Municipality of Belogradchik – Brief Description

The municipality of Belogradchik is situated in the north-west part of the country in the northern and north-east slopes of the Balkan Mountains direct to the border with Serbia. On North, East and South it has a border with the municipalities of Makresh, Dimovo and Chuprene. Its territory is 411 m^2, from which 198 m^2 are forests. The municipality is within the administrative borders of the Vidin region. Directly to the territory passes the transeuropean highway E 79, which provides the main route connection with the rest parts of the country. The distance between the town of Belogradchik and the regional centre Vidin is 55 km. 11 km from the town of Belogradchik is the railway station Oreshets, which serves to the whole municipality.

Figure 1: View of the Belogradchik Astronomical Observatory from the Kaleto fortress.

The territory of the municipality occupies parts of the Western shoulder of the Balkan Mountains and Western foothills of the Balkan Mountains. The relief in the direction from North to South changes from plain-hilly to hilly and mountainous one. In the northern part of the municipality rises the Rabisha barrow (461 m) and the ridge of the Belogradchik (1 125 m) built by hard limestone and carved on many places by the feeders of the Lom river. Superficial and subterranean forms (about 30 caves) and connected with them subterranean karst hydrography are widely spread in this part of the Balkan Mountains. The most beautiful is the cave "Magura", situated north-west from the village of Rabisha at the Rabisha barrow.

The available water resources on the municipality territory are formed by superficial and underlying water. The superficial water comes from the Archar river and the Stakevska river (a feeder of the Lom river, which takes its sources from the Saint Nicola ridge of the Balkan Mountains and runs into the Danube river. Through the municipality territory pass their upper streams.

The underlying water resources have mainly a karst nature. The biggest water basin is the Rabisha lake with area 32 500 a and 45 million m^3 water. The lake is fed by the subterranean karst spring and by the Archar and Vidbol rivers. It is situated directly to the cave Magura.

The municipality subterranean natural resources are considerably various. In a geological meaning the territory is built by the oldest Paleozoic stones, Triassic and Jurassic materials and Paleogene, represent by limestone, marbled limestone, sandstones and granite. Big interest presents the limestone near to the village of Granitovo, about 2 km north of the village. The place is known with the so called "Perla" marbled limestone with very good decorative quality.

The wet mountain climate of the Balkan Mountains is favorable for forest vegetation. There are well kept bornbeam woods mixed with oak up to 700 – 800 m above sea level in the foothills of the Balkan Mountains. Above 800 – 1 000 m there are beech woods. Above them there are needle-leafed woods. The ridge of the Balkan Mountains is occupied with grass and bush vegetations. On the municipality territory in the forests and meadows there are abundances of herbs, which have an application in the medicine. The forest areas with the large meadows and beautiful stone forms are a big attractive centre for the tourists.

In general the municipality of Belogradchik possesses a big natural potential, which is a source for development of various economic activities. The presence of phenomenal natural landmarks, the combination of different relief forms with favorable climate conditions and various forest vegetation are excellent conditions for relaxation and tourism.

The most significant natural object is the stone chain "Belogradchik Rocks", part of which is a natural landmark. They represent a wonderful open-air museum, whose beauty comes from the sandstones coloured in red. The centuries continued exogenous processes carved the limestones and conglomerates, strange rock giants, fairy chain of sculpture groups and separate figures, which are arranged wonderfully in complete images and subjects. This natural phenomenon has a length of 30 km and a width of 3 – 5 km.

Another significant natural object is the Magura cave, which is 20 km far from the town of Belogradchik. Except the wonderful subterranean forms – stalactites and stalagmites, the cave is known also with the unique old historic pictures, created by the ancient cave inhabitants. The pictures are under the UNESCO auspice. The constant temperature 120^0C and the air humidity in the cave are favorable conditions for cure and prophylactic procedures for some lung illnesses, as well as for production of some sparkling wines. Directly to the cave is situated the picturesque Rabisha lake. Except the cave Magura there are known about 30 other caves not well explored.

Very near to the town of Belogradchik is situated the well known historical fortress – Kaleto, dated since the third century AD as a roman fortification, later as a middle age Bulgarian fortress, kept up to now. Good conditions for specialized hunting tourism are proposed by a hunting farm in the south-west part of the district in the Stakevtsi part of the Balkan Mountains.

In the foots of the Balkan Mountains, directly to the municipality borders is situated the biospherical reserve Chuprene, giving excellent conditions for hunting and ecotourism.

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