

YOUTH VISION FOR SOCIETY ASSOCIATION

DANUBE'S ROAD DOBRORIGINI

Cultural Guide



Guide developed as part of the project "Danube Road – Dobrorigini, Part I," co-financed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund.

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We extend our gratitude to the experts who supported us throughout the project and contributed to the development of the guide: historian Răzvan Pop and tour guide Raul Ivan.

The information presented in this guide, along with the descriptions of the trails and routes, reflects the authors' experiences and serves a guiding purpose. The guide offers insights into the cultural landmarks situated along the suggested routes.



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FOREWORD

Dobrogea – a realm of contrasts, rich history, and pristine landscapes. Along the banks of the Danube, this region continues to safeguard its narratives, remnants of ancient fortifications, cultural traditions, and distinctive gastronomy. The cultural guide “The Danube Road – Dobrogea” beckons you to explore a captivating world, where time appears to halt, and each path offers a journey into the past and a tribute to nature.

The four cultural routes outlined in this guide transcend mere tourist pathways:

They are narratives concerning individuals, locations, and customs.

There are journeys that lead you through ancient fortresses, walled monasteries rich in legends, and communities that coexist harmoniously with nature.

These experiences enable you to savor authentic cuisine, immerse yourself in the serenity of the Danube, and comprehend the profound relationship between humanity and the river.

This project is conducted in collaboration with the Youth Vision for Society (YVS) Association, an organization deeply rooted in Dobrogea, our birthplace and source of inspiration. The team members, who have been raised and educated in this region, possess a profound emotional connection to the landscapes, traditions, and history of Dobrogea. With each exploration, we uncover new narratives, individuals, and hidden gems that we aspire to share and illuminate.

Through the “Danube Road” initiative, we aim to enhance the promotion of Dobrogea’s cultural and natural heritage, elevate its profile as a tourist destination, and assist local communities in leveraging their resources. We firmly believe that this region merits discovery, appreciation, and protection.

The “Danube Road” is dedicated to individuals who cherish exploration: those passionate about history, archaeology, cultural and natural heritage, as well as those in pursuit of adventure, relaxation, or an authentic retreat.

This guide serves as your travel companion, designed to inspire, orient, and deliver a memorable experience. Each page invites you to explore Dobrogea in a way you have never encountered: authentic, diverse, and brimming with stories awaiting discovery.

We wish you a safe journey and memorable experiences on the “Danube Road - Dobrogea”!

YVS Team



DANUBE AVENUE

DOBROGEANS, PART I

"The Danube Road - Dobrorogini, Part I" offers a remarkable opportunity to explore and value the cultural, historical, and natural riches of Constanța County, while fostering the economic development of local communities and advocating for responsible and sustainable tourism in this distinctive region.

The objective of the project is to promote and leverage the cultural, historical, and gastronomic heritage of the communities that coexist harmoniously with the Danube. This initiative targets individuals who appreciate history, traditions, and local cuisine—those eager to discover the breathtaking landscapes of Dobrogea, engage in authentic experiences, and connect with the values of a region rich in narratives.

Furthermore, the project fosters the growth of small local enterprises, promoting their participation in events that celebrate traditions, customs, and artisanal productions, aimed at showcasing the region's authentic resources. Concurrently, it emphasizes environmental protection by advocating for responsible tourism that honors the fragile ecosystem of the Danube and aids in the preservation of both natural and cultural heritage.

Dobrogea: a realm of discoveries

Dobrogea is among the most esteemed tourist regions in Romania. In addition to the Black Sea Coast, the area presents a remarkable array of experiences: hiking trails in the Măcin Mountains, strolls through the Danube Delta, the exploration of significant cultural and archaeological sites, and the discovery of vineyards that characterize the local oenological tourism. Northern Dobrogea further enriches this offering with historical monasteries that uphold the spirituality and traditions of the region.

In Constanța County, the Ministry of Culture certifies the presence of 694 historical monuments, whereas Tulcea County boasts 574 monuments—an authentic treasure for enthusiasts of history and culture.

Engaging cultural pathways

Through this guide, we invite you to explore four thematic routes that will lead you on a journey rich in discoveries and emotions. Whether your interests lie in museums, fortresses, and historical sites, or in delving into local customs and traditions, these routes have been meticulously curated to provide an authentic perspective on the cultural wealth of Dobrogea. From ancient monuments that stand sentinel over the Danube to multicultural communities with unique gastronomic traditions, each page of this guide will draw you nearer to the roots and beauty of this captivating region.

The Danube and its communities.

This guide is devoted to the Danube and the local communities that characterize it. The most valuable offerings to any traveler or investor are culture and nature: captivating and largely untouched landscapes, genuine culinary traditions, diverse ethnic and religious communities with remarkable narratives, as well as local, natural products that evoke the flavors of the past.

For the Youth Vision for Society Association, this project holds significant meaning. Dobrogea is our birthplace, and each proposed route symbolizes a facet of our shared soul and history. We invite you to explore this region through our perspective: authentic, vibrant, and replete with surprises, a locale where history and nature exist in harmonious coexistence.

REGARDING THE CULTURAL GUIDE

What is included in the guide?

The cultural guide "Danube Route - Dobrogea" is designed to offer comprehensive and accessible information regarding the four thematic routes within the Dobrogea region.

- Comprehensive descriptions of cultural, historical, and natural attractions: fortifications, archaeological sites, churches, monasteries, and significant monuments.
- Indicative maps for each route, assisting you in organizing your trip.
- Accommodation and dining suggestions for experiencing authentic local culture.
- Recommended activities include natural explorations, strolls through historic villages, and culinary tastings unique to Dobrogea.
- Photos and illustrations designed to inspire and offer a visual preview of the objectives included.

What assistance does it provide, and how should we utilize the guide?

This guide serves as a travel companion, beneficial for both trip planning and exploration.

- Planning: Review the maps and trail descriptions to devise your itinerary. Each trail is designed to provide you with vital information regarding cultural attractions, accommodations, and dining options.
- Terrain Orientation: Utilize maps and guidance to navigate at your own pace.
- Cultural information: Discover the narratives of the locations you explore, gaining a deeper appreciation for the history and traditions of the area.
- Local Experiences: The guide leads you to the most genuine locations where you can savor traditional cuisine and engage with local communities.

What are the reasons for pursuing these routes?

The routes featured in the guide are not merely conventional tourist paths; they represent authentic journeys through time, history, and nature.

For enthusiasts of history and culture:

- You will investigate ancient fortifications, archaeological sites, and historical monuments that illuminate the development of the Dobrogea region.
- Churches and monasteries rich in spirituality and steeped in centuries-old traditions.

For nature aficionados:

- Impressive landscapes: ranging from the banks of the Danube and rolling hills to untamed forests and expansive plains.
- Optimal locations for relaxation, photography, and hiking.

For enthusiasts of regional cuisine:

- Dobrogea represents a genuine cultural amalgamation, evident in its traditional cuisine. Each route presents opportunities to explore culinary offerings influenced by Romanian, Turkish, Tatar, and Lipovean traditions.

For genuine experiences:

- Each route serves as an invitation to engage with local individuals and communities, custodians of cherished traditions and narratives.

Whether you seek the serenity provided by nature or the rich history embodied in monuments and sites, the Danube Road guarantees a comprehensive, authentic, and unforgettable cultural experience.

REGARDING THE CULTURAL GUIDE

Accommodations and dining options along the Danube Road

Route 1: Cernavoda - Topalu

Dining Location:

Cernavoda presents a diverse array of dining establishments, ranging from traditional restaurants to contemporary culinary experiences.

Suraj Restaurant (Anghel Saligny Street)

Imperio Restaurant (12 Canal Street)

Where we reside:

Imperio Hotel (Cernavoda)

Danube Port (Vadului Street, Cernavodă)

Route 2: Rasova - Lipnița

Dining Location:

Danube Cycle Lounge (Eternity Street, Rasova)

Negureni layover (in proximity to Rasova)

Where we reside:

A.O.P.T.E. Danube (Eternity Street, Rasova)

Route 3: Harsova - Ghindaresti

Dining Location:

Hârșova boasts a variety of dining establishments, ranging from pizzerias and fast food outlets to traditional venues where one can savor local specialties.

At Regep (Plantelor Street)

La Grisha (Strada Primăverii 2, Ghindărești – local gastronomic spot)

Where we reside:

Adrian Accommodation (Cășăriei Street, Hârșova)

Etno Epic (6 Gradinilor Street, Harsova)

Route 4: Adamclisi - Canlia/Izvoarele

Dining Location:

Adamclisi Terrace (Museum Street, Adamclisi)

The Maramureș Inn (E60, Crucea)

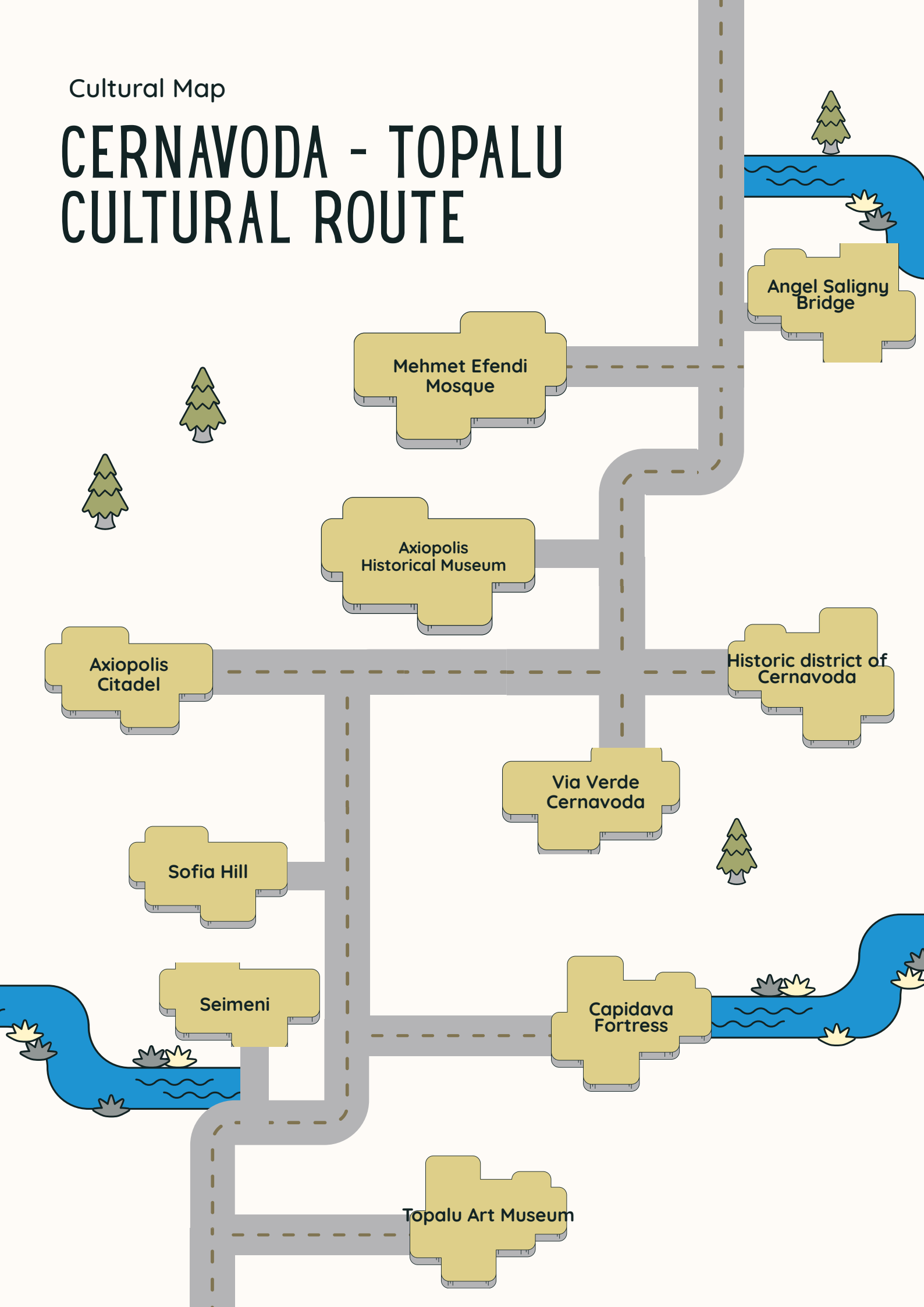
Where we reside:

Columna Guesthouse (2 Macului Street, Adamclisi)

Racilor Guesthouse (36 Decebal Street, Adamclisi)

Cultural Map

CERNAVODA - TOPALU CULTURAL ROUTE





Legendă

Limite

Indicații de orientare de la Cernavodă la Topalu

Cernavodă

Seimeni

Capidava

Topalu

Traseul cultural de la Cernavodă la Topalu

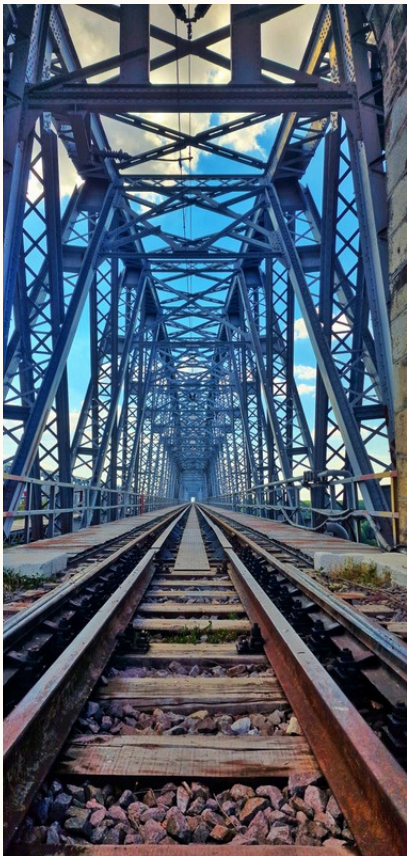
Obiective culturale

Dunărea+ afluenți

Lacuri

Angel Saligny Bridge

The King Carol I Bridge, also referred to as the Anghel Saligny Bridge, was constructed between 1890 and 1895 to establish a railway link between Bucharest and Constanța, thereby enabling rapid and efficient transportation between the Romanian capital and the primary Black Sea port. At the time of its completion, it ranked among the largest bridges globally. Engineered by Anghel Saligny, the bridge spans 2,632 meters and comprises both a structure over the Danube and another over the Borcea Arm. It is designated as a historical monument under the code CT-II-m-A-02872.

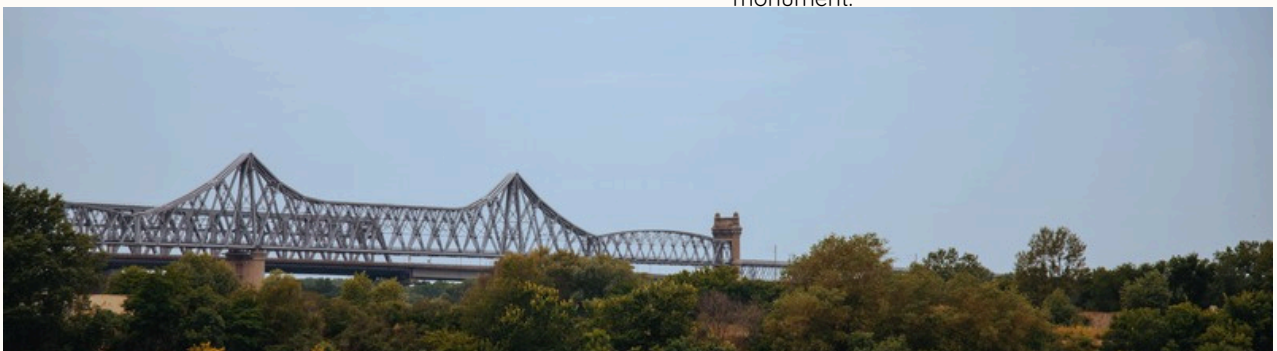


The construction of this bridge was crucial for economic and military advancement, providing a secure and efficient route for the transportation of goods and individuals, thereby superseding the slower and more perilous crossings of the Danube and the Borcea branch.

The project conceived by Saligny introduces two significant innovations in bridge construction: a novel system of cantilevered beams for the bridge superstructure and the utilization of mild steel in place of pig iron (a blend of relatively pure iron and slag) as the material for bridge decks.

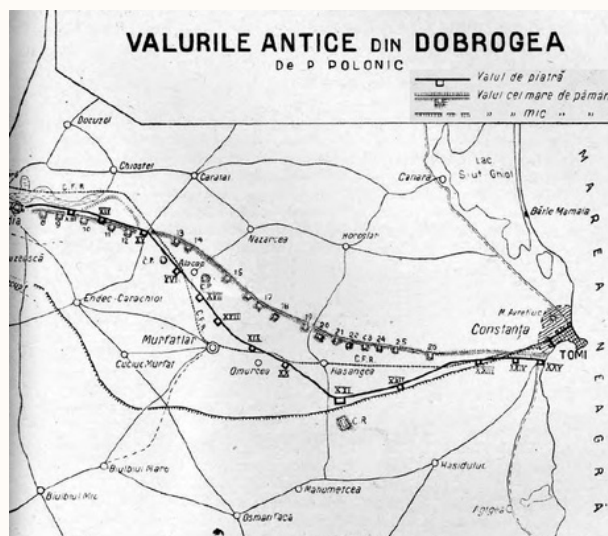


At either end of the bridge stand two bronze statues, symbolizing Romanian soldiers. These statues represent the *dorobants*, infantrymen of the Romanian army, and were crafted to honor the heroism and defensive spirit of Romanian soldiers. They impart a symbolic and patriotic essence to the bridge, underscoring its significance not only as a transportation infrastructure but also as a historical and cultural monument.



The stone wave originating from Cernavodă

Along the route from Cernavodă to Constanța, Dobrogea features three fortifications known as "waves": the Large Earth Wave, the Small Earth Wave, and the Stone Wave. The Stone Wave, the most recently constructed, constitutes a significant archaeological find extending 59 km from the Danube, beginning at the island of Hinog and the ancient fortress of Axiopolis, and reaching southward to the vicinity of the ancient fortress of Tomis, specifically situated between gates 3 and 4 of the port of Constanța.



Concerning the construction of the stone wall, two hypotheses exist. The first, proposed by Bulgarian archaeologists, posits that it was erected in the first half of the 10th century to counter migrations from across the Danube. In contrast, Romanian archaeologists assert that the walls were constructed by the Byzantines in the latter half of the 10th century or possibly the early part of the 11th century.

Valul mare de pământ. Amplasarea secțiunilor arheologice pe traseul A 2, tronsonul Cernavodă-Medgidia, km 159 (vedere aeriană dinspre vest, zbor CNADNR 28.04.2012, foto Carmen Bem).

Despite its name, the Stone Wall is constructed upon a mound of earth measuring approximately 20 meters in width and 1.5 meters in height, with a stone wall rising to a height of 2 meters atop it. On the northern side, there exists a ditch that is 2 meters deep, alongside 26 camps, which are spaced between 1 to 4 kilometers apart. These camps exhibit various configurations—rectangular, triangular, or pyriform—positioned behind the stone wall, with the exception of two camps that are situated in front of it.



"Mehmet Efendi" Mosque



The mosque's architecture exemplifies the Ottoman style, infused with Balkan influences. It features a slender, towering minaret, a hallmark of Ottoman mosques. The interior is adorned with traditional Islamic motifs and includes a mihrab oriented towards Mecca. Visitors are greeted by a ritual fountain designed as a limestone cube. The muezzin's balcony boasts a distinctive rounded shape, reminiscent of a swallow's nest. Constructed from stone, the roof is tiled. A historical plaque from 1886 on one side commemorates the building's first general restoration, undertaken amid significant efforts to connect Dobrogea to Romania, particularly through the railway bridge spanning the Danube.

The "Mehmet Efendi" Mosque, a prominent Muslim place of worship, is situated in the city of Cernavodă, Constanța County. It stands as one of the most significant and aesthetically pleasing architectural achievements of Sultan Osman III, as noted in the memoirs of the renowned Ottoman traveler Evliya Celebi. Most sources indicate that its construction occurred in 1756.

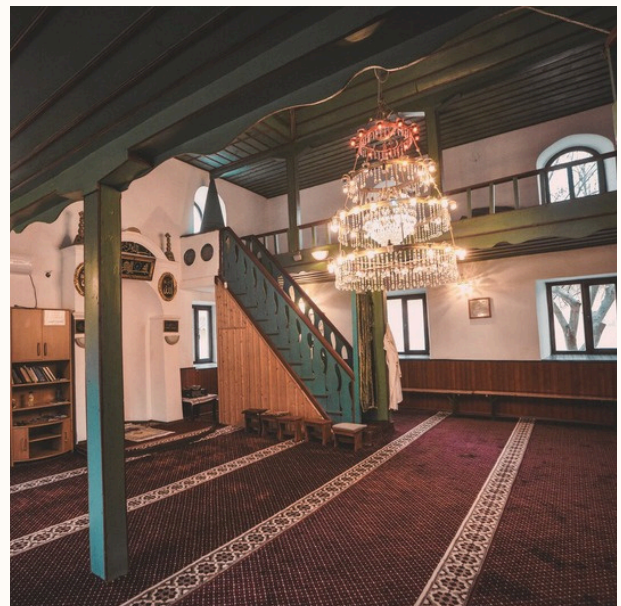


Photo source: MIRAS - Virtual Museum of the Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea (Romania)

Cernavodă History Museum

The "Axiopolis" Museum was founded in 2006 and is affiliated with the museum network of the National History and Archaeology Museum of Constanța. It is housed in the former fire department building in Cernavodă, which subsequently served as the pioneers' house, hosting circles for archaeology, astrology, and photography. In 2006, the building underwent refurbishment, redevelopment, and was furnished with modern amenities to facilitate the exhibition of historical artifacts.

The "Axiopolis" Museum provides a comprehensive overview of local history through a collection categorized into six distinct eras. In Hall 1, visitors can explore prehistoric artifacts from the Neo-Eneolithic-Hamangia Culture, including the renowned statuettes "The Thinker" and his companion, discovered on Sofia Hill in 1956. Hall 2 highlights the Iron Age and the Hallstatt Culture, featuring tools, iron ornaments, jar-type vessels, and funerary items from the 2nd century BC. Hall 3 presents artifacts from the Early Roman Era, including a sculpture of Hercules Sextanus and various ceramics. Hall 4 delves into the Roman-Byzantine Era and Christianity, showcasing remnants from Axiopolis and other sites, including the hypogeum tomb and bronze and iron artifacts. The museum lobby displays a monetary hoard from the 1st century BC, alongside XVII-XVIII century remnants and other artifacts from the feudal period. On the upper floor, visitors can view Romanian technical achievements from the modern and contemporary era, as well as silver objects and historical remnants situated in the inner courtyard.



The Hamangia culture, among the oldest in southeastern Europe, is distinguished by its remarkable prehistoric artifacts, particularly the "Thinker" and accompanying statuettes, unearthed on Sofia Hill in 1956. This culture is recognized for its unadorned yet sophisticated ceramics and anthropomorphic artistic expressions that embody a profound sense of spirituality and craftsmanship.

The Hallstatt culture signifies the onset of the Iron Age and is distinguished by iron tools and ornaments, alongside jar-like vessels and funerary artifacts dating from the 2nd century BC. This culture exemplifies one of the earliest expressions of Celtic civilization in central Europe, featuring a hierarchical social structure and vibrant trade networks.

Early Roman Era: This period witnessed significant urban and cultural advancement under the Roman Empire. Roman artifacts, including the sculpture of Hercules Sextanus and various ceramics, exemplify the profound influence of the Romans in the territories they conquered, particularly in the settlements of the Axiopolis region.

The museum is presently undergoing a new phase of development through the Interreg Romania - Bulgaria program.



Roman-Byzantine Era and Christianity: This period was characterized by the shift from Roman to Byzantine governance and the proliferation of Christianity. The remnants of Axiopolis, including the hypogeum tomb and bronze and iron artifacts, illustrate the enduring impact of Roman influence and the gradual assimilation into the emerging Byzantine religious and cultural landscape.

Feudal period: This era is characterized by monetary hoards from the 17th and 18th centuries, along with other remnants that illustrate the social and economic framework of feudal society in the region. The economy was primarily founded on trade and the exchange of goods, alongside a system of loyalty to nobles and rulers.

Modern and Contemporary Era: The technical advancements and silver artifacts displayed at the museum exemplify the progress and social and industrial transformations in Romania during the modern and contemporary periods. The historical remnants in the inner courtyard underscore the ongoing evolution of Romanian society and its adaptation to technological and economic shifts over the past two centuries.

Via Verde Cernavoda

In the heart of Cernavodă, along the scenic banks of the Danube-Black Sea Canal, a genuine oasis of tranquility and leisure is taking shape: Via Verde Park. This ambitious urban revitalization initiative aims to provide residents and visitors with a sanctuary where nature and contemporary amenities seamlessly coexist.

Via Verde represents more than a mere park; it stands as a testament to urban renewal. The 71,000 square meter area has been converted from an underutilized space into a verdant oasis, featuring pathways that meander through tranquil zones and children's play areas. The landscape is further enhanced by sophisticated gazebos and pavilions.

One of the park's distinctive attributes is its emphasis on sustainability. The lighting systems are powered by photovoltaic panels, incorporating modern technology to minimize environmental impact. The green spaces are sustained by sophisticated irrigation systems, guaranteeing a vibrant and healthy landscape year-round.

However, Via Verde encompasses more than just nature. The initiative integrates cultural components, fostering a vibrant environment for community engagement. The Civic Center Square serves as a venue for film screenings and cultural events. It is a space where tradition converges with innovation, celebrating the city's history by linking the historic center to the Danube River and the Danube-Black Sea Canal.

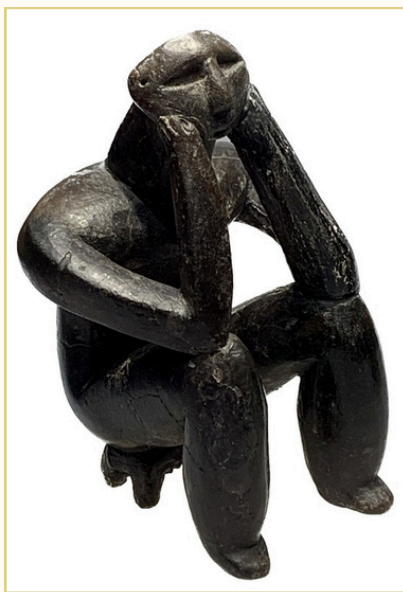


Sofia Hill and Columbia D

The Cernavodă necropolis, serendipitously uncovered in 1953 during public works, stands as one of the most intriguing archaeological finds in southeastern Europe. Originating from the Hamangia culture, this necropolis has drawn the interest of both specialists and the general public, owing to its extensive array of funerary objects and distinctive artifacts. The findings from this site provide an exceptional glimpse into the beliefs, rituals, and daily life of the prehistoric communities that once inhabited this region.



Among the most iconic discoveries from Cernavodă is the Hamangia Thinker. This anthropomorphic clay statuette, referred to as the "Thinker," depicts a seated man with his elbows resting on his knees and his hands positioned before his face, embodying a posture of profound contemplation. Alongside the "Seated Woman," these artifacts have garnered attention for their expressiveness and artistic intricacies, emerging as symbols of Romanian archaeological heritage.



The excavations at Cernavodă, conducted by a team of archaeologists and anthropologists, occurred from 1954 to 1958, with intermittent activity in subsequent years. The focus of the excavations was two primary sites: "Columbia D" and "Sofia Hill." At "Columbia D," archaeologists unearthed 37 inhumation graves, predominantly oriented SE-NW, with the deceased positioned on their backs. The grave assemblage comprises stone axes, ceramic vessels, and clay figurines, indicating intricate funerary practices.

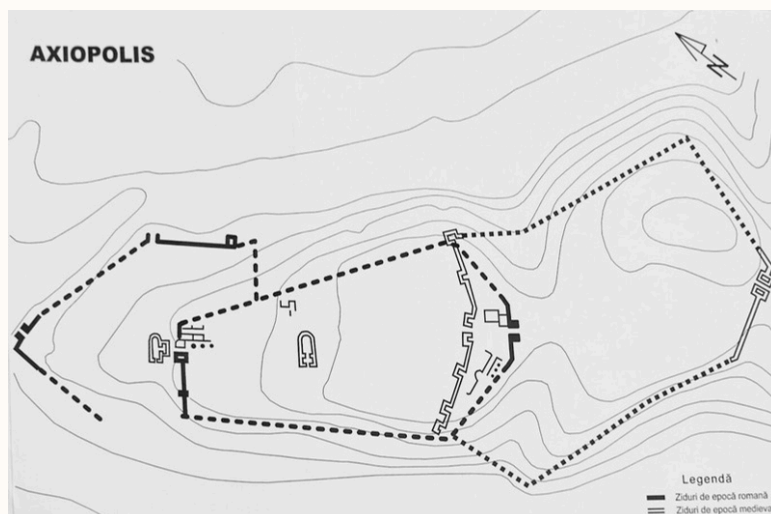
The skeletons unearthed in the necropolis were largely in a state of poor preservation; however, researchers successfully identified around 150 skeletons, 95 of which retained intact skulls. Anthropological analyses indicated that the population was primarily dolichocranial, exhibiting significant typological variability. Investigations suggested that the necropolis catered to the entire community, rather than being restricted to a specific social group.

The excavations at "Sofia Hill" uncovered cultural connections between the Hamangia culture and the Boian culture, illustrating reciprocal interactions and influences. The ceramic fragments and artifacts found suggest a rich and diverse cultural stratum, reflecting influences from various historical periods, including the Roman and pre-feudal eras.

The Cernavodă Necropolis is not merely an archaeological site of national significance; it serves as a gateway to humanity's distant past. Remarkable findings, including the Hamangia Thinker, offer profound insights into the life and customs of an ancient civilization, greatly enhancing our understanding of the Neolithic era. This site continues to stand as a testament to cultural heritage.

Axiopolis Citadel

The Axiopolis Fortress, a significant fortification in Dobrogea, is situated on the right bank of the Danube, roughly three kilometers from Cernavodă. With a storied history and a strategic role during the Roman and Byzantine eras, this fortress continues to be an enigmatic attraction. Regrettably, it is not open to visitors, and information regarding it is scarce, as more comprehensive archaeological research has been hindered due to its jurisdiction under the Ministry of National Defense (MAPN).



Axiopolis boasts a remarkable location, positioned at the point where the distance between the Danube and the Black Sea is minimized. This advantageous site promoted trade and provided natural protection for the fortress, bordered by a deep valley to the east and the elevated bank of the Danube to the west.

The fortress played a significant economic and strategic role, potentially serving as an episcopal residence in the 6th century.

The name Axiopolis originates from the Iranian term "axiaena," signifying "dark-colored." Greek colonists adapted it to Axiopolis, while the Slavs translated it to Cernavoda. Subsequently, the Turko-Tatars adopted the name and altered it to Karasu. The earliest reference to Axiopolis is found in the works of the geographer Ptolemy.

In 1898-1899, the National Museum of Antiquities conducted archaeological excavations at Axiopolis, uncovering Roman and Byzantine settlements as well as the foundations of a cemetery basilica. The artifacts unearthed offer significant insights into this fortress from the Hellenistic, Roman-Byzantine (4th-6th centuries), and early feudal (10th-11th centuries) periods. Among these findings are fragments of amphorae, Roman-Byzantine vessels, and ceramics from the early feudal era.



The northern gate of the fortress, P. Polonic, 1895-1896.



Excavations conducted at the southern gate of the fortress by P. Polonic during the years 1895-1896.

the perimeter wall of the fortress, P. Polonic, 1895-1896

Axiopolis Citadel

Archaeological discoveries encompass exquisitely crafted clay vessels that illuminate the city's trade connections with the island of Rhodes during the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC, offering insights into daily life in Axiopolis. These artifacts signify a sustained habitation and underscore the city's economic significance throughout history.

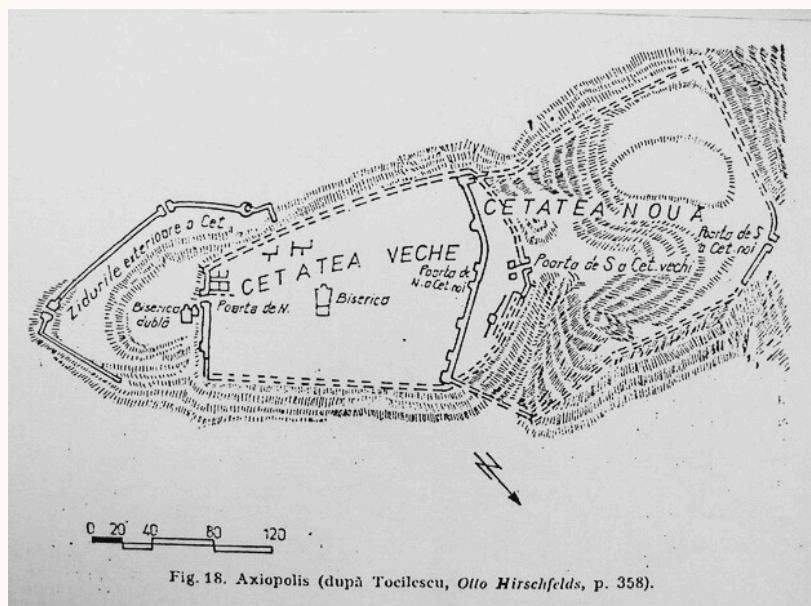


Fig. 18. Axiopolis (după Tocilescu, Otto Hirschfelds, p. 358).

In 1947, Greek inscriptions were uncovered that reference the martyrs Cyril, Chindeas, and Tasios, who were martyred during the Diocletianic persecutions. These findings affirm the substantial role of the fortress during the Roman era and its impact on the dissemination of Christianity in the region.



Although direct archaeological evidence for the period between the 6th and 10th centuries is scarce, it is posited that Axiopolis remained inhabited, preserving its significance during the Byzantine and early feudal eras. Subsequent archaeological investigations are likely to yield even more intriguing insights into this remarkable fortress.



The military function of the Axiopolis fortress was crucial, acting as a bastion against invasions. With robust walls and defensive artillery, the fortress was adequately fortified to endure assaults. During World War I, a military ammunition depot was established on-site, resulting in the concealment of this iconic fortress from the view of visitors.

Excavations conducted at the northern gate of the fortress by P. Polonic from 1895 to 1896.

The painted hypogeum burial chamber



According to the accounts provided by archaeologist Virgil Lungu, the Christian funerary structure of the hypogeum type at Axiopolis comprises a single rectangular burial chamber. The floor consists of well-compacted natural earth, while the interior walls are coated with a mixture of yellow earth and straw, over which a red pigment has been applied. The mural features an alternating pattern of crosses and trees of varying sizes, symbolizing paradise. The west wall displays a Byzantine cross framed by two trees, while the south wall features three schematic trees. At the base of the wall, to the right of the entrance, a simple cross is positioned. On the exterior of the tomb entrance, two letters, O and Y, along with a cross and a poorly rendered tree, are painted. The entrance was sealed with a plaque inscribed with the sign of the cross. Inside, five skeletons were uncovered: two men, two women, and one child, indicating a family tomb with successive burials.

The funerary complex at Axiopolis originates from the late 6th and early 7th centuries AD. This particular style of crypt tomb derives from hypogeic tombs, a tradition sustained by Roman influence and subsequently incorporated into Christian funerary architecture during the Roman-Byzantine period.

The 6th-century painted hypogeum tomb at Axiopolis, unearthed in 1984, represents a significant archaeological site. It houses five skeletons, including that of a priest adorned with a golden cross, and features murals illustrating acanthus leaves and crosses.

The term "hypogeum" denotes an underground structure, such as a chamber or burial site. Consequently, painted hypogeum tombs refer to subterranean chambers adorned with painted walls or ceilings, which serve various purposes and are found across different cultures and historical periods.

According to Mrs. Ana Olivia Rotaru, museographer of the Axiopolis Cernavodă History Museum, for ziarulnatiunea.ro, "The painted tomb was serendipitously discovered in 1984 by a shepherd and subsequently examined by archaeologist Virgil Lungu. This tomb, likely belonging to a family, contained five skeletons, one of which is believed to have belonged to a priest, who was adorned with a gold cross around his neck, crafted from leaves and embellished with numerous semi-precious stones. All artifacts unearthed within the painted tomb comprise its funerary inventory. Additionally, wooden boxes and garlands of flowers were found. The tomb is adorned with acanthus leaves, symbolizing the afterlife, and crosses, representing Christianity. In the Axiopolis Cernavodă History Museum, we possess a plaque discovered in the painted tomb at Cochirleni. Dated to the 6th century AD, it serves as evidence of the presence of Christianity in Scythia Minor."



Seimeni



The history of the Seimeni commune is both rich and diverse, marked by Turkish influences stemming from its proximity to the former borders of the Ottoman Empire. The name "Seimeni" conjures images of the medieval period, specifically referencing the infantry units known as seimeni. The earliest historical records confirming the existence of the Seimeni locality date back to approximately 1600, when a faction of soldiers under the rule of Constantin Șerban Basarab rebelled and crossed the Danube. These soldiers, who constituted the paid army of the aforementioned ruler, were referred to as seimeni.

Seimeni is a natural oasis that provides breathtaking views, making it an ideal destination for camping, birdwatching, and immersing oneself in the distinctive natural scenery. Tourism in Seimeni presents an authentic experience, allowing visitors to discover the natural landscapes along the Danube while engaging in outdoor activities such as fishing and hiking.

Seimeni commune exemplifies a rural community that maintains its traditions and cultural identity while evolving to address contemporary needs.



It is also essential to highlight a significant figure in the history of the commune, namely Stan Greavu Dunăre. Born on December 1, 1897, he commenced his career as a teacher; however, his fervor for history and literature propelled him into a self-taught career as a writer and researcher, where he independently pursued knowledge and amassed extensive expertise in his areas of interest.

One of Stan Greavu's most significant accomplishments was the initiation of the Danube monograph, an ambitious project aimed at thoroughly documenting this vital river for Eastern Europe. Although he was unable to finalize this monograph, his contributions are acknowledged and valued for the insights and distinctive perspective they provided.

In addition to the monograph, Stan Greavu Dunăre has authored numerous articles and research papers that concentrate on the history and culture of Dobrogea and the Danube. Through these contributions, he has illuminated lesser-known facets of the region, thereby enhancing Romanian cultural heritage.

Seimeni commune is situated in Constanța County, in a scenic location on the right bank of the Danube, presenting an idyllic representation of rural life in Dobrogea. The commune comprises the villages of Seimeni, Dunărea, Seimenii Mici, and Seimenii Mari, each possessing its unique charm and enhancing the cultural diversity of the region.



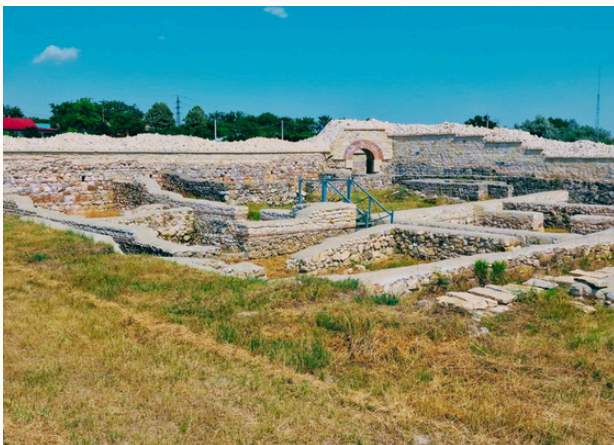
Capidava Fortress

The Capidava fortress played a strategic role due to its location on a rocky massif encircled by water and a natural ditch, serving as both a military outpost and a civil center. It was constructed with the assistance of detachments from the V Macedonica Legion and the XI Claudia Legion. Its significance has been substantiated by archaeological findings and funerary inscriptions.



The fortress endured numerous destructions and reconstructions throughout the centuries, impacted by barbarian invasions, yet it was rebuilt each time to serve defensive purposes. It was entirely abandoned in the 7th century following the Avar-Slavic assaults, but was reoccupied in the 9th century, transforming into a peasant fortress until the mid-11th century.

Capidava Fortress is situated in the scenic county of Constanța, along the right bank of the Danube, nestled between Hârșova and Cernavodă. It was unearthed in the late 19th century by Marin Ionescu-Dobrogianu and Grigore Tocilescu. This archaeological treasure is rich in history, providing a captivating glimpse into the ancient past of the region. With origins tracing back to the Dacian period, the fortress has established a significant presence in the ancient history of this area of Europe. During the Dacian era, Capidava Fortress experienced turbulent times, strategically positioned on the right bank of the Danube, serving as a defensive stronghold against invasions. The initial structure, constructed of wood and earth, epitomized the resilience of the local populace and its significance in confronting the challenges of the era.

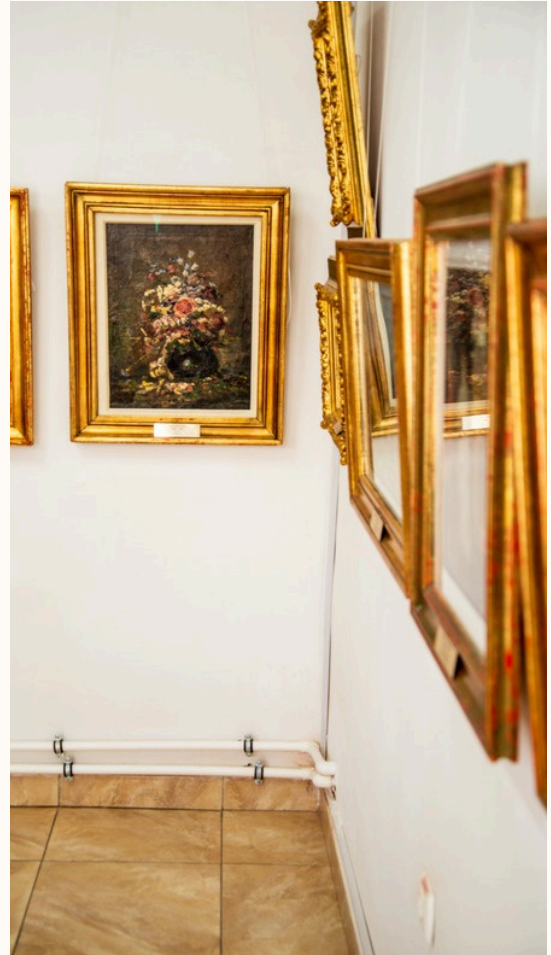


With the Roman conquest, the fortress experienced a profound transformation. Massive stone walls supplanted the original structures, and Capidava Fortress became a crucial component of the Roman defense system known as the "limes." This reconstruction was not merely a gesture of submission but also a clever adaptation to the Roman architectural style, embodying the urban and military organization characteristic of the period. It served as a military center for an extended duration before being abandoned at the onset of the 7th century.

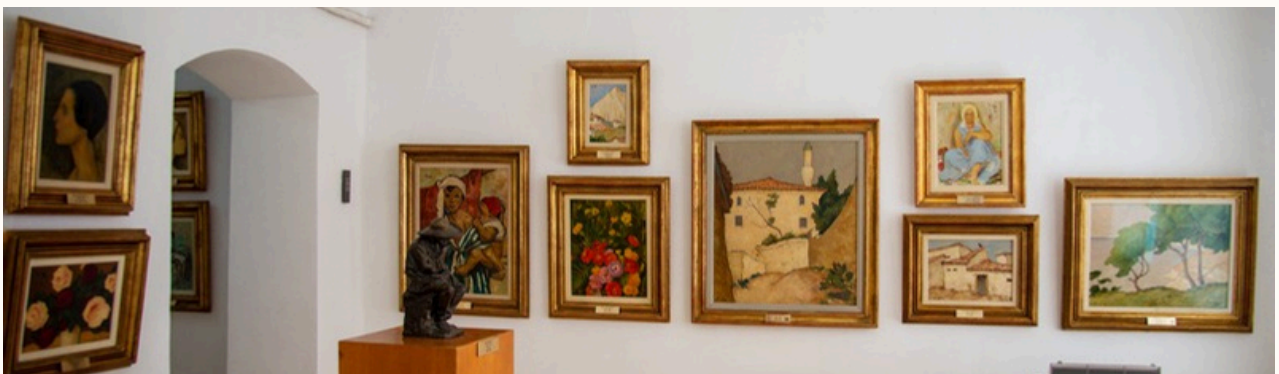
Today, Capidava Fortress welcomes visitors, enabling them to stroll through the ancient ruins and immerse themselves in the ambiance of history.

Topalu Art Museum

The "Dinu and Sevasta Vintilă" Art Museum is situated in the commune of Topalu, Constanța County, establishing itself as the commune with the most significant art collection in the Romanian countryside. It was established by Gheorghe Vintilă, a physician and art aficionado. This passion was nurtured by his parents, Dinu and Sevasta Vintilă, who served as educators in their hometown and played pivotal roles in advancing local cultural life. Consequently, through their influence, Gheorghe Vintilă's son was motivated to disseminate this appreciation for culture.

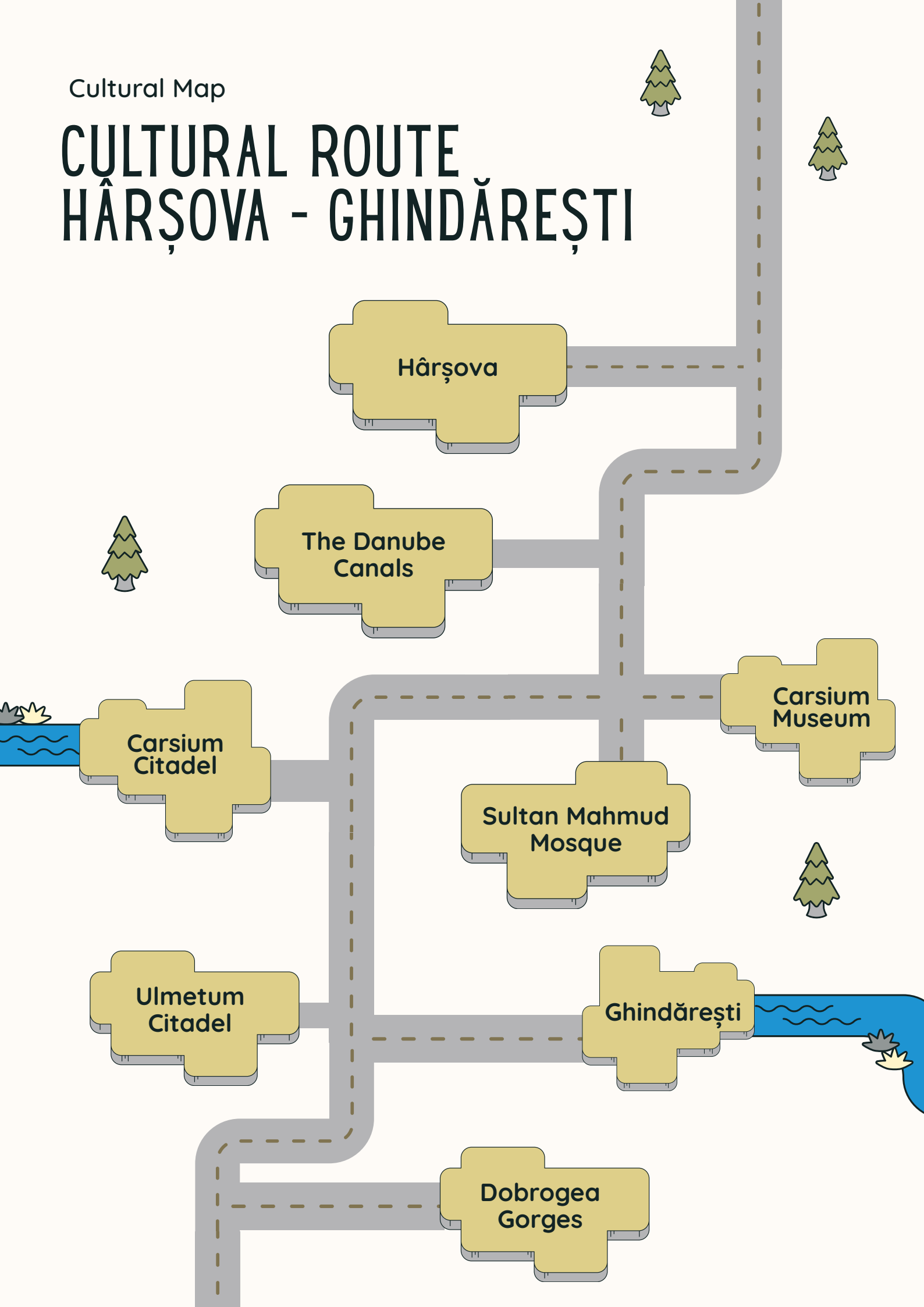


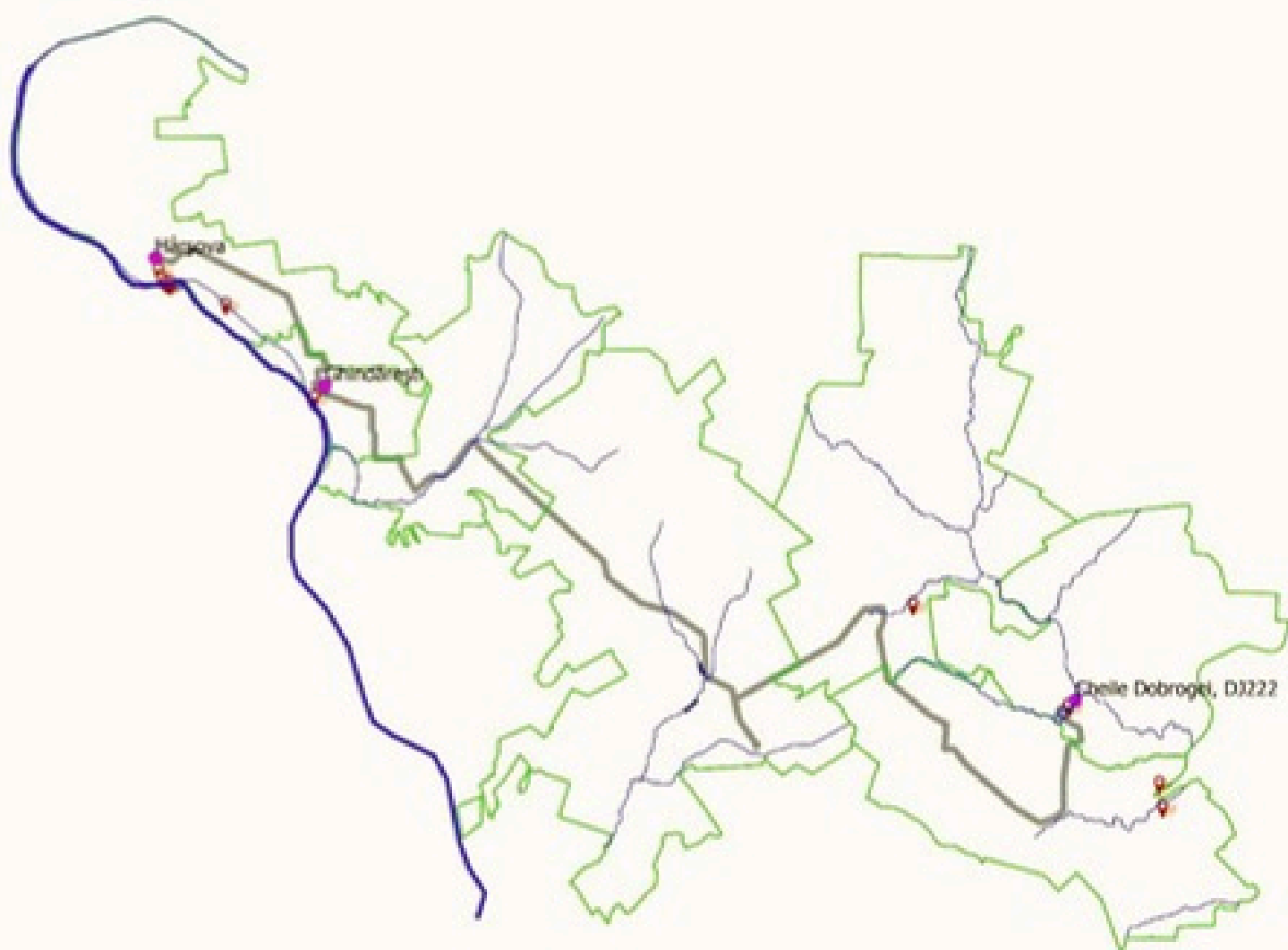
Beginning in 1920, Gheorghe Vintilă commenced the collection of artworks, thereby establishing an impressive assemblage that reflects Romanian art from the latter half of the 19th century and the early half of the 20th century. The museum features 228 pieces of painting, graphics, and sculpture that were donated in 1920 to the Topalu City Hall as a tribute to his parents. These works are attributed to some of the most distinguished figures in Romanian art. Among them are creations by artists such as Ion Andreescu, Nicolae Grigorescu, George Demetrescu Mirea, Ștefan Lucian, Octav Băncilă, Theodor Pallady, Nicolae Tonitza, Gheorghe Petrașcu, Camil Ressu, Corneliu Baba, and Alexandru Ciucurenci, as well as pieces by Oscar Han, Corneliu Medrea, Ion Jalea, and Dimitrie Paciurea.



Cultural Map

CULTURAL ROUTE HÂRȘOVA - GHINDĂREȘTI





Legendă

Limite

Indicații de orientare Hârșova - Cheile Dobrogei

● Hârșova

● Ghindărești

● Cheile Dobrogei, D3222

— Traseul cultural de la Hârșova la Cheile Dobrogei

● Obiective culturale

— Dunărea+afinenți

Lacuri

0 2,5 5 km



Sultan Mahmud Mosque

The Sultan Mahmut Mosque, situated in the historic center of Harşova, Constanța County, was constructed in 1812 during the reign of Sultan Mahmut II, the son of Sultan Abdulhamid I. It was destroyed by Bulgarian troops in 1916, who had taken control of Harşova. The mosque's primary purpose was to bolster authority in the province, particularly following the Ottoman Empire's cession of Bessarabia to the Russian Empire.

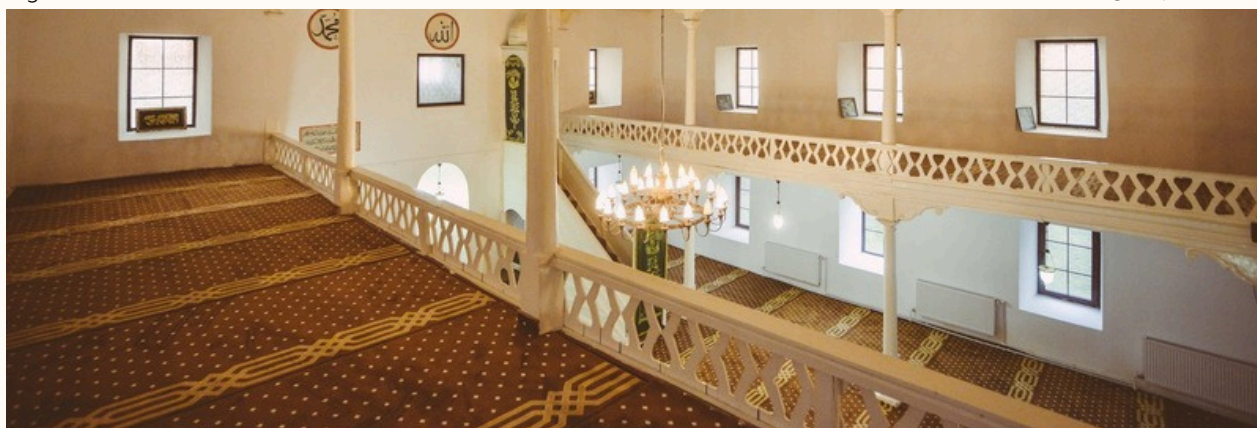


The mosque served a pivotal role in the life of the Ottoman community in Harşova, which was governed by Ottoman rule for five centuries. Beyond its religious importance, the mosque exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of residents from various faiths, mirroring the cultural and religious diversity of the Dobrogea region.

Photo source: MIRAS - Virtual Museum of the Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea (Romania)

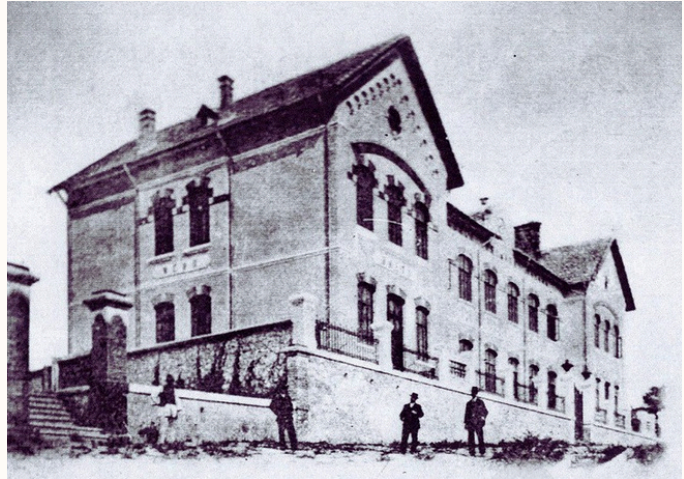


It is the oldest structure in Hârşova and is included in the List of Historical Monuments in the county, bearing the LMI code CT-II-m-A-02892. The minaret of the mosque serves as a defining feature of Islamic architecture, signifying the connection of this place of worship to the Islamic faith. The primary component is the stone minaret, emblematic of the Muslim religion, alongside a cubic-shaped edifice typical of Muslim religious architecture in this region, which is adorned with tiles.



Carsium Museum

The Carsium Museum in Hârșova stands as one of the most significant museums in Dobrogea, boasting a rich history that commenced in 1904, when it was established by educator Vasile Cotovu. Throughout its existence, the museum has been inaugurated three times by the kings of Romania: Carol I, Ferdinand, and Michael, underscoring its cultural and historical significance. Although the museum was devastated during World War I, it reopened in 1921, and the current edifice was inaugurated in 2006 by King Michael and Queen Anne.



The historic school building that housed the museum from 1904 to 1916. Photo credit: MINAC

The museum's exhibitions showcase archaeological artifacts spanning from the Neolithic period to contemporary times. Featured among the displays are items from the Gumelnița culture, artifacts from the Roman and medieval periods, and a lapidarium containing Roman architectural elements. Noteworthy discoveries include a necklace composed of astragals dating back over 6,000 years and ceramic fragments from the Roman era, including pieces adorned with Christian symbols.

At present, the museum's efforts are concentrated on showcasing the findings of archaeological research conducted in the area and on educating the residents of Hârșova to foster a renewed appreciation for the local heritage. Additionally, the museum serves as a vital logistical hub for advancing archaeological research in the region, exemplifying cultural continuity and the preservation of historical heritage at the gateway to Dobrogea.



Carsium Citadel

Carsium Fortress, situated in Hârșova, Constanța County, is a fortification with a remarkable history that dates back to the Roman era. Constructed on Citadel Hill, the fortress is linked to the ancient city of Carsium, a name of Thracian origin referenced in Roman texts such as those by Ptolemy, the Tabula Peutingeriana, and the Antonine Itinerary. This strategic fortress along the banks of the Danube was pivotal in the defense and governance of the region.



The fortification was constructed in the latter half of the 1st century AD, with its walls strengthened by Emperor Trajan during the Dacian Wars in the early 2nd century AD. Over the years, the archaeological site has uncovered a wealth of remnants, including two enclosures featuring a defensive system comprised of ramparts and ditches. The initial structure of the fortress was fortified during the reign of Constantine the Great, serving as a crucial defensive point against barbarian invasions. Archaeological excavations in the region have revealed a Roman fort, defensive towers, a commercial port, and a wealth of military and civilian artifacts, including coins, amphorae, funerary inscriptions, and a bronze "military diploma" from the 1st century.



Carsium Fortress has been occupied across various historical epochs, showcasing Roman, Byzantine, and medieval influences. In 2019, an initiative was launched to restore and improve the fortress; however, the efforts were halted due to the absence of requisite permits. The restoration project encompassed critical objectives, including the refurbishment of the Commander's Tower, the Port Sector Wall, and the Conex Site Development.

This fortification stands as a significant historical monument, preserved and esteemed through ongoing archaeological research, providing insight into the strategic and commercial history of the Dobrogea region.



The Canals of Hârșovei

"Canarale" is a regional term in Dobrogea that refers to limestone rock formations commonly found along the banks of the Danube. These structures are distinguished by their steep and dramatic walls, providing striking and picturesque landscapes. A prominent example is the "Canaraua Cetății" in Hârșova, situated near the remnants of the ancient Roman fortress Carsium.



The Canaralele Hârșovei constitute a geological and geomorphological natural reserve situated along the banks of the Danube in Constanța County. The striking cliffs, rising to approximately 30 meters, are composed of Jurassic limestone and were designated as a natural monument in 1943 to safeguard both the geological significance and the remnants of the Roman-Byzantine fortress of Carsium, located on Citadel Hill. This site served as a crucial defense point during the Roman and Byzantine eras, and the ruins of the Carsium fortress are currently protected by law.

The region is a designated avifaunistic protected area (ROSPA0017), distinguished within Dobrogea, classified under IUCN category III (geological and geomorphological natural reserve). The reserve spans 5.3 hectares and boasts a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna. During the spring and summer months, visitors can encounter species such as snowdrops, terns, and pheasants, alongside protected avian species including egrets and pelicans.

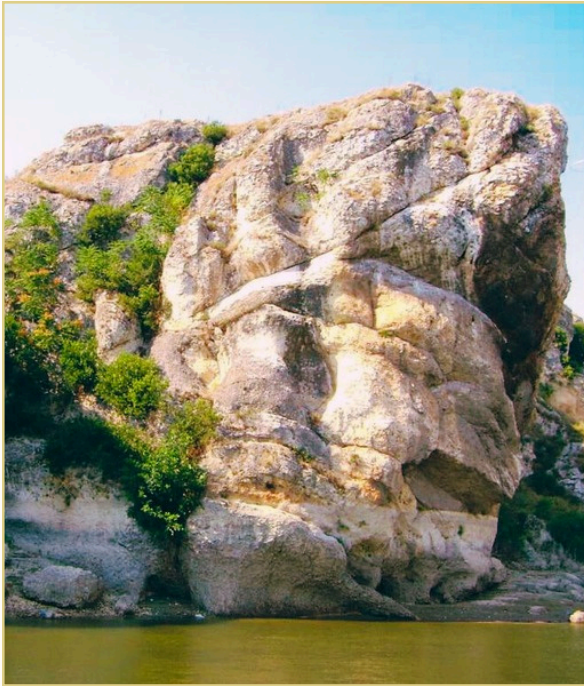


From a geological perspective, the region consists of a stratum of loess and limestone from the Jurassic period, which has resulted in remarkable formations such as bridges, towers, and caves. These geological features are situated atop a foundation of green schists, contributing to a stunning landscape. From a geomorphological standpoint, the area exhibits a rugged terrain characterized by two hills (Celea Mică and Celea Mare) and Dealul Băroi, a name derived from the ancient town of Beroe, located downstream.



Photo source: www.harsova.ro - Harsova Canals and additional natural landmarks.

The Canals of Hârșovei



An impressive geological feature is the Piatra cu Capac, commonly referred to as the Sphinx of Harsova, a 6-meter-high formation situated at the base of Băroi Hill. According to legend, Emperor Trajan stood upon this rock to observe his legions as they crossed the Danube during the Dacian Wars.

Belciug Hill, situated downstream, is home to the remnants of medieval fortifications that once protected the city. Over the years, the hills have been referred to as "Canarava Țigănească" and "Canarava Turcească," names that reflect the ethnic influences in the region during the 20th century. These hills have a tectonic origin and provide a distinctive view of the faults within the Dobrudzian horst. In addition to these geological features, the area also contains fossil deposits that bear traces of marine life from the Upper Jurassic period, dating back over 150 million years.



Additionally, within the Canaralele Hârșovei, one can find the geological formation known as Moșul și Baba, situated on Dealul Celei Mică, which serves as another point of interest in this remarkable natural reserve.

Photo source: www.harsova.ro - Harsova Canals and additional natural landmarks.

The TELL from Hârșova

The Tell of Hârșova is a significant archaeological site with a history spanning approximately 7,000 years, situated along the banks of the Danube, southeast of the town of Hârșova. This artificial hill, known as a "tell," was created through the successive accumulation of habitation layers, each representing a historical period during which communities reconstructed their destroyed homes. The Tell of Hârșova serves as a crucial example for comprehending the Boian and Gumelnița cultures, which defined the prehistory of Dobrogea.



The Tell of Hârșova was uncovered in 1960, with archaeological investigations intensifying since the mid-1980s, particularly through collaborations between Romanian and French archaeologists. These excavations have unveiled a significant stratigraphic sequence that illustrates the continuity of habitation at this site, establishing Hârșova as a pivotal location for the study of prehistory in the Lower Danube region.



Archaeological research conducted since the site's discovery in 1960 to the present has unveiled a substantial collection of artifacts, including ceramic vessels, stone tools, and remnants of clay and wooden dwellings. These findings suggest a sophisticated engagement in hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, and agriculture. Additionally, evidence of trade with distant communities has been uncovered, highlighting the settlement's significant role in the economic networks of the era. Among the archaeological discoveries at Hârșova, the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods are particularly prominent, signifying the dawn of local history.

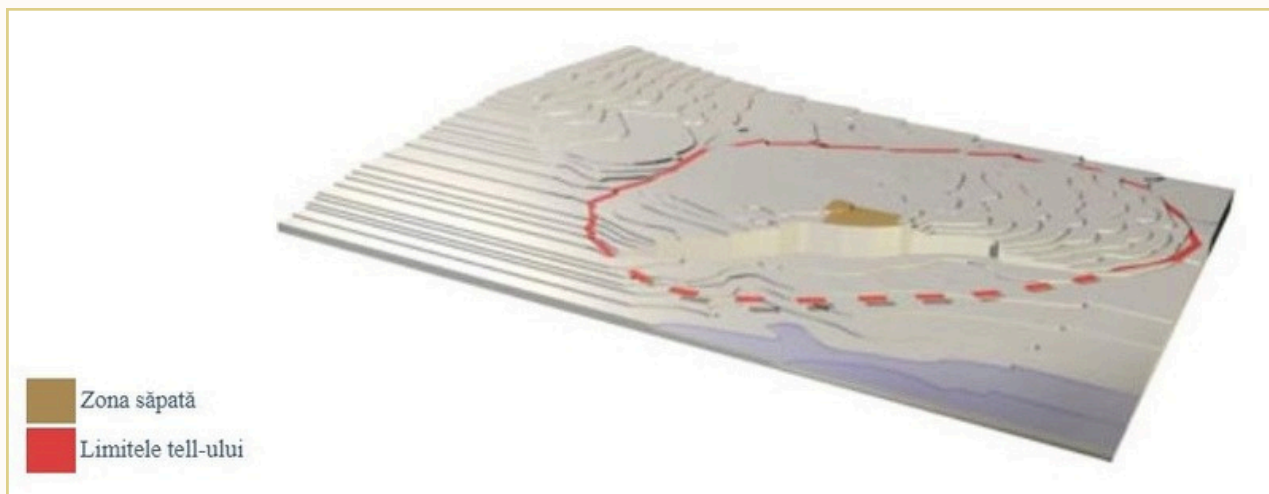


Photo source: <https://archeologie.culture.gouv.fr/> - Formation of the Tell and www.harsova.ro - Tell Harsova

Ghindărești - Lipovan settlement

Ghindărești, situated in the northwestern region of Constanța County, is a Lipovean village distinguished by its rich cultural and historical heritage. It has been inhabited since 1837 by a notable community of Lipovean Russians who migrated to Dobrogea, establishing their families in Ghindărești while preserving their religious and cultural traditions. The name "Novoseolki" or "Novinkoe," which translates to "New Village," indicates that Ghindărești was the final settlement founded by Lipovean Russians in Dobrogea. Over the years, the village has experienced significant development, achieving commune status in 1966, and has modernized its infrastructure along with essential community services, including dispensaries, pharmacies, and churches.



Ghindărești is also home to an exemplary instance of rural revitalization. La Grisha, a local culinary establishment situated in a traditional Lipovean house, was constructed in 1943 by Vasile and Paraschiva Matei and renovated in 2021-2022 by their descendants. The house retains its adobe walls and distinctive Lipovean architecture, featuring intricate joinery and a blue-and-white facade.

La Grisha provides a practical transformation of a familial residence, now serving as a venue that promotes both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Lipovean community through traditional fish-based dishes. The ingredients utilized are sourced from local producers and fishermen, preserving the authentic essence of Lipovean cuisine.

This culinary establishment exemplifies a profound respect for the community's traditions and serves as a successful model for preserving and promoting cultural heritage through gastronomy.



Ulmetum Citadel

Ulmetum Fortress is a Roman-Byzantine fortification situated near the village of Pantelimonul de Sus in Constanța County, dating back to the 4th century AD. Originally constructed to safeguard the central imperial road of Dobruja, it ensured the secure transport of goods and merchants between the Roman cities of Noviodunum and Markianopolis. Over the years, Ulmetum evolved into a fortified civilian settlement, with its inhabitants primarily engaged in agricultural activities.



Ulmetum remained occupied until the early 7th century, when it was deserted due to a new wave of assaults. Archaeological excavations, initiated by Vasile Pârvan in the early 20th century and resumed in 2004, have uncovered numerous artifacts, including inscriptions, coins, and remnants of structures.

After many years of obscurity, it was illuminated by Vasile Pârvan, commencing with his initial archaeological excavation campaign in 1911, which included inscriptions and statues from the period of Roman decline.

The fortification features a triangular design, characterized by robust stone walls and defensive towers of diverse shapes. Within the fortress, the remnants of a Paleo-Christian basilica and a military administrative structure have been uncovered, illustrating the settlement's strategic significance during the late Roman Empire. In the 5th century AD, the fortress faced an assault and was partially devastated by Hunnic invasions, yet it was reconstructed during the reign of Emperor Justinian in the 6th century.



Archaeologists from Constanta have established that, by the conclusion of the 4th century, the Ulmetum fortress accommodated hundreds of Gothic federates who had been permitted to settle in this region. During the excavations, the tomb of a Germanic nobleman was uncovered in the heart of the fortification, challenging the hypothesis that necropolises were exclusively situated outside the settlements.

Photo credit: Wikimapia



Dobrogea Gorges

The Dobrogea Gorges represent one of Romania's most remarkable natural reserves, situated in Constanța County. These gorges are composed of Jurassic limestone, which dates back more than 150 million years, a period when this area was submerged beneath the Thetis Sea. The limestone formations are, in essence, fossilized reefs, endowing the landscape with exceptional geological significance, as they are regarded as some of the oldest geological structures in the nation.



Following the karstification process, these formations evolved into sinkholes, limestone cliffs, caves, and grottoes. Consequently, this remarkable location, characterized by its undulating terrain and diverse limestone structures, boasts a variety of tourist attractions, including Gura Dobrogei Cave, La Adam Cave, Adăpostul Rânânelor, Mireasa Cave, Babei Cave, Cariera Nouă Cave, Ghilingic Cave, Saint John Casian Monastery and Cave, and Izvorul din chei. In terms of biodiversity, the region is home to over 565 rare species, along with steppe vegetation, scrubland, and forest.



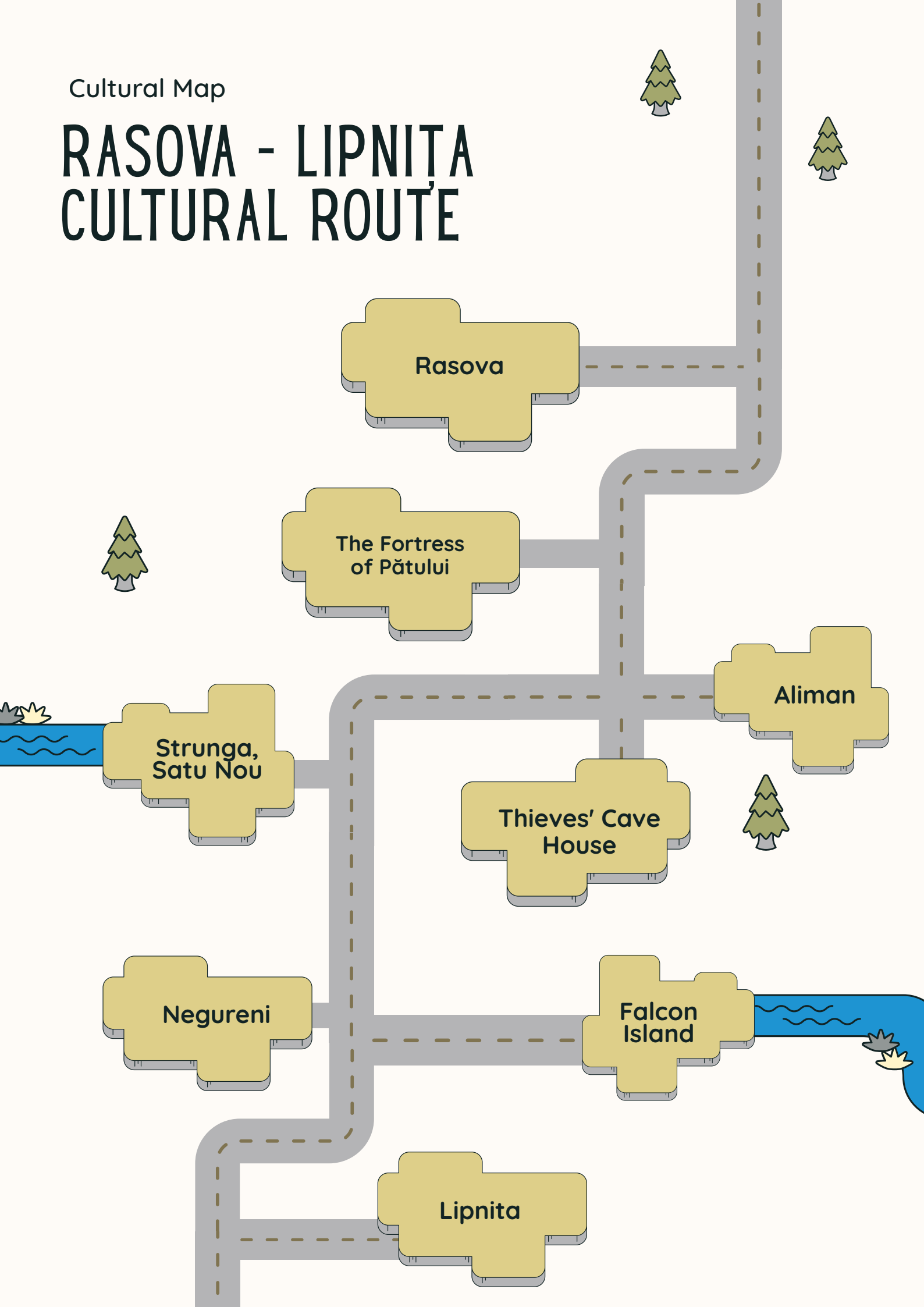
One fact that many individuals are unaware of is that these cliffs were originally over 1,000 meters in height. However, external forces such as water, wind, and flowing streams have continuously eroded them, resulting in their current elevation of just over 100 meters.

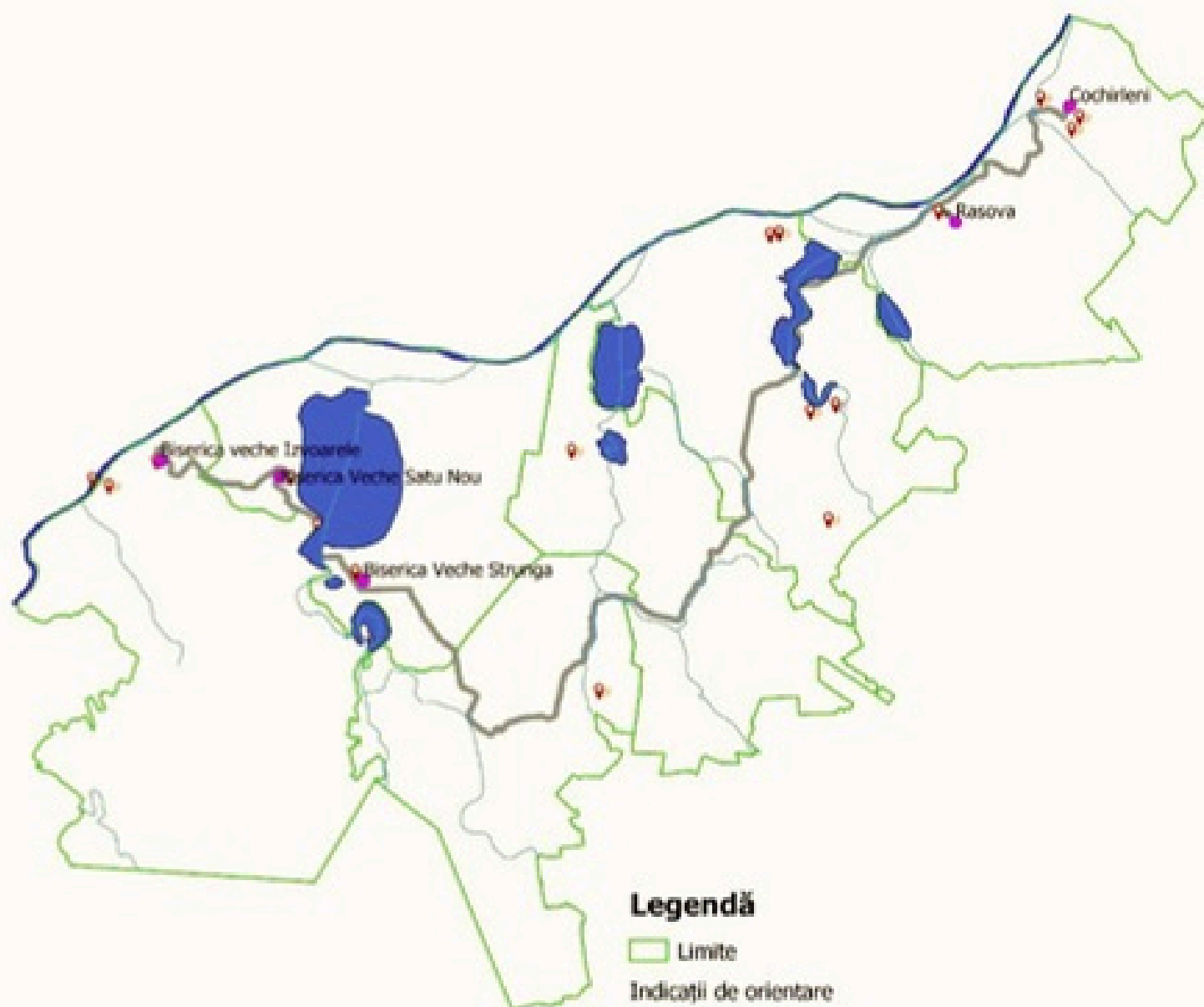




Cultural Map

RASOVA - LIPNITA CULTURAL ROUTE





Legendă

— Limite

Indicații de orientare

● Cochirleeni

● Rasova

● Biserica Veche Strunga

● Biserica Veche Satu Nou

● Biserica veche Izvoarele

— Traseul cultural de la Cochirleeni la Rasova

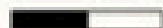
📍 Obiective culturale

— ape

— Dunărea + afluenții

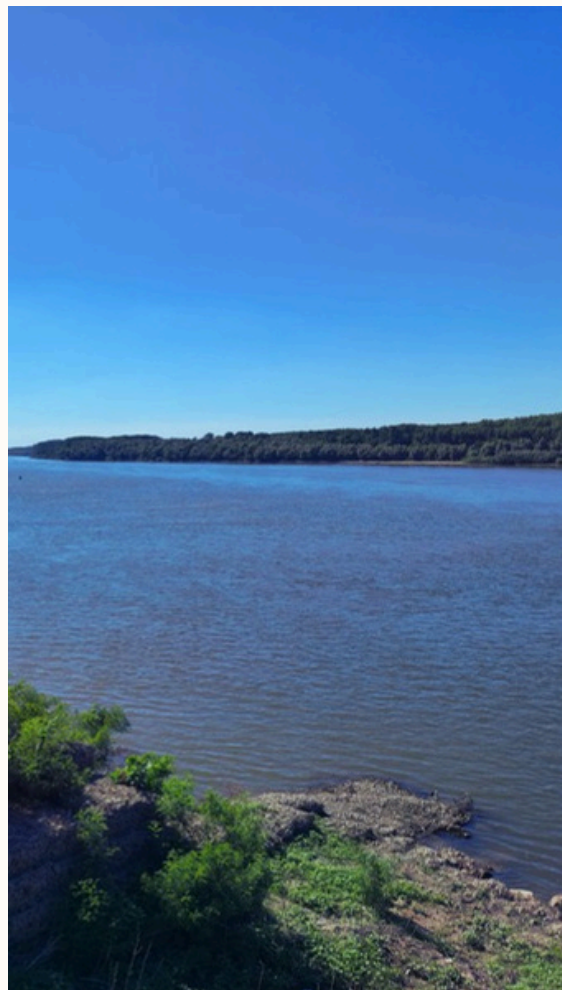
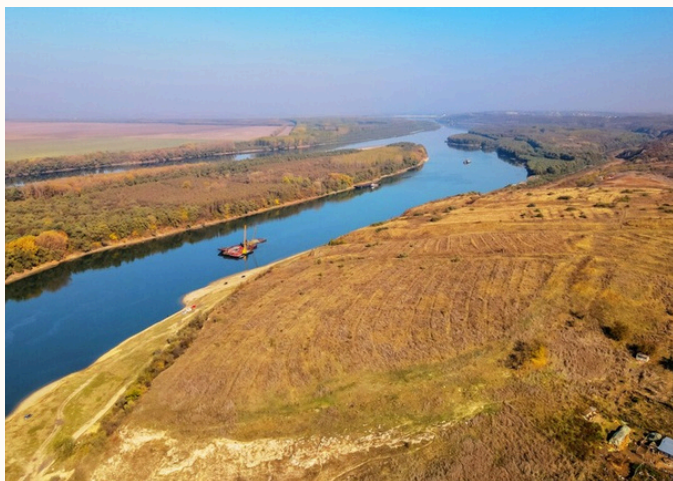
■ Lacuri

0 2,5 5 km

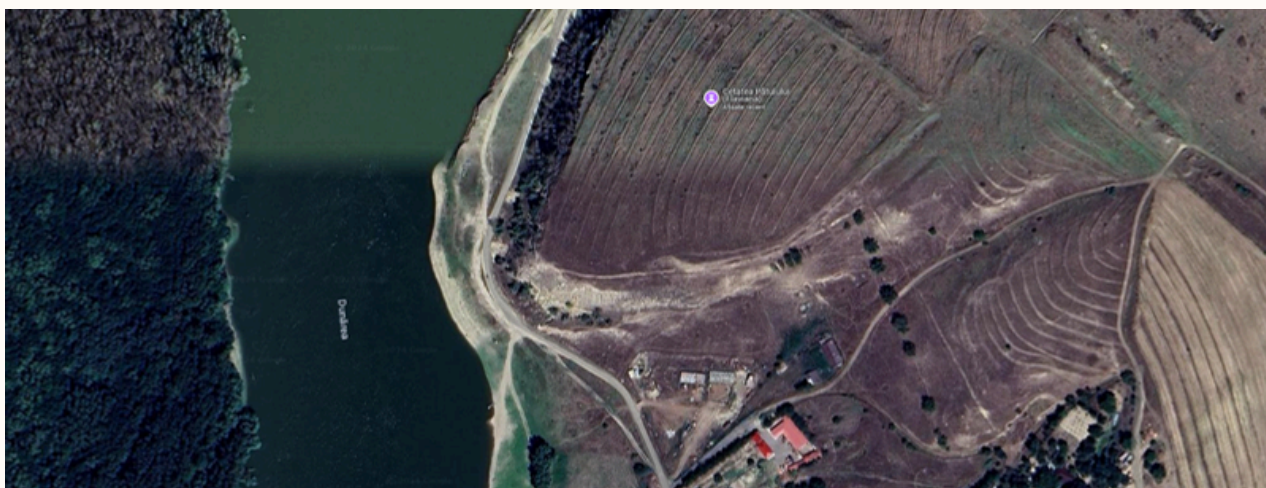


The Fortress of Pătului

Situated merely two kilometers northwest of the village of Cochirleni in the Rașova commune, along the shores of Lake Baci, the Pătului Fortress stands as a remarkable representation of fortifications from the Roman-Byzantine era, dating from the 4th to the 6th centuries AD. Despite its significant strategic value, the fortress has been relegated to neglect and obscurity. This site marks the origin of two of the most extensive fortifications in Constanța County: the Roman-Byzantine Valul Mic and the early medieval Valul Mare, which extend over a distance exceeding 60 kilometers.

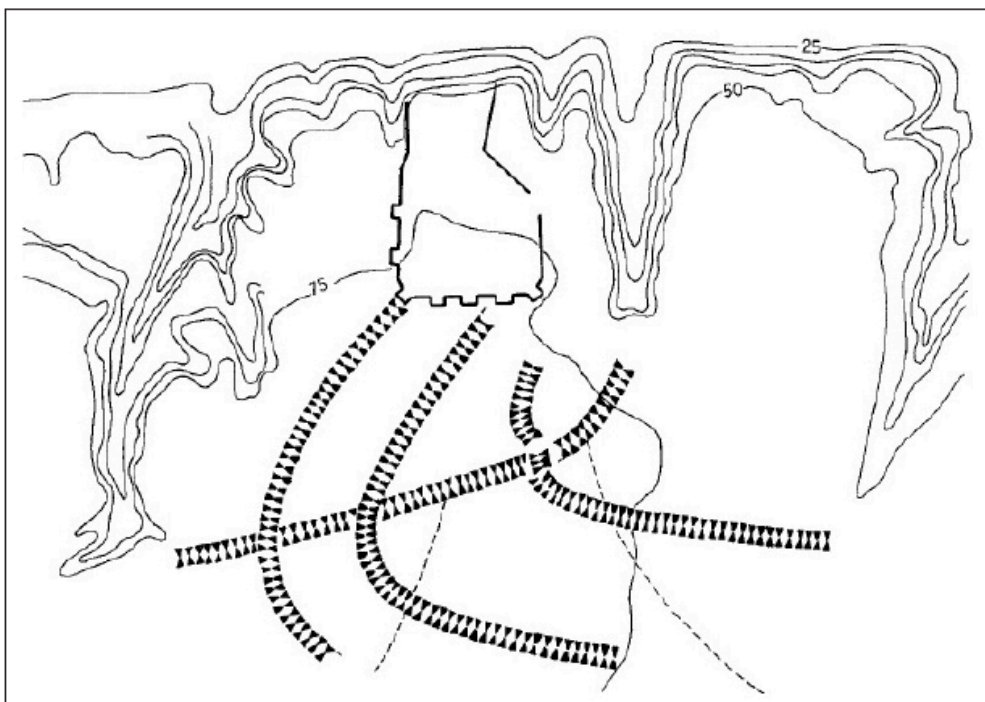


During the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great in the first half of the 4th century AD, the fortress was referred to as Flaviana, a name derived from the emperor's half-brother, Flavius Dalmatius, who served as the commander of the Gothic bank (ripam Gothicum). This fortress functioned as his headquarters and was integral to the defense line along the Danube border (Danubian Limes), safeguarding the province of Scythia Minor from invasions by migrating tribes. Its strategic significance is corroborated by two prominent ancient sources: the Notitia Dignitatum and the Itinerarium Antonini, both of which identify Flaviana as a crucial point in the defense of Dobruja against external threats.



Sacidava Fortress

The Sacidava Fortress, situated on the right bank of the Danube in the commune of Aliman, Constanța County, represents a significant archaeological site with a history spanning from the Roman era to the Romano-Byzantine period. Initially established as an auxiliary Roman camp, it accommodated military units including Cohors IV Gallorum and subsequently Cohors I Cilicum millaria. The fortification, characterized by a rectangular layout measuring approximately 160 by 125 meters, formed an integral part of the defense line of the Danubian Limes.



3.1. Sacidava, planul fortificațiilor (după Scorpan, C., *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and stratigraphical research on the Late Roman fortifications on the Lower Danube*, BAR IS 88, Pl. XIX, Oxford, 1980, 164)

Photo credit: MINAC

Sacidava underwent multiple reconstructions, particularly during the 4th to 6th centuries AD, when it emerged as a significant stronghold within the defense strategy of both the Roman and Byzantine Empires. The robust walls, constructed from opus caementicium and stone blocks, shielded the fortress from numerous barbarian incursions. Under the reign of Emperor Justinian, the fortress was further fortified, serving as a crucial outpost in the defense of the province of Scythia Minor. Within the walls, residential structures and architectural remnants were uncovered, indicating the persistence of urban life until the early 7th century.



Although Sacidava is less recognized and explored today, the fortress provides a captivating insight into the military and strategic development of the Roman Empire in the region of Dobrogea.

The Getic fortress at Dunăreni

The Getic fortress at Dunăreni represents another significant site, yet it is frequently overlooked by the archaeological community in Romania.

The settlement originates from the La Tène period and is associated with the Getic culture, serving a significant function within the network of fortifications in Dobrogea before the Roman conquest. The fortress is referenced in epigraphic sources, and archaeological findings in the region encompass ceramic fragments and structural remnants, indicating substantial human activity during that era.

The fortress was inherently shielded on the eastern and southern flanks by nearly vertical slopes, complemented by the lake's waters, which rendered access challenging and defense straightforward. On the northern side, the fortress was further reinforced with an earthen rampart and a defensive ditch nearly two meters deep, still discernible today.



Situated near the village of Aliman, on the right bank of the Danube and in close proximity to Lake Mărleanu, this Getic fortress was constructed in antiquity and lies near one of Dobrogea's most renowned fortifications, the Sacidava fortress. This closeness led to its overshadowing by the more extensively researched Roman fortress.

Photo credit: Wikimapia



Cavern of bandits

The cave measures approximately 14 meters in length and features three openings: one facing downstream, which is easily accessible; another facing upstream, resembling an almost inaccessible window; and a third, intermediate opening, likely formed by the collapse of a wall. This natural formation was sculpted by water erosion in the limestone slope, although subsequent evidence indicates that it may have been artificially enlarged.



The cave was occupied during the Neolithic and early Iron Age periods, as indicated by research conducted in 2005 by archaeologists Mihai Irimia, Gabriel Custurea, and Traian Clante. Subsequently, it served as a refuge for local shepherds, and the cave walls remain coated in soot.

Access to the cave is on foot, as it is situated in a challenging location, and the path leading to it is unpaved. It is advisable to either hike, use a bicycle, or employ a 4x4 vehicle.



Photo
trecător.ro

source:

Aliman fossil locality

The Aliman fossil site, situated in the Aliman commune of Constanța County, is a paleontological protected area classified under category III by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). It serves as a natural monument of both national and international significance, owing to the well-preserved fossils that date back to the Lower Cretaceous, a geological period approximately 125 to 140 million years ago.



Fossil sites are geological locations where, under specific conditions, the remains of marine or terrestrial organisms have been preserved over extended periods. These sites are crucial for geological and paleontological research, as they offer insights into the Earth's distant past, facilitating the understanding of life's evolution as well as climatic and geological transformations.

The Aliman fossiliferous site features a steep wall composed of limestone layers, abundant in fossils of gastropods (snails), lamellibranchs (bivalves), and corals, representing the fauna that inhabited the Tethys Sea. It is one of the rare locations in Romania where a complete stratigraphic succession of the Lower Cretaceous can be examined under southern Mediterranean facies conditions.



The phrase "southern Mediterranean facies" denotes the distinct characteristics of the geological and biological environment in the southern regions of the Mediterranean during the sediment formation period, specifically the Early Cretaceous. In the context of the southern Mediterranean facies, sedimentary rocks, including the Aliman limestones, developed in the warm, shallow waters of the Tethys Sea, which encompassed a significant portion of Europe, Asia, and Africa during that era.

As a genuine "open-air nature reserve," this site holds significant scientific value owing to the density and exceptional preservation of fossils, drawing the attention of geologists and paleontologists who investigate the evolution of marine life during this era.

The fortified Getic settlement of Adâncata I.

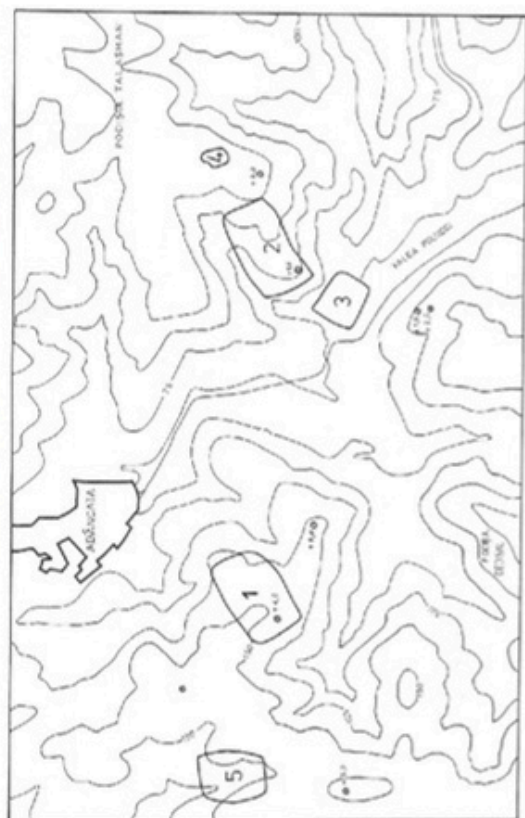


Fig. 1 - Harta siturilor arheologice din zona Adâncata, com. Aliman, jud. Constanța: 1 - așezarea getică Adâncata I; 2 - așezarea getică Adâncata II; 3 - așezare romană; 4 - așezare medievală; 5 - așezare romană (?)

Irimia, Mihai "DESCOPERIRI GETICE ÎN ZONA ADÂNCATA"

The Getic fortified settlement of Adâncata I, situated in southwestern Dobrogea, ranks among the largest and most significant Getic fortifications in the area. Originating from the 6th to 1st centuries BC, the settlement is positioned on the northern plateau of Dedibal Hill and features a sophisticated defense system, comprising earthen ramparts and surrounding ditches. The primary fortification exhibits an approximately quadrangular shape, with sides measuring 150 meters, safeguarded by substantial stone walls.

This settlement, integral to a network of Getic power centers in Dobrogea, governed trade routes with the Greek world through its direct links to the Danube and the Black Sea coast, including cities like Callatis. In addition to the fortress of Adâncata I, the region encompasses other satellite settlements, such as Adâncata II, Ion Corvin, and Adamclisi, which functioned during similar periods, illustrating a complex organization of the Getae in this area.

Archaeological discoveries encompass ceramic fragments, iron tools, and coins, while cremation graves identified near the fortress further confirm the prolonged use of the settlement during the Getic period.

The ancient churches of Strunga-Satu Nou

The oldest churches in the villages of Strunga, Satu Nou, and Izvoarele, situated in Dobrogea, are remarkable monuments constructed with traditional techniques utilizing sticks and earth. Erected in the 19th century, these churches exemplify a distinctive architectural ensemble characteristic of the region.

The wooden church in Strunga, constructed circa 1870, is notable for its unique building technique involving woven sticks and earth. Despite its advanced state of deterioration, the church served as a significant place of worship for the local community until the 1970s, when the village experienced near-total depopulation due to the policies of the communist authorities. Presently, adjacent to this church, lies the Orthodox Monastery of Strunga.



The wooden church in Izvoarele, constructed in the 19th century, stands as a remarkable example of Romanian and European sacred architecture. Alongside the churches in Strunga and Satu Nou, it constitutes a distinctive ensemble characterized by its construction techniques and materials, serving as a vestige of the region's historical heritage. In 2001, it underwent restoration by architect Calboreanu, and a dedicated page can be found in this guide.



The church in Satu Nou, constructed in 1863, is dedicated to the "Ascension of the Lord" and is built using the traditional technique of sticks and adobe. It is regarded as one of the oldest Orthodox churches in Dobrogea and is classified as a category A historical monument.

These churches exemplify remarkable cultural and spiritual resilience, enduring even amidst the challenging circumstances of the Ottoman and communist eras.



The Roman fort amidst the vineyards

The Roman fort of Viile is an archaeological site situated in Dobrogea, on the right bank of the Danube, south of the town of Oltina. It formed a component of the Roman defensive system along the Danube Limes and served to safeguard the border of the Roman Empire in the province of Moesia Inferior, also referred to as Scythia Minor.

Originally constructed as a surveillance and defense outpost, the fort was modest in size, designed to accommodate a Roman auxiliary cohort. While comprehensive archaeological investigations at this site are limited, evidence suggests the existence of a stone wall along with wooden and earthen fortifications. Its strategic significance grew during the reign of Emperor Diocletian and was further solidified under Constantine the Great, amid the reorganization of the imperial frontiers.

The fort was destroyed due to the clogging of the Danube branch and has since been listed as a Historical Monument in Constanța County. The primary researchers associated with this fort were historians Irimia and Emilia Popescu, who uncovered several remarkable artifacts, including "a bronze military diploma dated August 14, 100; an amphora inscribed with HRISTON MARIA GHENA (Mary gives birth to Christ); a Byzantine kiln for firing ceramics from the 4th to 6th centuries; inscribed bricks; and coins from Diocletian and Constantine the Great, along with ceramic vessels."

Adjacent to Oltina lies the Negureni Mouflon Reserve, a site of significant importance for the conservation of biodiversity and wildlife. Established through the fervent initiative of Nicolae Ceaușescu, it is situated in the village of Negureni, near Băneasa, along the border with Bulgaria. The reserve is also home to 30 deer and 100 pheasants.

Due to the unique climate of South Dobruja, mouflons, a species of wild sheep akin to rams, have adapted remarkably swiftly. Their primary diet comprises grass, shoots, grains, and leaves. The reserve is distinguished by its scenic landscapes and well-preserved natural habitats, thereby aiding in the maintenance of ecological balance. This valuable natural resource not only facilitates the conservation of wild species but also fosters ecological education and research in the realm of biodiversity.

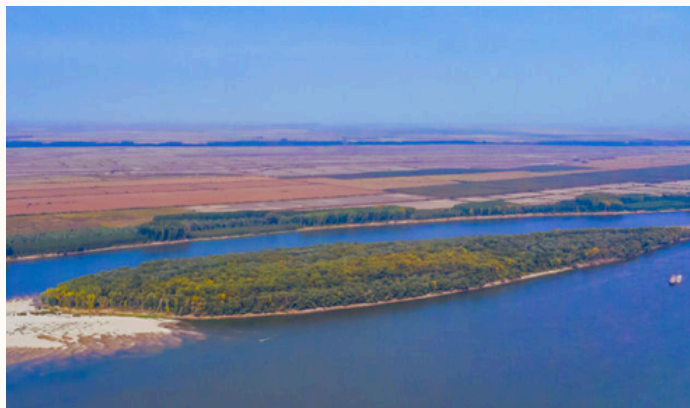
The Negureni Mouflon Reserve serves as a significant attraction for both Romanians and international visitors, as well as for researchers and advocates of environmental conservation.



Despite its deteriorated condition, the ruins of the Viile fort provide significant insights into the Roman military organization in Dobrogea, as well as the economic and military relations in the region, owing to its proximity to the Danube, a vital hub for trade and defense during that era.



Falcon Island



Ostrovul Șoimul is a nationally significant protected area situated in Călărași County, within the Dichiseni commune, along the left bank of the Danube. This protected area encompasses 20.10 hectares and is classified as category IV according to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) standards, recognized as one of the region's most important tourist attractions. It is located near the Borcea branch of the Danube and the southernmost fluvial estuary in Romania, Lake Bugeac, which serves as a mixed nature reserve in Constanța County.

Ostrovul Șoimul was designated a protected area by Government Decision No. 2151 on 30 November 2004, to safeguard its diverse flora and fauna. The dominant vegetation consists of softwood riparian forests, including willows, and the island serves as a crucial habitat for various bird species and wildlife from the Danube River wetland.

This island serves as a natural sanctuary and is vital for the preservation of local biodiversity, attracting tourists and nature enthusiasts alike due to the beauty and variety of its ecosystem.



Access to Ostrovul Șoimul is available from the commune of Dichiseni in Călărași County, as well as from the commune of Izvoarele in Constanța County, facilitating easy access for visitors from both regions. The island is situated near Lake Bugeac, another significant natural reserve that lies on the border between the two counties.

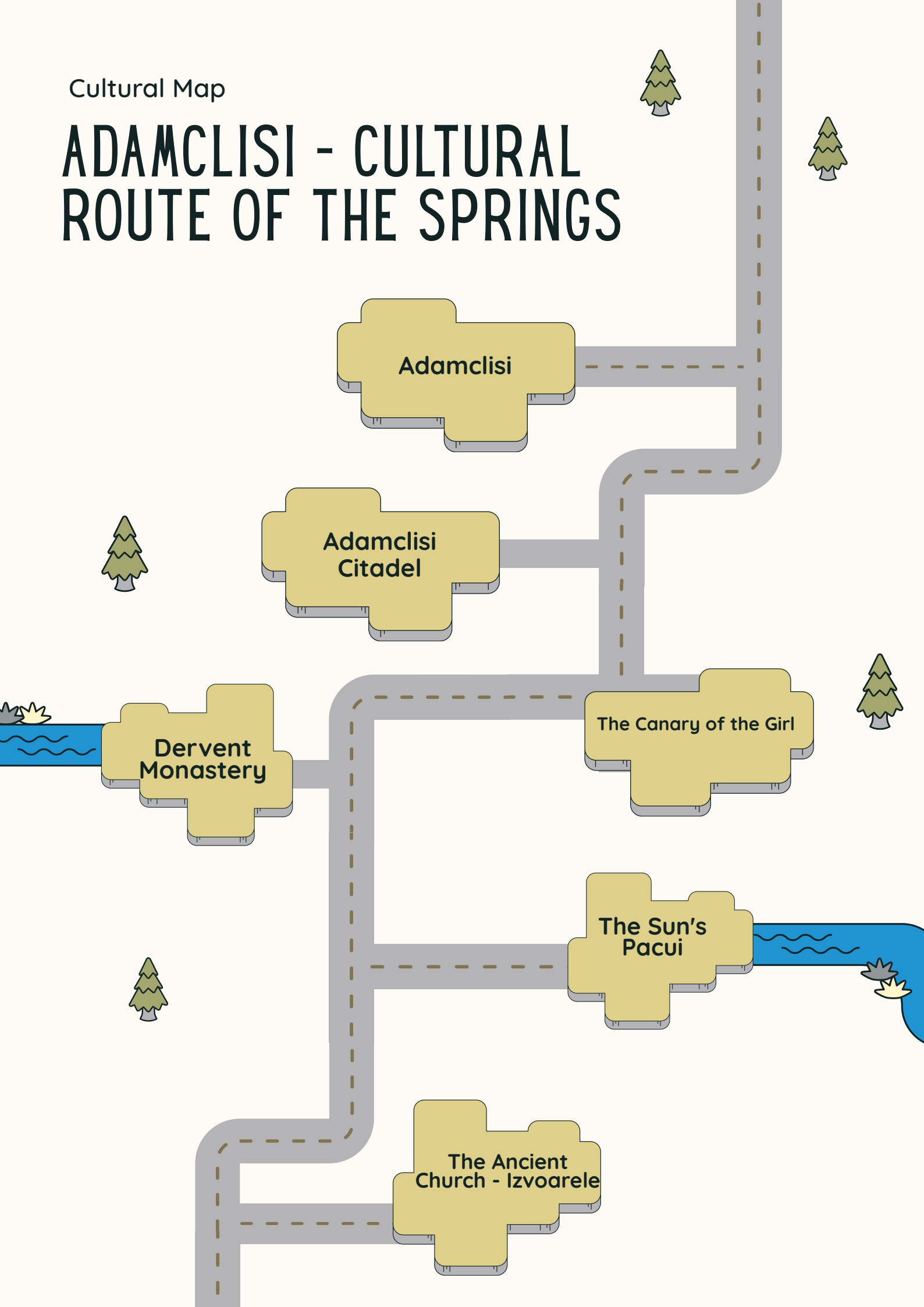
Near Ostrov Șoimul lies the Roman Fortification of Izvoarele, situated in the commune of Lipnița, Constanța County. This fortification, dating back to the Roman era, is positioned on the crest of a hill adjacent to the Danube, approximately 1.5 km from the mouth of the Canlia stream. It features a rectangular layout, with its longer side aligned parallel to the riverbank. The archaeological site was identified through the discovery of Roman ceramic fragments and stone blocks, likely remnants of the fortification walls. Archaeological investigations were conducted at the site, including periegesis (field inspections) undertaken between 1978 and 1984 by archaeologists Ion Munteanu and Vasile Oprea.

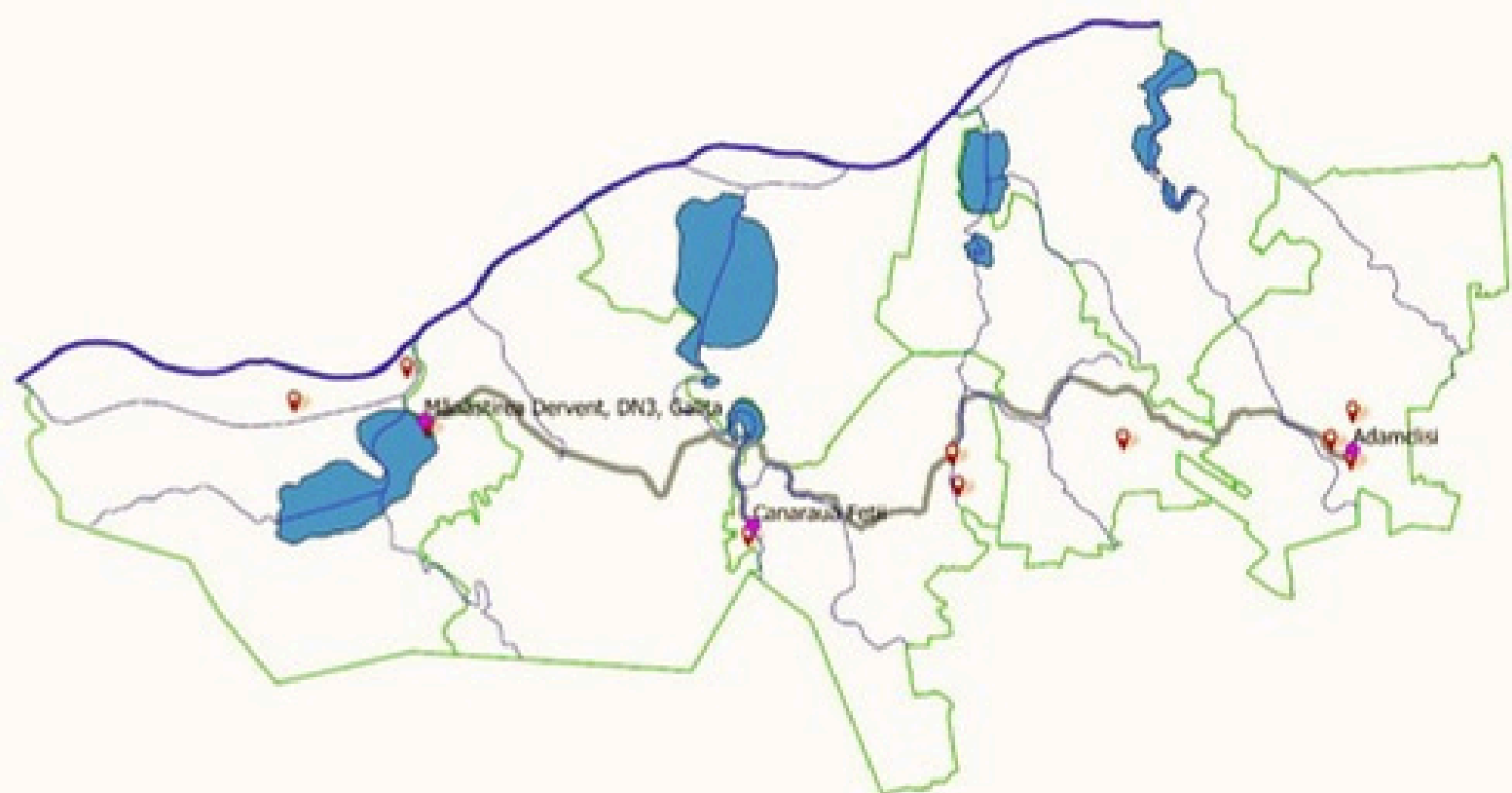
While somewhat influenced by human activities, the fortification provides a significant insight into the Roman presence in Dobrogea and the defensive network along the Danube.



Cultural Map

ADAMCLISI - CULTURAL ROUTE OF THE SPRINGS





Legendă

— Limite

Traseu Adamclisi - Mănăstirea Dervent

● Adamclisi

● Canaraua Feti

● Mănăstirea Dervent, DN3, Galița

— Traseul cultural de la Adamclisi la Mănăstirea Dervent

📍 Obiective culturale

— Dunărea+afinenți

■ Lacuri

0 2,5 5 km



Adamclisi Complex

The Adamclisi Complex, situated in the Adamclisi commune of Constanța County, stands as a remarkable testament to the grandeur of Ancient Rome and serves as a historically significant site of considerable economic and tourist value. Associated with the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, the complex honors the heroes who participated in the Dacian-Roman wars and constitutes a vital landmark in the history of Dobrogea.

The complex comprises three principal components: the Tropaeum Traiani triumphal monument, the Tropaeum Traiani Fortress, and the Adamclisi Archaeological Museum. The Tropaeum Traiani monument, situated approximately 1.5 km from the Adamclisi commune, ranks among the most remarkable ancient monuments in Romania, reaching a height of nearly 40 meters. Its structure features a cylinder measuring 12.6 meters in height and 31 meters in diameter, adorned with 54 sculpted metopes that depict battle scenes from the Dacian wars. At its apex stands a statue representing a Roman trophy, symbolizing the triumphs of the Roman army.



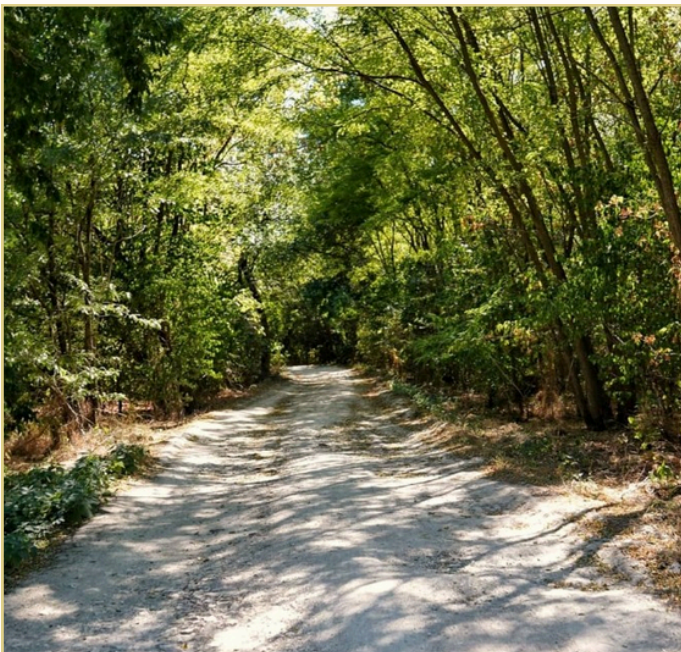
Within the complex, the Adamclisi Archaeological Museum, established in 1977, contains a wealth of artifacts unearthed in the vicinity of the fortress and the triumphal monument. This includes a collection of original metopes and other significant remnants that illustrate the daily, religious, and military life of the fortress's inhabitants.

The monument, referred to by Grigore Tocilescu as "the birth certificate in stone of the Romanian people," attracts annual visits from tourists, serving as a symbol of Rome's triumph over the Dacians and a significant reference in the ancient history of the region.

The Tropaeum Traiani fortress, established in the 2nd century AD, served as a significant economic and military hub. The imposing walls of the fortress, its sewage system, and the intramural basilicas, particularly the secular Basilica Forensis, are among the features that can still be appreciated today. The initial archaeological excavation campaign was conducted by Grigore Tocilescu from 1891 to 1909, followed by further research undertaken by esteemed archaeologists such as G. Murnu, V. Pärvan, and I. Barnea.

The canary belonging to the girl

Canaraua Fetii is a designated natural reserve situated in the southwestern region of Constanța County, adjacent to the city of Băneasa, within the Southern Dobrogea Plateau. This remarkable area is included in the Natura 2000 network and is characterized by its diverse biodiversity and distinctive geomorphological features. The natural canyon features steep slopes with fissures and caves that have historically served as refuges for small churches hewn from the rock, dating back to the 4th and 3rd centuries AD. Archaeological findings in this area include crosses, coins, and tombs from the era of Emperor Constantine the Great.



In addition to its natural significance, Canaraua Fetii is renowned for its local legends. One tale recounts that during the Ottoman invasions, the village girls leapt into the abyss to evade capture and enslavement. Another legend suggests that the name derives from the Bulgarian word "kanara," meaning rock, as some bandits established themselves in the cliffs of Valea Ceairului, near the Bulgarian border, with the intent of abducting girls from nearby villages. In response to this threat, the outraged peasants resolved to set the area ablaze, successfully vanquishing all those within the cave.



Dervent Monastery

Situated near the Bulgarian border, Dervent Monastery is an Orthodox site steeped in history. This location is renowned for its healing crosses that emerge from the earth, believed to provide solace to the ailing. Within the monastery courtyard, there exists a cross specifically designated for the healing of sick animals. Local tradition holds that the monastery was constructed on the remnants of an ancient Roman fortress known as Dervent, which was destroyed by the Pechenegs in 1036.

The present church of the monastery was constructed in 1936, on the site where these sacred crosses were situated. During special services, it is reported that many pilgrims experienced healing from various ailments, leaving their crutches as evidence.

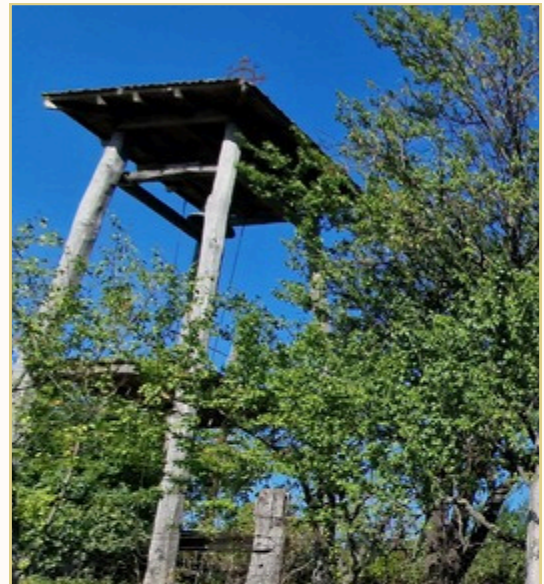


The Ancient Church - Izvoarele

The historic church in Izvoarele, Constanța County, known as the Church of the "Saint Great Martyr Dumitru," stands as one of the oldest and most authentic wooden churches in Dobrogea. Constructed in the mid-19th century, devoid of a spire and partially submerged, the church exemplifies a rare instance of traditional architecture from the Ottoman Empire era.

The wooden church in Izvoarele features a semi-buried construction style, characterized by "a wooden structure with walls insulated using rammed earth and adobe," supported by "wooden pillars embedded in the ground, with walls constructed of woven wicker between them." While it lacks a spire, it encompasses all the essential elements of an Orthodox church, including a semicircular altar, narthex, nave, porch, wooden vaults, and icons.

Its distinctive character is derived from the materials and techniques employed: the walls consist of wickerwork coated with earth, while the roof is constructed with traditional Dobruja tiles.



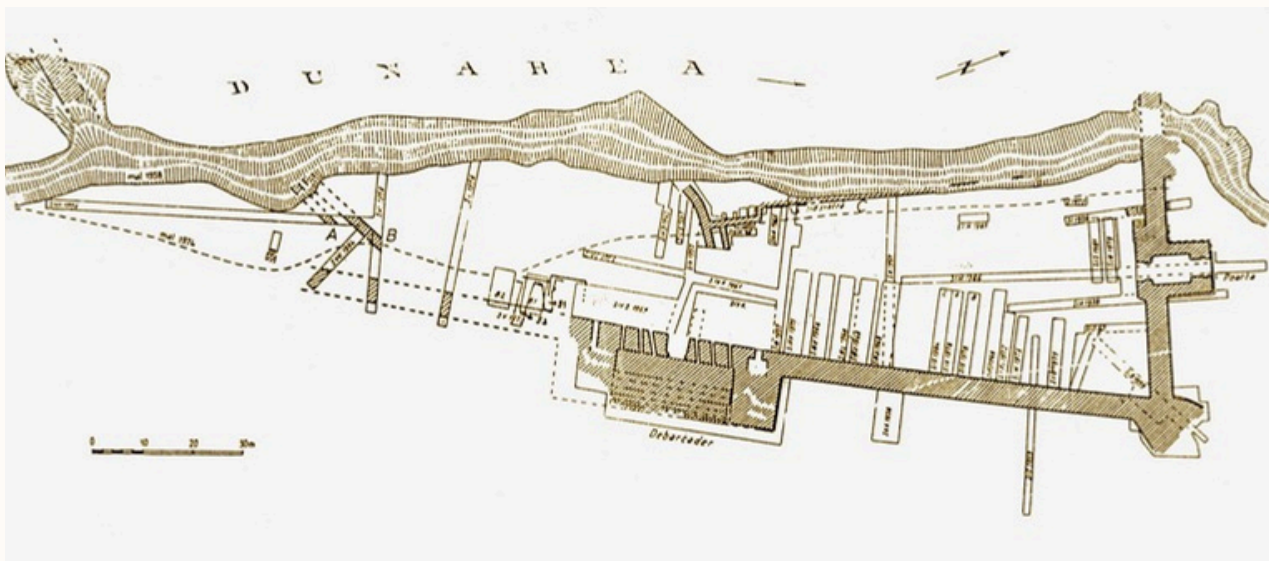
This church is classified as a Category A historical monument; however, it suffered significant damage over time. In 2001, architect Vlad Calboreanu commenced a comprehensive restoration process.

Currently, the church is in outstanding condition; however, it is not adequately utilized from either a tourist or religious perspective. Archaeological investigations have also disclosed that the church is situated above an ancient cemetery, likely dating back to the Neolithic era.



The Sun's Pacui

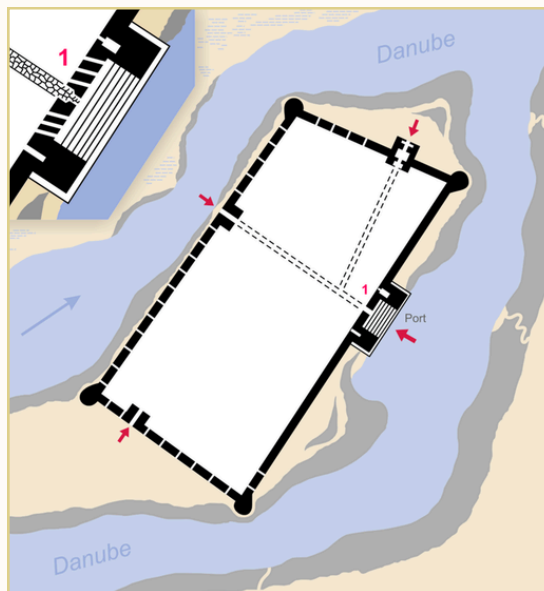
Păcuiul lui Soare is an island approximately 6 km in length, situated on the Danube near the town of Ostrov in Constanța County. Its name is linked to a local legend about a shepherd named Soare, who tended his sheep in this region. The island is presently referred to as the "Sunken Fortress" because of the remnants of the medieval fortress Vicina, which can be found in the northern section of the island.



Vicina Fortress, a historically significant port city along the Danube, was established in 971 by Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes to safeguard the Byzantine Empire. It served as both a naval base and a military garrison. The remnants of the fortress are regarded by certain archaeologists as the second largest and most crucial fortification in Romania, following Sarmizegetusa, and possess remarkable archaeological potential.

Archaeological findings at Vicina encompass a diverse array of materials, including coins and artifacts that illustrate the active trade between Byzantium, Kiev, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Near East, highlighting its significance as a prominent trading hub during that era.

Regrettably, erosion from the Danube has profoundly impacted the fortress throughout the centuries. In 1950, merely 25% of the fortress remained visible, and by 2011, only 10-15% of the original structure was discernible due to damage inflicted by floods and landslides.





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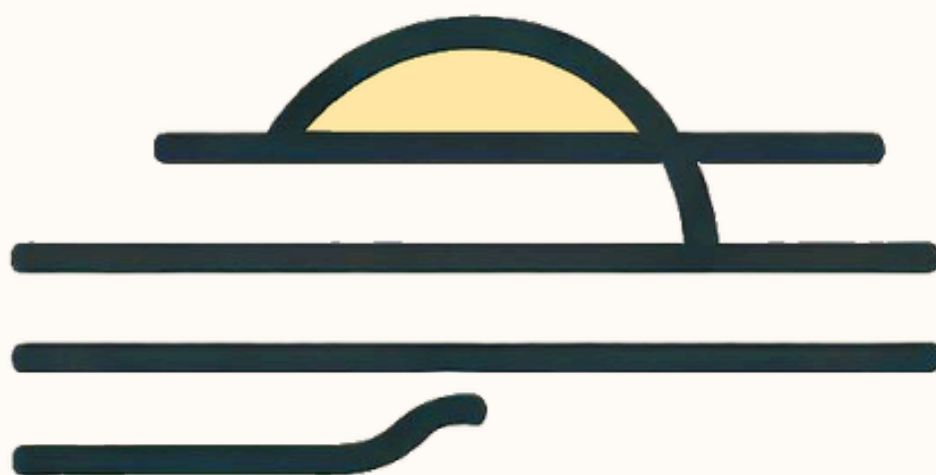
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DRUMUL DUNĂRII

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