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PROMOTING HERITAGE - AND CULTURE - BASED EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN

Project No BSB-1145



NESTINARSTVO

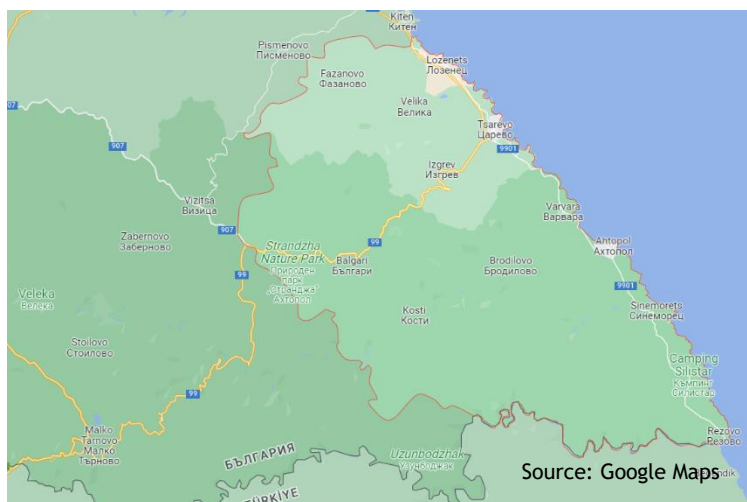
(Traditional celebration)

Common borders. Common solutions.

BASIC INFORMATION

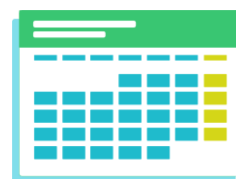
WHERE:

The dances are held in several villages in the Strandzha mountain on the Bulgarian side of the border - the villages of Bulgari, Kosti and Brodilovo in the municipality of Tsarevo, Burgas region. In Bulgaria, the custom is preserved in its authentic form in only one village in Strandzha - Bulgari.



SCHEDULE:

Authentically celebrated on the night of 3 to 4 June in the old church Julian style on the church holiday of St. St. Constantine and Helena (according to the new Gregorian calendar, the date is May 21).



ORGANIZER AND CONTACT INFORMATION:



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DESCRIPTION

The origin of fire dances lies in the most distant historical past of the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. The Nestinarstvo (or fire-dancing) is a ritual from Eastern Thrace, associated with the cult of Saints Constantine and Helena, in which participants dance barefoot on embers. It is distributed in Strandzha mountain, Bulgaria and northern Greece.

In 2009 the ritual was included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and in the National Representative



List of Intangible Cultural Heritage "Living Human Treasures - Bulgaria" at the suggestion of the Regional Historical Museum - Burgas.

The first written testimony about the custom of nestinarstvo was published in 1866 by

the Bulgarian public figure Petko Slaveykov.

The first study of this practice was made in 1873 by the Greek theologian Anastasios Hurmuziadis at the request of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He sees the custom as a superficially Christianized remnant of the ancient orgiastic cult of Dionysus. The hypothesis of the ancient Greek or Greco-Thracian origin of fire-dancing is widely used in Greek and Bulgarian ethnography. The name of this tradition is also shrouded in mystery, but





in support of the above hypothesis there is a suggestion that it comes from the Greek word Αναστενάρια.

The custom spread in the early 20th century in several Bulgarian and Greek villages in Eastern Thrace, some of which in

1913 came to Bulgaria, and some remained in Turkey. Nestinarstvo was practiced only by "fire-dancing" families, but there were cases when some of those present at the ceremony fell into a trance.

Tsarevo Municipality has a Certificate for registration of the trademark "Nestinari" with registration 89814 / 10.11.2014.



KEY MESSAGE

The Nestinarstvo is the spirit of Strandzha. This is a preserved centuries-old tradition and is unique for our country. There are pagan elements in it, but the essence of the ritual is respect for Saints Constantine and Helena.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Fire-dancing is a dance with bare feet on embers. According to tradition, the fire-dancers play in the evening on the day of St. St. Constantine and Helena (the night of June 3 and 4). Preparations for the event began at dawn with the "dressing" of fire icons. A bright red cloth is placed, lined with old silver coins and decorated with flowers. A procession is held around the village, and the icons are carried to the holy spring of St. Constantine by three teenagers, followed by a ritual washing of their handles. In the evening, the epitrope (church trustee) and the fire-dancers go to the chapel of St. St. Constantine and Helena, then inhale the incense smoke and pray in front of the icons. Then the water from the spring is considered the most healing during the year. After dusk, all the people from the village come in front of the chapel, as well as the musicians - bagpiper and drummer. They perform three special melodies at a specific time. The first is performed during the movement from the chapel to the embers, the second during the walk on the fire, and the last is played at the end, bearing the name "Kostadinsko horo". After the icons are lit and the village is surrounded, the fire-dancers return to the chapel (called the konak). There are kept the icons of St. St. Constantine and Helena and spend time until the evening and listen to the constant beating of the drum, then fall into a trance. Reaching the embers with their dance, the fire-dancers enter the circle with shouts. They carry in their hands icons, towels, chandeliers. At the same time, a fire is lit in the square, which is maintained by the oldest fire-dancer (they are usually at an age when they no longer play).

By dusk, the fire was already beginning to spread over the embers. It is about two meters in diameter and five or six centimeters thick. The oldest practicing nestinarstvo are the first to enter it, who first go around the embers three times and then cross it. Only then does the real dance begin - the fire-dancers enter the circle of fire with a

shrill cry. They cross the embers by pressing their feet into the coals and keep shouting. The dancers dance, holding the flower-decorated icon of Saints Constantine and Helena. Sometimes those in a trance make predictions. Gradually the dance becomes slower, the movements of the fire-dancers are calmer and finally the dance ends. When the ritual is over, everyone joins the Kostadin dance (Kostadinsko horo) for health.

In some villages the custom lasts for two days, and on the second day a ritual procession is performed again. The teenagers and the icon enter every home, and a dance is played on the village square. The fire-dancers perform their dance again against the background of ritual music. At the end of the dance, each of them crosses himself three times, kisses the icon and goes to the chapel.

EXPERIENTIAL AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Everyone watching the event on June 3, after the dance of the fire-dancers, can go through the fire, even dance. The condition that the dancers are barefoot is mandatory, of course. Preliminary preparation and adjustment is extremely important during the evening.

In order to preserve the authenticity and originality of the custom of fire dances, it is not necessary to include modern technologies of broadcasting or transmission to a wider audience.

INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

Fire dances are included in the UNESCO list of world intangible cultural heritage of mankind. In its description it is explicitly stated that in its authentic form it is performed only in the village of Bulgari, Tsarevo municipality, on the night of 3 to 4 June. Any other event outside Strandzha mountain and using of the word "Nestinarstvo" is in order to attract the interest of viewers and motivated by commercial purposes.

MAIN FEATURES AND SERVICES THAT ATTRACT PUBLIC

Observance of the Nestinarstvo custom is not just entering and dancing in the fire, it is a ritual observed, followed and performed for years according to a strictly defined

calendar, only in Strandzha. Authenticity and the opportunity to participate directly and dance in the embers are the most important characteristics that make the event desirable to be attended and experienced.

KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The holiday is organized by the local population and community centers in the villages where it is celebrated. Mainly supported by Tsarevo municipality, which in order to preserve the traditional holiday holds a patent with the brand "Nestinarstvo".

PARTICIPANTS, LOCAL COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER SEGMENT

The main participants are local fire-dancing families from the mentioned Strandzha villages. The main participants are mostly representatives of the local population, as well as guests from other settlements.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION CHANNELS

The event is relatively well known among the Bulgarian population, but still uses various channels for information and advertising, such as websites, social media pages.

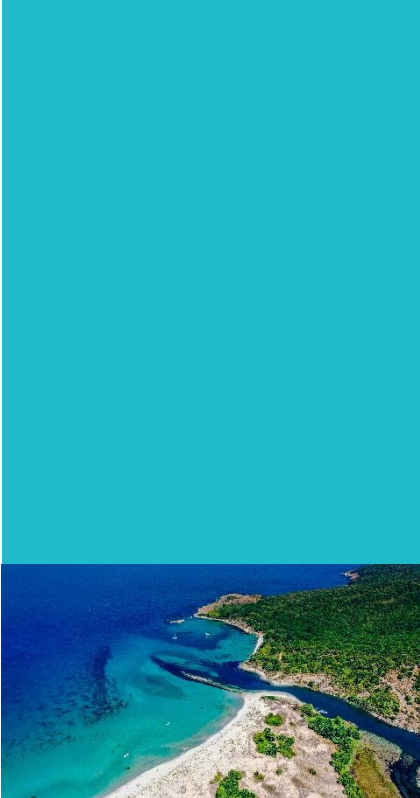
SPECIFIC ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

ACCESSIBILITY

The settlements where the traditional holiday is held are located in areas away from the main roads in the Strandzha Mountains. The village of Bulgari, which is the main place of firedancing, is located 18 km from the municipal center of Tsarevo.

LIAISON WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS OF THE BLACK SEA BASIN REGION

The event is unknown in another country and has no analogue.



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