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Plovdiv

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Ancient Stadium

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Ancient Stadium of Philippopolis was built in the beginning of 2nd century under Emperor Hadrian. It is approximately 240 meters long and 50 meters wide, could seat up to 30 000 spectators. Some of them came to Philippopolis particularly to witness its games.

The seats are made of solid marble blocks and the front parts are decorated with stylized lion paws.

Like the other imperial buildings for spectacular events, the Ancient Stadium of Philippopolis had its seats of honour preserved by inscriptions in the marble blocks. Seats with Greek inscriptions were found, proving the existence of special seats for members of higher public position.



 Did you know?

The main entrance of the Stadium was formed by masonry pillars decorated with marble pilasters and reliefs. The sign of it you will see in front of TOGETHER 2019 inscription (a must place for pictures that reminds about European Capital of Culture). The track was under nowadays Main pedestrian street and you can see in the foundations of 2 buildings more parts of the Stadium.

The inscriptions in the eastern area on the orthostats (stone slabs set at the base of the walls) attest that the emperor's box and seats for persons of high social status were nearby with the inscription "hymn singers" is a proof that there were seats reserved for people worshipping the imperial cult.



Ancient Theater

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Ancient Theater is one of the best-preserved in the World. Built I century A.D. with open-air spectator's area that includes 28 concentric rows of marble seats and it had a capacity of about 6 000 spectators. More than 2 000 years after its construction nowadays it is a stage for opera, jazz, rock and folklore concerts. Here, Plovdiv welcomes world-famous artists who fascinate the modern audience.




The theater was constructed on the southern slope of the three hills known as the Old Town. The stage building has 3 floors. On the 1st there are three symmetrically located gates. An underground vaulted passage begins from the center of the stage, goes under and leads out of the theater.



Another vaulted passage, passing under the central bank of seats of the top tier, connects the spectators' area of the theatre with the Three Hills area. Over the passage the box of the dignitaries was situated.

Some honorary inscriptions show that the building was used as the seat of the Thracian provincial assembly.

 Did you know?


Presumably, some of the fights with animals were held in the theatre, as remains of safety facilities in front of the first row are uncovered. These additions were set because of the visit of Emperor Caracalla to Philippopolis in 214 AD. Nowadays it hosts world famous artists concerts.



St. St. Constantine and Helena Church

The church "St. St. Constantine and Helena" is one of the oldest Christian churches in the city of Plovdiv. It is situated in the center of the old part of the town, right on the wall of the Acropolis. It is part of the Architectural complex "The Ancient Plovdiv."


In 304, at the place where the church is located today, the martyrs Severin and Memnos were beheaded for professing the Christian faith. Before them, 38 other martyrs of Plovdiv died because of their religion. According to the research of archaeologists and historians, the temple near Hisar Kapia was built about thirty years after the martyred death of Saint Severin and Saint Memnos and their 38 comrades and it was built in honor of the holy martyrs.





The temple is named after Emperor Constantine, depicted as a saint on parchment sheets, and his mother Elena. During the Otoman Rule the church was burned several times.

The newly built temple was one of the largest of its time 1836 and was fully painted in 1864 – 1866. The iconostasis was made entirely in the Baroque style, but it is especially unique for its gilt and polychrome decoration.

 Did you know?

Under the foundations of the oldest Orthodox church in Plovdiv, there was a Christian sanctuary from the IV century. And The miraculous icon of St. King Constantine and St. Queen Elena from the 16th century is kept here.



Ethnographic Museum

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The former house of Argir Kuyumzdhioglu is impressive: two floors from the front side and four floors from the back side. Each floor covers an area of 570 square meters, two large parlours, twelve rooms (all of them with unique wood-carved ceilings) and over 130 windows. The emphasis is placed on the imposing reception parlour on the second floor, arching and projecting above the portico towards the yard. The reception parlour is characterized by its oval central part and its beautifully shaped wooden ceiling, supported by a high and beautifully painted chamfer.

The western façade of the house is placed at the end of a large yard and it has a unique and impressive form copying the shape of a wave-shaped carrying yoke.



The eastern façade of the house was built upon the ancient fortified wall and it is an inseparable part of the ensemble of Hisar Kapiya. After the Bulgarian Independence, Kuyumdzhioğlu's heirs rented out the building and it acquired new functions. At the end of the 19th century, it was a boarding school for girls and later became a hat factory, a vinegar factory, and a flour warehouse.

 Did you know? 

In 2017, during restoration they found remains of the structures of an existing old hammam from the Ottoman period (XVI – beginning of the XVIII century). In situ, three halls of the hammam, consecutively located one after another, were identified.



Hisar Kapiya

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The first gate at this place was most likely built in the 2nd century during the Roman rule of ancient Plovdiv. In the 6th century, during the time of Emperor Justinian, the fortification system of the city was strengthened, part of which was the gate on the site of Hissar Kapia. It was among the 3 entrances to the city and situated on a Roman street that used to enter the city, passed through the Maritsa river and led to Constantinople. Some claim that there was an Arc de Triomphe in this place.

Today, only the foundations remain of the ancient gate, and it acquired its current appearance between the 11th and 14th centuries. A construction technique was used that is typical for



the architecture of the Second Bulgarian State: above the arch of the gate, each stone is surrounded by pieces of red brick and joined with white mortar.

Hisar Kapiya lost its importance as a defense facility after the invasion of the Ottoman Empire. In the area of Hisar Kapia, the preserved walls of the former fortress walls were used as massive foundations for the construction of today's Renaissance houses in the last period of Ottoman rule of the city.

 Did you know? 

A legend tells of Philip of Macedon, who did not keep his promise to his sister to name the city after the one who entered it first. His sister Heisar was first, but Philip named the city after himself, and the gate after his sister.



The Agora of Philippopolis

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The Main square or The Forum (Agora) of Philippopolis occupied an area of 20 dca and has always been the commercial, administrative and religious centre of the city. It was also a place for debates, meetings, holidays and state affairs. The Odeon is situated in its Northeast corner. It has 300-350 seats and it used to serve as the seat of the city council and as a theater too. The Ancient Library was not only as a place to store manuscripts and scrolls, but also a place for education, literary readings, discussions and public speeches.

The public buildings, dominate over the rest of the buildings used for the needs of urban governance and other manifestations.



Three entrances provided access to the streets with powerful columns in Doric order. The portico around the area was made of marble with a marble arcade of free-standing columns in the Roman and Corinthian order.

Some documents recall for the existing of a Treasury. At the complex some inscriptions, related to the religious and administrative life of the town are found, along with a piece of an invitation card for a performance of gladiator fights.

 Did you know? 

During communist period it was a place parades. A high tribune was built for each holiday for the leaders of the Communist Party, who greeted the passing citizens built in formations by workplace or schools.



Bishop's Basilica

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In Late Antiquity the Bishop's Basilica was at the center of public life. Its dimensions, decoration and its central location near the ancient city's forum indicate the existence of a sizable and influential Christian community the city. A revealed coin of Emperor Licinius (308-324) indicates that it was among the first basilicas built in the Roman Empire after Christianity was legalized, in 313. It has impressive architecture and interior - adorned with columns with Christian symbols, murals and lavish mosaic floors. The mosaics are in two layers and have a total area of 2000 sq.m.

The Discovery Zone is perfect for children and their parents, here you will learn about the history through fun hands-on activities.



 Did you know? 

In the Bishop's Basilica you can Adopt a Bird. Cultural heritage is a source of pride but also requires responsibility by all. Active citizens and representatives of businesses in Plovdiv established the Friends of the Basilica Foundation. The mission is to turn the Bishop's Basilica in a lively cultural center, attracting children and adults, locals and visitors from Bulgaria and the world. Anyone can choose between 100 mosaics of birds and adopt one through donating funds.

The Adopt a Bird initiative aims to motivate the business community and general public to join efforts and raise funds to support the long-term functioning of the Basilica complex and its community programs.