

The Cultural Heritage of the Great Prespa Region

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Abstract

The Great Prespa region is situated in the Balkan Peninsula and is divided between Albania, Macedonia and Greece. It includes the Great Prespa Lake and the surrounding beach and meadow, areas designated for agricultural use and the towns of Pusteci (formerly known as Liqenas) and Resen. This region is now part of the Trans-Boundary Biosphere Reserve 'Ohrid-Prespa Watershed. Great and Small Prespa lakes plus Ohrid Lake are included in this newly-approved UNESCO world Heritage Site, but for this paper, we are looking only at the area surrounding the Great Prespa Lake. It is critical for this area to be protected immediately, because of the overuse it has undergone in recent years.

While current levels of fauna are dangerously declining due to recent over-harvesting, this area has been known historically for its diverse natural and cultural features. Thus it is important to take drastic measures to reclaim the natural beauty immediately, including those areas currently covered by Prespa National Parks in Albania and Greece and Galichica and Pelisteri National Parks in Macedonia.

Due to many wars over the centuries, it exists a mixture of Albanian and Macedonian culture. The historical and architectural remaining, religious structures and artifacts testify the richness and uniqueness of the communities of Pustec and Resen have. The cultural heritage is now a key element designated for the development of the region's sustainable tourism development. This study was enhanced via the Geographic Info System (GIS) digital presentation showing the opportunities for natural and cultural tourism in both countries (Albania and Macedonia).

Keywords: *tourist potential, cultural heritage, Great Prespa Lake, Albania, Macedonia.*

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