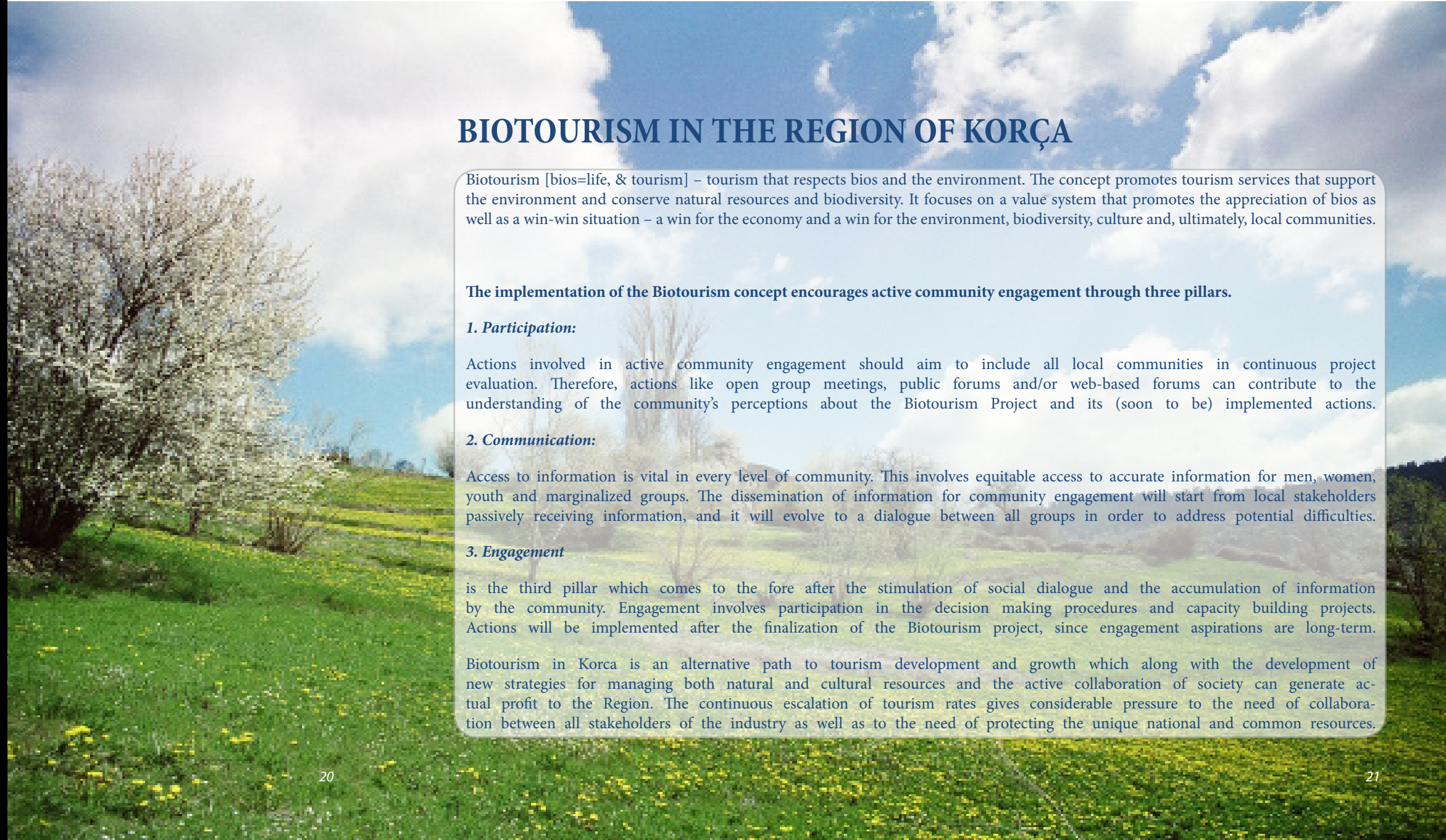
## URBANISTIC ARCHITECTURE

Architectural elements of the city of Korçë reflect its multicultural past and provide a mixture of eastern characteristics and traces of French influence in its urban scheme and grand architectural planning. Korçë's urban structure also features neoclassical mansions, Italian interwar buildings, picturesque neighborhoods with stone paved streets and white mulberries. Its particular architectural traits have plenty of potentials to satisfy visitors' quest for alternative 'secret' destinations.



# KORÇA BIOTOURISM POTENTIALS

- Biotourism in the Region of Korça
- Biotourism Itinerary Examples



## BIOTOURISM IN THE REGION OF KORÇA

Biotourism [bios=life, & tourism] – tourism that respects bios and the environment. The concept promotes tourism services that support the environment and conserve natural resources and biodiversity. It focuses on a value system that promotes the appreciation of bios as well as a win-win situation – a win for the economy and a win for the environment, biodiversity, culture and, ultimately, local communities.

**The implementation of the Biotourism concept encourages active community engagement through three pillars.**

### **1. Participation:**

Actions involved in active community engagement should aim to include all local communities in continuous project evaluation. Therefore, actions like open group meetings, public forums and/or web-based forums can contribute to the understanding of the community's perceptions about the Biotourism Project and its (soon to be) implemented actions.

### **2. Communication:**

Access to information is vital in every level of community. This involves equitable access to accurate information for men, women, youth and marginalized groups. The dissemination of information for community engagement will start from local stakeholders passively receiving information, and it will evolve to a dialogue between all groups in order to address potential difficulties.

### **3. Engagement**

is the third pillar which comes to the fore after the stimulation of social dialogue and the accumulation of information by the community. Engagement involves participation in the decision making procedures and capacity building projects. Actions will be implemented after the finalization of the Biotourism project, since engagement aspirations are long-term.

Biotourism in Korca is an alternative path to tourism development and growth which along with the development of new strategies for managing both natural and cultural resources and the active collaboration of society can generate actual profit to the Region. The continuous escalation of tourism rates gives considerable pressure to the need of collaboration between all stakeholders of the industry as well as to the need of protecting the unique national and common resources.

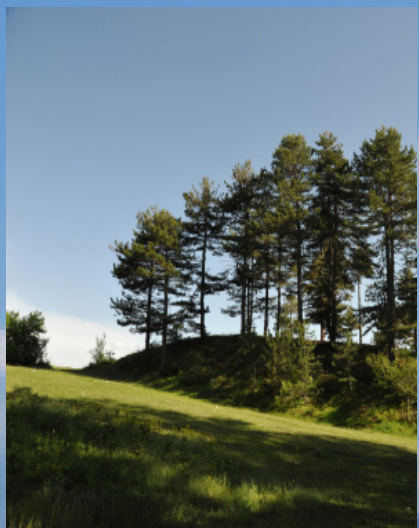
# Biotourism Itinerary Examples

## Korça Biotourism Potentials



**Liqenas-Zaroshke-Greek Borders**

Between the villages Liqenas and Zaroshke the gentle shore offers swimming opportunities in mild weather, while a walk to the villages can get visitors in contact with local fishing traditions and gastronomy (fish Krapa). The small Bay in Zaroshke (Micro Prespa) is a breeding area for the Dalmatian pelican. Driving over the border past Bilisht, further towards Florina leads to a narrow tar road with a dam between large and small Prespa Lake where bird watching provides a great Biotourism experience.



**Korce -Voskopoje - Shipcka**

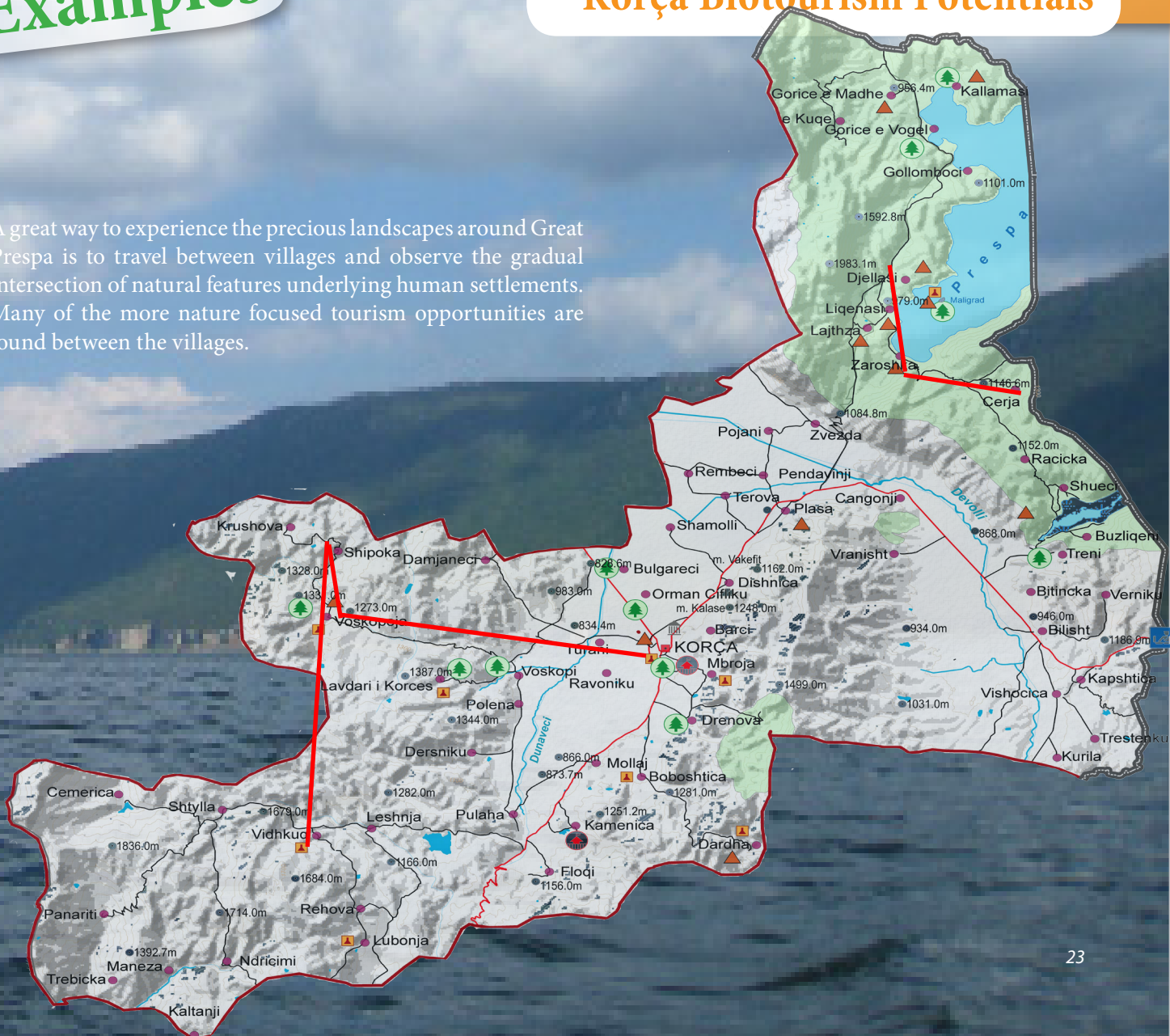
Voskopoje is full of churches and monasteries from the 17th century with well preserved murals hidden behind well camouflaged and hidden nondescript walls. The highlight is the renovated church in Shipcka, a tiny sanctuary high in the mountains, only accessible via a mountain track challenging trekkers. The richness of the architecture and interior design compensates for the tough walk.



**Shipcka-Vithkuq Natural Reservoir**

Long trekking trails among Vithkuq's natural scenery involves visiting churches, viewpoints and resting areas. In the area there are two artificial water reservoirs close to the villages Gjançi and Rehova. Generally, these water reservoirs are characterized by clear waters with a poor to moderate nutrient status.

A great way to experience the precious landscapes around Great Prespa is to travel between villages and observe the gradual intersection of natural features underlying human settlements. Many of the more nature focused tourism opportunities are found between the villages.



## Biotourism Itinerary Examples

### KORÇA ATTRACTIONS

Korca town is situated in the south-eastern part of Albania, on the side of Morava at a height of 896 meters above sea level. Its current territory lies upon an ancient Illyrian ruins. Korca is first mentioned on 15th century when it was founded as a city and later developed as a commercial and crafts centre (especially for manufacturing of carpets). During the second half of 19th century, Korca became the biggest economic, commercial and cultural centre of the country. The city, its peculiar architecture and its paved streets, are an historical asset of the region and the whole country.

In 1887 the first Albanian school for boys was opened (today is the Museum of National Education). The French Lyceum was also opened in 1917; this institution will latter play an important educational and cultural role.

Among the main cultural monuments are worth to mention: Cathedral of Resurrection of Crist, Church of Saint Ilia, Church of Saint Thanasi, Church of Shenepremte, Church of Saint Triada, Church of Saint Ana, the Mosque of ottoman period: Mosque of Iljaz Bej Mirahorit.

### VITHKUQI ATTRACTIONS

Vithkuqi lies on the southwest of Korca town (26 km), has a population of 965 inhabitants, a surface of 195 km<sup>2</sup> and an average height of 1230m. The climate is mountainous (cold winters and fresh summers) and very healthy. Vithkuqi was built on an ancient Illyrian ruins. Although little explored, it dates back as an inhabited centre from first Iron Age up to 2nd century BC. Between 17-18 centuries, it was known as a developed city with up to 24 neighbourhoods and a population of 12000 – 15000 inhabitants. There are up to 18 churches as main monuments of the village. The first church, Saint Atanasios, was built in 1162. Currently, only 8 churches are either maintained or re-built from ruins: Saint Peters, Kozma Damianov or Qimitiri, Saint Costantin, Vangelizmoi, Saint Milli, Saint George, Saint Dëllia, Saint Mary.

### DARDHA ATTRACTIONS

Dardha is a mountainous village of an outstanding beauty. It is situated on south-east of Korca Town, on some 20 km of distance from it and an average height of 1344 meters, in the midst of a crown of mountains. The village was developed on a hollow, between Saint Peter's hills, the "Autumn" Rock and other hills. Dardha features an ideal climate, fresh air filled with oxygen, attracting people throughout the whole year. The fresh air during summers and the snow during rough winters, have turned Dardha into an touristic hotspot at anytime of the year.

The old tale says that pears used to be the main fruits tree cultivated in the village. Hence the name Dardha. Its foundation goes back to year 1600. The first Albanian school of the village was opened in 1917. The apex of its development was reached in 1913 when Dardha had some 500 dwellings. Even before the 18th century locals were famous for sewing their local "Dardha" costumes, which are renowned in and outside the country.

### VOSKOPOJA ATTRACTIONS

Voskopja Commune with its centre Voskopja village lies on an altitude of 1200 meters, in the western part of Korca, around 20 km away from it through an auto route. Voskopoja has a surface of some 100 km<sup>2</sup> out of which 2477 km<sup>2</sup> are arable land and the rest forests and pastures. Voskopoja was founded around the year 1330 as per the Codices of Monastery of Saint Prodhome. In 1750 it had a population of 28-30 thousands of inhabitants. On the periods of its maximum splendour, Voskopoja had 24 churches with magnificent frescos out of which only 7 have survived. Voskopoja used to have High School, Academy, Library (cent. XVI, XVII, XVIII), developed handcrafts and textiles as well as smiths and tinmiths and stone carvers, etc. It has represented an important trade route and centre not only regional but also with Greece and Turkey.

Prespa Lake





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