



DOSSIER ON THE 2016 EDEN RUNNER-UP DESTINATIONS

Project Number: GRO/SME/16/C/071-Tourism	Project Acronym: BULCULTOURism
Destination: “LITTLE MOUNT ATHOS” – Municipality Dragoman	

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1. FOREWORD MESSAGE OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DESTINATION

(Max 250 words)

The applicant organization is the Municipality of Dragoman. The number of employees currently is 54, including mayoral deputies.

Destination management is moving towards a positive direction every year. In the recent years, the Dragoman Municipality has executed an inventory and evaluation of all the cultural and natural resources in the region. It has also developed new tourist products for the destination and appropriate attractions packages; potential routes, paths and events have been determined; the necessary support services, facilities and infrastructure were identified; new thematic routes were created. The destination is represented through cultural and natural sights, events and activities, which improve tourist offer. The information about them is announced in publications in the Dragoman Municipal Journal, official websites and tourist sites.

SECTION 2 – DESCRIPTION OF THE DESTINATION IN A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

In this section the destination is described from a pure place-marketing point of view (travel-friendly communication style, attractive slogan, and some pictures) for promotional purposes. This part of the document should be prepared with a support of a travel journalist or expert in place marketing.

2. POSITIONING DECLARATION

**What makes this destination excellent?
Why should a tourist visit it?**

Here it should be stated (in max 2 or 3 lines) in which way the destination is excellent (from a traveller's point of view). The prospect traveller should immediately get clear in what sense this destination is excellent.

Please, add a picture that symbolizes the statement.

Unknown Bulgaria – the discovery... “Little Mount Athos” Municipality Dragoman is the place of temple architecture and iconography, spiritual peace, natural beauty and historical narrative.



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3. EXPERIENCES

What can a traveller do in visiting the destination?

Please, describe max three iconic experiences the destination has to offer:

Headline

A short three- to five-word phrase that captures readers' attention and imagination.

Benefits

Focus on what travellers will gain from of the experience.

Call-to-action:

Be clear and concise in describing the primary action you want readers to take (start the sentence with an action verb). In case you want to have descriptions of the amenities that may be important for certain promotional activities, make sure it supports the experience. Do not position buildings and beds as the reason for travel.

Feel the real emotions of the physically separate but spiritually assembled people who inhabit the border area of West Bulgaria and Eastern Serbia by joining The International Folklore Festival "Nishavski Horovod". Feel the Bulgarian spirit via the Bulgarian traditional folklore songs. The International Folklore Festival "Nishavski Horovod" is held annually on May, 24th and 25th. The Festival is two-sided and it is conducted simultaneously in two countries – Bulgaria and Serbia with the respective festival centers – Dragoman and Dimitrovgrad. The festival was established in 2001 with the main purpose to keep the interest to Bulgarian traditional folklore alive and to support Bulgarians from both sides of the boarder to represent and to share their intangible cultural heritage and to feel as part of one society. Although these people inhabit two countries they have their common culture, history and spirit. You could feel the real emotion these people experience during these two days festival only if you visit the event yourself.

A race that causes more and more unforgettable sporting emotions and has constantly grown every next year - International "Bike and Run for Chepun". The format of the competition includes mountain biking and mountain running during which the athletes can enjoy the amazing revitalising nature of the region. Even if it is not for participation, but just to feel the atmosphere of the wonderful experience, the race is worth the visit.

Explore the Medieval temple architecture and iconography. There are 47 churches and monasteries in and around Drgaoman's municipality territory, a significant part of which dated back in the Medieval period and represents the unique Bulgarian traditional ecclesiastical constructive and art traditions from the period.

4. MAIN TOURISTIC FEATURES

Iconic/Famous people

Famous historical facts happened in the destination

Cultural and Natural sights

Celebrations, festivals and events

Please, describe in no more than 200 words the main features that are worth a travel to the destination.

Among the most significant and of national importance cultural and historical sites are the following: Medieval Nedelishki Monastery "St. Atanasius the Great "; the Medieval monastery "St. St. Ap. Peter and Paul", which is under restoration, and testifying of which existence are preserved in the Vatican today; Medieval Church "St. Ascension of the Lord"; Medieval Church "St. George"; Medieval church "St. Petka"; The Medieval monastery "St. Nicola", etc.

Among the natural attractions on the territory of Dragoman's municipality are: Karst complex Dragoman marsh - the largest wetland on the territory of the country; Chepan Mountain; Temnata Dupka cave with one of the richest cave fauna; Century oak in the village of Berende (protected by an order of the Minister of Environment and Water); the Three Ushi Mountains, where during the Serbian-Bulgarian War on November 7, 1885, Boyan Botev (brother of the Bulgarian revolutionist Hristo Botev) is deadly injured.

One of the most important events taking place in the region is the annually organized International Folklore Festival "Nishavski Horodvod - Dragoman". Another important events in the municipality are: International Bike and Run for Chepun (a nationally popular event); Week of Karst Complex "Dragomansko blato"; Day of Animal Breeding and Agriculture in the village of Golemo Malovo; Dragoman's Day Celebration (on the last Saturday of August); the Day of Dragoman Municipality (on December 27 - Stefanov's Day).

5. PRATICAL INFORMATION REFERENCES

Please add websites (links) references for practical information:

Getting there & away

Getting around

Accommodation

Restaurants

Shopping

Touring

Health and Safety

Dragoman Municipality has a well-maintained infrastructure to tourist sites. Destinations are marked with road signs; there are signs also at the entrance of the city. A tourist information centre provides a detailed information and directions to the cultural and natural sights of the region. In the village of Nesla is located another friendly place - the Visitor Centre, which employees assist with directions and details about the sight-seeing, routes, transportation and accommodation.

The destination and its landmarks are accessible by car, can be reached by train and bus, as the municipal route network covers all the settlement. On the territory of the municipality there is a three star hotel located in the town of Dragoman, it is part of a complex with a restaurant offering Bulgarian cuisine A camping is also available in the destination for travellers. There are also several guest houses in the town on the territory of the municipality.

On the territory of the municipality medical assistance is offered, except with medical and dental surgeries, the municipality also has an Emergency Medical Centre. In case of fire, the municipality immediately contacts the fire station, which is located in the neighbouring municipality, and includes not also professional firemen but also a group of volunteers.

<http://visitdragoman.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/infocenternesla/>

<http://www.obshtinadragoman.com>

SECTION 3 – DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS WHICH JUSTIFY THE NOMINATION

In this section, there is a description of all reasons why the destination fulfils the European and national criteria. It is important that all actions and initiatives taken are presented in a way to underline why they contribute to make the destination considered a good practice in the field of sustainable tourism.

6. GENERAL CRITERIA

What makes this destination excellent in "cultural tourism"?

Visiting "Little Mount Athos" Municipality Dragoman a traveller will immediately fill the peaceful atmosphere embracing the destination with all its cultural and natural

What makes this destination emerging, not traditional and off the beaten track?

On what basis was it assessed that the destination offers authentic tourism experiences?

On what basis was it assessed that the destination has local authorities with a capacity in managing their destination in a way to ensure social, cultural and environmental sustainability?

On what basis was it assessed that the destination has a management destination organisation that has a capacity in sustainable tourism management?

On what basis was it assessed that the destination has agencies, NGOs or authorities with a capacity in adopting sustainable tourism practices?

Please, specify criteria, facts and data upon which you have based the assessment

sights, places and friendly people. Its name was preciously chosen ("Little Mount Athos") as there is no other place in Bulgaria where a visitor could explore so many churches and monasteries on such a compact territory (in and around the region of Dragoman they are 47). Most of these temples are cultural monuments of national importance as they represent the Mediaeval temple architecture and the Bulgarian iconography from the period.

One of the most attractive sites is the renovated and restored **Medieval Nedelishki Monastery "St. Atanasii The Great"**. The monastery revitalized and restored the religious and cultural life of the entire Dragoman municipality. The completely renewed valuable monument of cultural and historical heritage have been made accessible not only for local Orthodox Christians but for pilgrims from the whole country and abroad. The **Church of "St. Peter and Paul"** was built on the foundations of an ancient temple by a local boyar in the middle of the 13th century. The murals were painted by at least three artists, depicting the iconographic image of king Ivan Asen II (the work of an unknown artist). The frescoes in the church are of national significance, with the value of those from the Boyana church, and the church itself was declared an old-style folk art style in SG № 69/1927 and with a protocol of the SOPK dated 07.12.1966 as a cultural monument of national importance.

Medieval Church "St. Nicola" is a cultural monument of national importance. It was built of cut stones, joint with mortar. The windows have conical shape narrowing towards outside.

Medieval Church "St. Ascension of the Lord" is a cultural monument of local significance. After 50 years in ruins the church was restored and on May, 13th 2107 it opened door for visitors.

Medieval Church "St. George" is a cultural monument of local significance, which was restored and renewed this year thanks to donations, sponsors and the local community.

Medieval Church "St. Petka" is a cultural monument of local importance. It is located in a wooded area. Its roof was repaired, the iconostasis was restored, the façade both inside and outside was renovated.

Medieval Monastery "St. Nicola" was probably built in the 14th century, however, its architectural features and preserved frescoes dated back to the 16th-17th century. It is partly dug into the terrain, built of stone and covered with stone slabs. "The Court of Justice" scene is best preserved. A frieze with the apostles and a group of angels is preserved from the outer decoration, as well as the image of St. Nicholas in the patron niche above the entrance. The colour range includes only light ochre, pale blue and green.

The importance of the destination was valued even in Roma period when the **Roma road Via Militaris** passing through Dragoman municipality was actively used. It was marked with "milliarted columns" with Latin inscriptions which indicate the distances between cities, stations and other inhabited sites. Traces of this period are localized in many places in the area where stones have been found.

Millennia ago the Thracians dwelt the area and part of their cultural heritage reaching us today is a **Thracian sanctuary of Sabasius-Dionysus**, which could be seen on the Chepun hill. Here was researched an altarpiece with inscription, according to which God Sabazius, initiated by Aurelius Mestrianos, has made sacrifices for victories in wars, for fertility and health. The Sanctuary continues its existence through Antiquity.

In the early Middle Ages the holy place was inherited from the coming Christians and the Petropavlov Monastery was built. The Christian monastery was destroyed in the late Middle Ages when the Turnovo Kingdom fell under Ottoman rule. Subsequently the surviving Christian population placed cross that is still preserved.

Dragoman Marsh - the only marsh in Bulgaria with a karst origin, which gives it special environmental significance (11th Ramsar site in Bulgaria). Together with the wet meadows from the town of Dragoman to the village of Tsarklevtsi, it has been declared an important ornithological place. Most of thspcies in and arounf Dragoman marsh are endemic species for the country and the Balkan Peninsula. Dragoman Marsh and Chepun mountain are designated as representative habitats of European importance for the protection of biodiversity. Wildlife Association "Balkani" organizes summer volunteer camps in the region of Dragoman Marsh and Chepun Mountain. The Wetland Conservation Centre, located near the marsh, hosts periodically organized educational and informational meetings devoted to the importance of saving the local flora and fauna, which results in saving the worldwide.

In recent years the municipality has successfully developed its tourism. Successfully

implemented a project of "**Unknown Bulgaria - Discovery - Western Suburbs**" of the municipalities of Dragoman, Tran, Slivnitsa and Breznik with an active and very fruitful participation in national and international tourism exhibitions and trade fairs and with significant tourist products – programs, leaflets, brochures, maps, short films. Each year, Dragoman municipality participates in the national initiative "Let's clear Bulgaria for a day". Periodically the municipality initiates campaigns for entirely **cleaning** of the municipality. This year the municipality of Dragoman won 300 trees from the 77 Foundation campaign "Thousands of trees for the children of Bulgaria". Another 600 trees provided by the founder of the foundation as a mean of appreciation for the initiative taken were **afforested**. Dragoman Municipality has also implemented a project: "**Closure and rehabilitation of an existing municipal landfill for waste**", which made another step towards improving the environment and its preservation. It has signed a contract with "EcoCollect for organizing a system for separate collection of packaging waste on the territory of the Municipality of Dragoman.

7. SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Please, specify criteria, facts and data upon which you have based the assessment.

Dragoman Municipality complies on Territorial Planning Act and the permissions and guidelines of the National Institute of Cultural Monuments upon the issuance of a building permit for the construction and reconstruction of the cultural and historical monuments.

Tourist Information Centre Dragoman – a building with large conference room, designed for presentations and lectures, computer configurations with mounted films for the cultural and historical heritage and the natural richness of the region. The Centre offers promotional materials revealing the beauty and the spirit of the entire Western region.

Visitors Centre Nesla was opened on May, 21th 2015 with the aim to inform and disseminate the opportunities for tourism and recreation on the territory of the municipality. It has an information room, an ethnographic exhibition hall related to local traditions and customs, expositions of local clothing, vessels and household items; craft hall (demonstrations of local crafts for the purpose of training visitors) and local cuisine.

SECTION 4 – INFORMATION ABOUT THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

8. THE ORGANISATION MANAGING THE "DESTINATION"

(i.e. organisation which submitted the application for the EDEN Award)

	Governance System	Overall Budget (in €)	% Budget in tourism	Staff working in tourism activities
What type organisation is it?	Select of the following:	Select of the following:	Percentage	Total: 10
	<u>Municipality</u>	Up to 50,000 50,001 – 75,000 70,001 – 100,000 100,001 – 250,000 250,001 – 500,000 500,001 – 1M <u>more than 1M</u>	≈4%	Breakdown - permanent: 4 - temporary: 4 - consultants: 2

Which tasks in tourism management are performed by the organisation?

Please choose one of the list on the right

- Strategic planning
- Tourism infrastructure development
- Human Resources development (within our DMO)
- Advance Innovation and Information Communication Technology systems (ICT)
- Promotion activities/publications
- Management and development of events
- Management and development of attractions
- New tourism products/services development
- Capacity building programs for SMME's
- Training and education seminars for tourism professionals
- Business advice/consultancy
- Quality management
- Tourism facilitation activities (reservations and bookings)
- Information services for tourists/visitors
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Monitoring and evaluation of consumers' behaviour
- Develop sustainable tourism products/services
- Research and development actions

Please indicate the partnership or co-operation schemes in which the private sector has been involved in the organization?

- Advisory boards
- Joint Management units
- Sectorial liaison groups
- Corporate partnerships with private associations and agencies
- Membership
- Registration (annually or periodically)
- Outsourcing/subcontracting private companies
- Visitors/tourists services and products

Please indicate if there are special agreements with the regional or national tourism offices for marketing the destination in the domestic and international markets

Brochures promoting the destination are spreading by the tourist centers in the neighboring municipalities. The local authorities work closely with tour operators who offer the destination's cultural trails.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

CEO, General Manager, Legal representative of the Organization

Andrei Alexiev Ivanov – Mayor of Dragoman municipality
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Tourism Manager

The person who will attend the EDEN Network meetings and who is in charge of tourism management

Lidia Bankova-Naydenova – Deputy Mayor of Dragoman Municipality
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SECTION 5 – STATISTICS AND FACT ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE DESTINATION

10. TOURISM STATISTICS

	Hotel	B&B, apartments, other
Tourism Volume <i>Please, in counting the tourism volume consider all accommodation</i>		
Number of establishments	2	2
Number of bed places	64	8
Number of days of the peak	All year tourist destination	

establishments close (less than 30 minutes) to the destination	season		
	Arrivals	2071	
	% of arrivals from abroad (international arrivals)	35 %	10 %
	Nights (overnight stays)	937	112
	Average daily rate per room in the peak season	50	20

11. FACTS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Facts and data on a sustainable tourism supply chain	<p>The main parties of the tourism supply chain are the hotel and guesthouses in the destination, which work closely with the municipality tourist centres and local people. The proposed cultural and natural trails prepared by the municipality are offered as a tourist product by tour operators and local business representatives. The tourist centre in Nesla, offering workshops and special events, is primary devoted to the traditional local crafts and cuisine. Tourism, like all other supply chains, operates through business-to-business relationships.</p> <p>Around 20% of the restaurants use local food.</p>
Facts and data demonstrating results to reduce the use of the cars in the destination	<p>30% Percentage of arrivals get reach the destination by train and other public transportation means</p> <p>A mark for a walking/hiking route in Chepun mountain is established in the spring of each year. All the tourist centers in the destination provide additional map of the route so the visitors are stimulated to explore the beauty of the nature on foot.</p>
Facts and data demonstrating results in waste reduction	<p>The average quantity of waste per year is 6000 tones.</p> <p>The percentage of the recycled waste increased in 2016 with 3,20 %</p>
Facts and data demonstrating results in decreasing water consumption	<p>Last year a 4,7 km long old asbestos cement plumbing was completely replaced by a new one, which significantly improved the water quality and reduced its consumption and water waste through the water main in the municipality. The replacement of another 3,5 km are planned for the next year.</p>
Facts and data demonstrating results in reducing energy consumption	<p>A campaign for replacing the existing public lighting with LED light has started and will be finalized in the middle of 2018.</p>

12. GENERAL STATISTICS

How many inhabitants?	The number of inhabitants of the town of Dragoman is 3361 and the residents of Dragoman municipality are 4850.
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