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Great Synagogue of Edirne

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Edirne used to be an enclave for one of the biggest Sephardic communities of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century. 13 local synagogues in Edirne completely burned down with a large fire in August, 1905. The Great Synagogue was built in 1906 due to the edict of Sultan Abdulhamit II for all Edirne Jewish population, nearly 20,000 people remained without synagogues. The synagogue was designed and built by the French architect, France Depré, who got his inspiration from the Synagogue of Vienna.

Known as the largest synagogue in Europe and the third largest in the world, the structure was actively used until the 1960s, when the congregation was densely located.





The synagogue complex, which has an area that can accommodate 600 men and 300 women, consists of 3 buildings: the Synagogue building, the Midrash building (Rabbi's lodging-outbuilding) and the Administrative building, which have not been completed due to the outbreak of the Balkan War. Regarding several sources the administrative building was designed as a "school" with workshops and exhibition halls where various art classes (painting, ceramics, calligraphy, etc.) can be given.

 Did you know?

The Great Synagogue of Edirne is open to visitors regularly and is one of the main venues of culture and art events organized in Edirne.



Complex of Sultan Bayezid II EDIRNE


The Complex of Sultan Bayezid II Health Museum is one of the most important monumental heritage of Edirne. Built by Bayezid-II in 1484-1488, the complex is covered with a close to hundred domes.

It is one of the most important institutions of health, social, educational and religious of its period. It is spread over a wide area with its medical madrasah, imaret, hospital, hammam, kitchen, food stores and other sections, and it reflects perfectly the social care understanding of the period.

The Healing house was converted into the Health Museum by Trakya University and in 2004. it was awarded by the Council of Europe with the "European Museum Award".



The hospital, formerly named Darussifa, is the first in the world in terms of being a central hospital of the region, similar ones began to be made in the West only 200 years later. In the hospital, the deep-rooted understanding of music therapy, together with the water sound, were successfully applied in the treatment of physical and mental illnesses. The complex was also an important center for eye treatment.


 Did you know?

A different maqam was played and sung for each disease. Rast maqam was played for convulsions and paralysis, Iraqi maqam was played for nervous people, Rehavi maqam was played for headaches, Zengule maqam was played for heart diseases, and Isfahan maqam was played to open the mind and increase intelligence.



Karaagac

EDIRNE

In the 17th century, Karaagac was where summerhouses and farmhouses of Greek and Turkish families were located. Later, in the 19th century, European families and Consulate members were living in the neighborhood. 

With the construction of the train station in the 19th century, Karaagac became one of the entertainment and attraction centers of Edirne. The station was a major stop for the famous Simplon Orient Express train, which operated between Paris and Istanbul from 1883 to 1977. Due to this railway connection, Karaagac has developed in a very short time both socially, economically and culturally. It turned from a small town into a modern city and they started to call it "Little Paris" due to its colorful and lively texture.



The train station's architecture combines traditional Ottoman and European styles, making it a unique cultural landmark. Nowadays, the place is used by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Trakya University.

The symbol of Karaagac is the Lausanne Monument, which was built in memory of The Treaty of Lausanne. It consists of three high columns: symbolizing Anatolia, Thrace and Karaagac and a young girl holding a dove - symbol of peace and democracy.

 Did you know?

After the Balkan wars Together with the village of Bosna, it became a region that could not be shared between countries and today is one of the two Turkish settlements in East Thrace situated on the right bank of the river Meriç.



Kaleici

EDIRNE

At the period when Edirne was conquered by the Ottomans, Kaleici was surrounded by walls built during the Roman period. However, these walls began to fall from the second half of the 19th century and today their vague traces remain. In the 19th century various factors such as Russian invasions, Greek and Bulgarian occupations, earthquakes and fires, and epidemic diseases have devastated Edirne and erased much of its history.

As a result of a fire in 1905, the neighborhood Kaleici was severely damaged. The historical and cultural texture of the ancient district - a space for living together with tolerance - which dates back to the Middle Ages, has been almost completely lost and the social fabric has been disrupted.



Kaleici has been redesigned to be added to the urban texture, which is taking into account the initiatives of Dilaverbey, the Governor of Edirne at the time, and the experiences of the fire of 1905 with the cooperation of French architects.

Many of the traditional Kaleici houses that have survived to the present day have been restored and converted into boutique hotels, restaurants and cafes, giving visitors a chance to experience the area's rich history and architecture of the site.

 Did you know? 

Kaleici in Turkish means “the Old town” or “inside the castle”. There you can find some small craft shops for Edirne’s famous wooden painted boxes.




Meric River and Bridge

EDİRNE 

The Meric River, also called Maritsa or Evros, is one of the largest rivers born in the Balkans. It forms part of the border between Turkey and Greece. The Meric Bridge, built over the Meric River, overlooks the magnificent view of the river. It's construction began under the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839), but was completed in 1843 by his successor Abdülmecid I (1839–1861).

In the middle of the bridge there is a marble viewing balcony and a marble Pavilion in the opposite side. In the Inscription Pavilion, there is a mural painting that rotates on its own axis depicting the houses on the riversides of Edirne. Nowadays, the bridge it's the perfect spot for walking and beautiful photos at sunset.





The "Protocol House", where located just on the banks of the Meric River and Bridge, directly opposite the insatiable view of Edirne and the Selimiye Mosque that crowns it, is one of the most visited places where visitors to Edirne come to get "a sweet peace" from Edirne accompanied with a cup of tea or a foam coffee.

 Did you know? 

The Meric Bridge has also been the subject of many poems, songs, and works of literature over the years. There is also a legend about the Meric River which is rumored to have caused the end of a legendary love story in which two lovers could not meet. It has been the subject of fairy tales with both its majesty and flow.



Bulgarian Orthodox Churches

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The Church of St. Konstantin and Elena is a historical Bulgarian Orthodox church located in Edirne. The church, named after Constantine the 1st and his mother Helena, was built in less than 7 months in 1869 and is one of the classic examples of Eastern Orthodox church architecture of the period.

After the Second Balkan War in 1913, when the Bulgarians were expelled from the Turkish region in Thrace, the church lost its congregation and was abandoned to its fate.

Although the church was neglected for many years, it was restored with the help of the Bulgarian government and opened to visitors in 2008.



Church of St. Georgi - According to some sources, the great prophet St. Georgi, who became governor, was sentenced to be killed four times and resurrected three times for inviting the Roman emperor to Christianity. By order of Sultan II Abdulhamit, a church was built in memory of St. Georgi in 1880 in the Kiyık district, where Bulgarian citizens lived extensively. People also call it the "Church of Bulgarians". This place, which has hosted many minorities throughout Ottoman history, became a ruin in the 1940s due to neglect and because its congregation migrated when the Balkan War happened. Following the restoration works, the church was reopened to worship in 2004 and an ethnographic museum was opened on its balcony in 2008. On the second floor, there is a library with more than 3000 Bulgarian books.



Balkan History Museum

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Hidirlik Bastion it's the largest bastion in Edirne, built due to the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78. There are 18 artillery rooms, a 120-meter tunnel and 4 shelter rooms. In the First Balkan War, which took place in 1912, it was used as the headquarters by Sükrü Pasha and the defense of Edirne was managed from here during 155 days. It has lost its importance due to the developing ball technology after the Balkan Wars.

The Hidirlik Bastion, which was put on its feet by the restoration works initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2011, currently serves as a Museum of Balkan History. In the museum, subjects such as “Sultans passing through Edirne”, “Ottoman architecture in the Balkans”,



“the Balkans under Ottoman rule”, “Conquest of Edirne”, “Commanders passing through Edirne”, “Diaries of the Balkan Wars”, “Dressing and feeding at the front”, and “Epidemic diseases in war, migrants” are handled with visual and audio objects prepared using the latest technology.

In the museum, where the history of the city is revived with models, firearms such as cannons, rifles and pistols reflecting the Early Republican Period, war equipment with cannonballs, military clothing reflecting the period and wax sculptures of important figures that add value to Edirne are exhibited.


 Did you know? 

If you want to feel (just for a moment) what it's like to be at war, just enter the 120 meter tunnel.



Edirne Bazaars

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During the period of the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century, Edirne was one of the richest and most developed provinces in terms of bazaars and inns. Although Edirne bazaars are much smaller than the most famous Turkish bazaar - Kapalıçarşı in Istanbul, visiting them is an excellent opportunity to see experience shopping in a genuinely Turkish style. The most well-known of these bazaars are Ali Pasha Bazaar, Bedesten and Arasta of Selimiye. 

Ali Pasha Bazaar

Conveniently located along pedestrianized Saraclar Street, Ali Pasha Bazaar is that was built by Sinan the Architect in 1569, by the order of Herseki Semiz Ali Pasha, one of the last grand

viziers of Sultan Suleyman The Magnificent. One of the most active trade centers of the 16th and 17th centuries, the bazaar is work of art with 300 meters of length and 6 gateways.

Unlike the other two historical bazaars of Edirne, this one has no apparent connection to a mosque. There are some claims that it was built to gain revenues for the construction of a mosque in Kirklareli. Certainly, the bazaar served as a place that united the tradesmen selling valuable goods under one roof to ensure their protection. According to Evliya Chelebi, the fact that 100 watchmen patrol the bazaar each night is evidence of the value of the goods sold. Another feature of Ali Pasha Bazaar is that its walls are made of red and white stone. Here, the Turkish flag is symbolized as a color.





There are 130 shops in Ali Pasha Bazaar, flooded with domestic and foreign visitors today. Initially it hosted all the jewellery shops in the city, but today there are very few merchants selling valuable goods such as gold and silver. Traditional souvenirs from Edirne are sold at the bazaar as fruit-shaped soap unique for Edirne. The fruit-shaped soap is not used to wash but to decorate and add sweet aroma to interiors. Other typical souvenirs of Edirne are the small brooms with a small mirror attached that are known to bring good luck. The broom represents purity and the mirror - beauty.

Ali Pasha Bazaar was burnt down completely by the fire in 1992. It was reopened in 1997 following the faithful restoration of the structure, also taking into account the needs of our time.



Bedesten

The structure which is located next to the Old Mosque, opposite the Rüstem Pasha Caravanserai, was built by order of Chelebi Sultan Mehmet to yield income for the Old Mosque. It is one of the most interesting examples of the bazaars of the Early Ottoman Period in standing and usable condition. Evliya Chelebi mentioned Bedesten, which means "the place where valuable goods are bought and sold" as "Diamonds and jewels worth Egyptian treasure dazzle in the cupboards of rich merchants, 60 watchmen patrol were waiting for the bazaar."

Bedesten maintained its status as an important shopping center until the 18th century. The building, which was restored in 1965, is still used as a covered bazaar today.

Arasta of Selimiye

The Arasta in the south-west of the Selimiye Mosque was built to yield income for the mosque. Moreover, the Arasta that has 124 shops, from an architectural point of view, it serves as a retaining wall that supports the mosque platform in the southwest direction. It was probably built by Sinan the Architect, . Evliya Chelebi marks the place as “Kavaflar Bazaar (where tradesmen selling shoes, belts and wallets are located.)”. Under the Prayer Dome in the Arasta, the shopkeepers prayed every morning before opening their shops and took an oath of righteous trade.

Today, shops selling touristic goods are the majority in Arasta, one of the important touristic regions of Edirne.

