



## TOURISM

Landscapes and tradition



THREE COUNTRIES, TWO LAKES, ONE FUTURE

ТРИ ДРЖАВИ, ДВЕ ЕЗЕРА, ЕДНА ИДНИНА

ΤΡΕΙΣ ΧΩΡΕΣ, ΔΥΟ ΛΙΜΝΕΣ, ΕΝΑ ΜΕΛΛΟΝ

TRE VENDE, DY LIQENE, NJË E ARDHME



[www.prespapark.org](http://www.prespapark.org)

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Our **VISION** is Prespa lakes basin managed jointly by the three countries, for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the wellbeing of its peoples.

Our **MISSION** is to offer ways to restore and keep this balance.

**Prespa Park Coordination Committee**





The sheer beauty of the Prespa landscapes is enough to draw visitors. In addition to that, versatile cultural and traditional elements, valuable ecological sites, good food, picturesque villages and historical layers of Byzantine and Ottoman monuments spread across the basin. No wonder then that the promotion of tourism seems to be essential for the economic development of the area and the preservation of its historical, cultural and ecological identity.



Krani beach, FYR of Macedonia  
*Photo UNDP archives*

Ethnic Museum Jone Eftimovski,  
Podmocani, FYR of Macedonia  
*Photo UNDP archives*



### Landscapes and Tradition

In an area like Prespa, endowed with a variety of unique values – natural and cultural – tourism is often seen as the universal solution for economic development. However, uncontrolled tourism may aggravate stress on ecosystems and unequal distribution

of income opportunities, so a planned basin-wide approach is required. This refers both to many sectors supporting tourism activities, like roads, water supply and sewage, as well as coordinated, nature-based planning and marketing.

Beach at Fishermen's village  
Otesevo



Traditional gastronomic  
delights from local produce



A typical traditional room in the Resen area

### Facts and figures

Visitors come to Prespa at all seasons. The main tourist period lasts from June to September with a peak in July and August, while in Greece winter season is also very busy. Domestic guests dominate the Prespa tourism market in all three countries, with less than five percent of foreign tourists.



A typical room for rent in a traditional guest house, Aghios Germanos, Greece  
*Photo by Sonja Seizova*

Local experts believe the current capacity for tourists to be lowest in Albania (75 beds), Greece (300 beds), and FYR of Macedonia (7,200 beds). However, bed capacity does not reflect the health of the market. Tourism is actually on the rise in both Greece and Albania, while FYR of Macedonia has lost 50% of its clients (also due to external causes).

Tourism is expected to increase over the next 20 years, calling for the development of communal and traffic infrastructure, and regional planning to encourage increased tourism. This, in turn, requires the improvement of the wastewater and solid waste treatment which currently do not suffice even for the needs of the inhabitants.



Art by a local craftsman on display at the Saray building, Resen  
*Photo UNDP archives*





The White Angle, a 12<sup>th</sup> century fresco in the small church of St. George in Kurbinovo  
*Photo UNDP archives*

Services offered in the Greek Prespa mainly relate to recreation and tourism primarily in the form of hotels and taverns. Estimates from 2000 suggest an annual income of just under two million US dollars for accommodation and meals. A steady yearly increase in the tourist flow is noted during the last few years, while, in parallel, the

first signs of the inefficiency of the existing infrastructure have appeared.

Tourism has been given a prominent role in Albania's development strategy, and Macro Prespa is considered one of the most important areas regarding the potential for tourism. However, this potential is unexploited due

to the generally unfavourable economic situation and the lack of basic tourist infrastructure. Nevertheless, certain initiatives are directed to the Micro Prespa region in Albania.



Krani village  
*Photo UNDP archives*

The lack of public investment in the conservation and restoration of tourist attractions - archaeological, historical, cultural and ecological – is aggravated by the insufficient information and promotion. The stresses on the environmental health have started to take their toll on tourism too, like the challenged appeal of the lakes as swimming resort due to eutrophication and increased pollution.

The waste disposal problem in Prespa is important but, perhaps, not critical yet. The foreseen increase of visitors and changes in consumption patterns requests for a good planning and the development of necessary infrastructure in the area to accommodate future needs.

### Challenges

The current state of tourist infrastructure presents an obstacle to the utilisation of the tourist potential of the region, in combination with the problems facing the other services in the area (telecommunications, drinking water etc.). The quality of the services offered calls for improvements too: boat trips, swimming, guided tours of historical monuments, insufficient number of nature observation points, small-scale conference and alike.



Sunset over the 10th century basilica of Aghios Achillios where the relics of the saint were kept, brought from Larissa by Czar Samuel

*Photo by Sonja Seizova*



### Recreational boating

Photo by Ardit Konomi / UNDP



According to the UN-World Tourism Organization (UN-WTO), sustainable tourism should keep a balance among the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development in order to guarantee long-term benefits to the recipient communities.



### The Way Ahead

In view of the character and the particularities of the region, large-scale or intensive development initiatives in any sector (intensive agriculture, manufacture, industry, mining, mass



Otesevo  
Photo UNDP archives



tourism etc.) are often incompatible with the preservation of the values of the area.

On the other hand, **sustainable tourism** respects ecological limits within which human activities should remain, and recognizes the interdependence of economic and environmental systems to provide for long-term socio-economic benefits.



Apple harvest festival, Resen  
*Photo UNDP archives*



Local festivity  
*Photo by UNDP*

It refers to a variety of activities supporting tourism, and entails **ecotourism** as an environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present). Ecotourism promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

### Visiting the Prespa Park

If you are a visitor to Prespa, follow these simple guidelines. You will prove that tourism does not mean deterioration of local characteristics and degradation of the environment, but can be a means to better protect a region and integrate tourists into the local way of life.

- Get informed about what's important in the region, and help preserve wildlife and biodiversity;
- Explore the area on foot and by bicycle;
- Talk to the people. Learn about their life and customs;
- Support the local economy by buying local products.
- Minimize the consumption of natural resources, primarily water and energy.
- Protect the nature by choosing activities that do not impact on the flora, fauna and natural landscape and leave no marks or traces on the places you pass through.



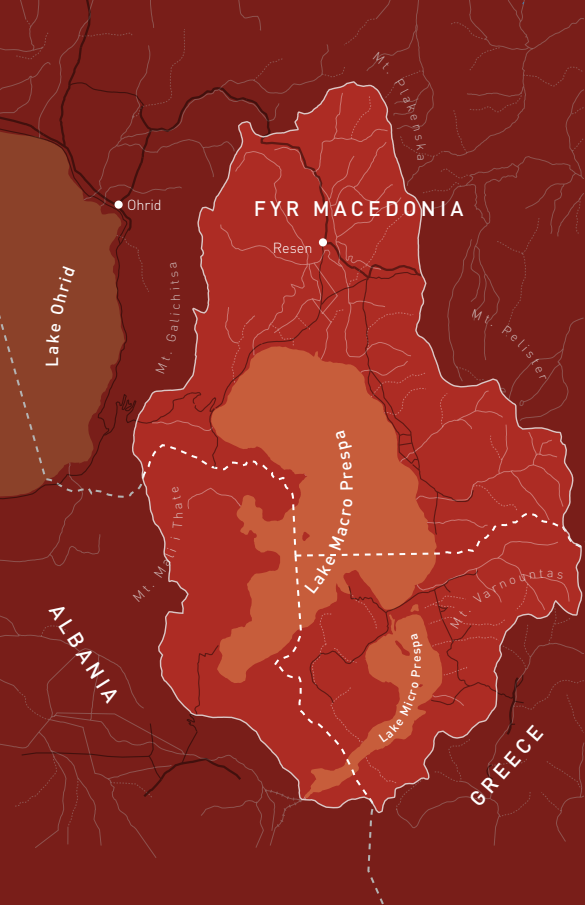
### Prespa Park Contribution

The preparation of eco-tourism development plans should take full advantage of the valuable features of the entirety of Prespa Park, and should deal with each national section separately, while at the same time treating the region as a unitary tourism resource. This can be achieved by combining the advantages of each part while undermining any disadvantages with a view at a balanced distribution of the benefits.

Activities and initiatives supported by the Prespa Park Coordination Committee include

a feasibility study on the tourist potential of the area with a view at developing sustainable tourist activities, and a pilot project of linked tourist products, integrated visitor infrastructure (roads, pathways, bird-watching sites etc.), as well as a network of local tourist agencies and businesses.

Local desert – baked apple covered in sugar



#### Prespa Park boundaries

Adapted, courtesy of the Society  
for the Protection of Prespa

The Prespa Lakes basin (Southeast Europe) is a globally significant ecological and cultural landscape comprising four National Parks and several protected areas with unique habitats, flora and fauna.

In 2000 the Governments of Albania, FYR Macedonia and Greece agreed to work together to maintain the natural values of the area and introduce environmental management practices in the Prespa Park by integrating ecological, economic and social goals.

Two Wetlands of International Importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, lie within the Transboundary Prespa Park boundaries. The area has been acknowledged as a Gift to the Earth by WWF-International, and European Union has included Prespa Lakes in its policies on water and species protection.

The Prespa Park Coordination Committee is a trilateral body representing governments, local authorities and civil society. It supports environmental protection and sustainable development in the Prespa Park for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the wellbeing of its peoples.

Since 2006 a GEF/UNDP Project supports Integrated Ecosystem Management in the transboundary Prespa Lakes Basin, to last until 2011.



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