

Bulgaria 2018

An Amazing Adventure

Diana W. Patton



I highly recommend the Ibis Heathrow Hotel if you need a room when you arrive 7 am in the morning & you can't connect to the only flight to Bulgaria at 8:05 in time (you can't; allow at least 2 hrs to get from Terminal 2 to Terminal 5, through Security and all, miles of walking, literally, plus a bus and tube). The Ibis is reasonable for London; \$160. USA, very comfortable, aesthetic, and has a great onsite restaurant. Take a Hopper bus there.



After I'd slept a few hours I had an enjoyable walk around a few blocks. Note the clutch store and "Just eat" sign above, the dble decker bus & bicyclist, the plane leaving Heathrow below. It took me several shots to get the plane just right (ie several departures) No fly tipping confused me, as we have a joke in the USA about tipping cows, but flies? Asked my waitress at night, but she didn't know what it meant (she was new, from Poland). At home I googled and Fly Tipping is dumping garbage in bags anywhere so as to avoid paying garbage disposal rates. Travel is indeed broadening!





Ani (Anita Dancheva), Cveta's best friend, who I'd met at Mike & Cveta's wedding back in 2010, met me at Sofia Airport (3 hrs 20min London to Sofia) and we drove perhaps 4 or 5 hours to Varna, on the Black Sea. We ate at a BarBQ restaurant Ani knew. So I had my first taste of delicious Bulgarian food. Michael and Cveta were already there with Cveta's parents, Mariana and Cristo. We had a beautiful apartment Cveta had arranged from AirBnB "Blue Sea". Ani and I were roomies. We had 2 nights there. This was Friday 9/15/18.

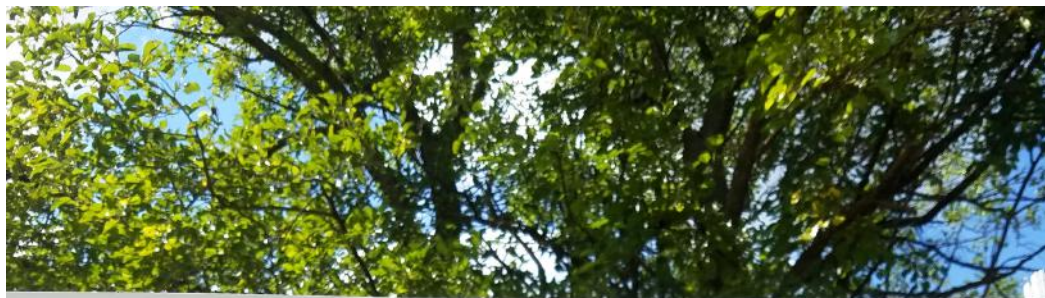


I gave out the gifts I'd brought for them all (paintings, books, and a necklace for Ani plus she chose the pink flower ptng. Marianna wanted the cat picture, and I had 3 others they shared. We had some dinner. The next day we all went to the picturesque town (of course they all are!) of Rugachevu where Ani's cousin Ivailo and his wife Julio have a weekend home. They led us to where we went next.



We were busy until after 10 or 11, going to Queen Marie's Palace and her Botanical Garden which is also enlarged and an official botanical garden where Cveta was interested in a lot of the plants. Lots of climbing up rough stone streets past stalls of different kinds of goods to get there, and then more climbing up and down in the gardens and up and in the palace (one room of which had an art gallery).





UNIVERSITY OF PLANT GARDENS

1923



БЪЛГАРСКО БОТАНИЧЕСКО ДРУЖЕСТВО

Българското ботаническо Дружество чества своята 95-та годишнина

Bulgarian Botanical Society celebrates its 95th anniversary



1923 год., група учени-ентузиасты биологията, които усещат нуждата от комуникация и информиране, се организират и поставят Българското ботаническо Дружество в името на проучване на растителността на Балканския полуостров. Благодарим то ва на инициаторите Николай Стефанов, Дакин Петков, Иван Арнаудов, Борис Ахтаров, Вацлав Штерный, Тома Георгиев...



The Bulgarian Botanical Society is one of the first societies in the field of natural sciences. On November 7, 1923, a group of young and enthusiastic Bulgarian biologists, who experienced natural need for communication and information exchange, had joined their efforts in organizing the Bulgarian Botanical Society in the name of a common goal: investigation of the flora and vegetation in Bulgaria. We owe this inspiration to such prominent botanists like Nikolay Stojanov, Boris Stefanov, Daki Jordanov, Stefan Petkov, Ivan Urumov, Nikola Arnaudov, Bozhimir Davidov, Boris Ahtarov, Vaclav Štěrny, Toma Georgiev...



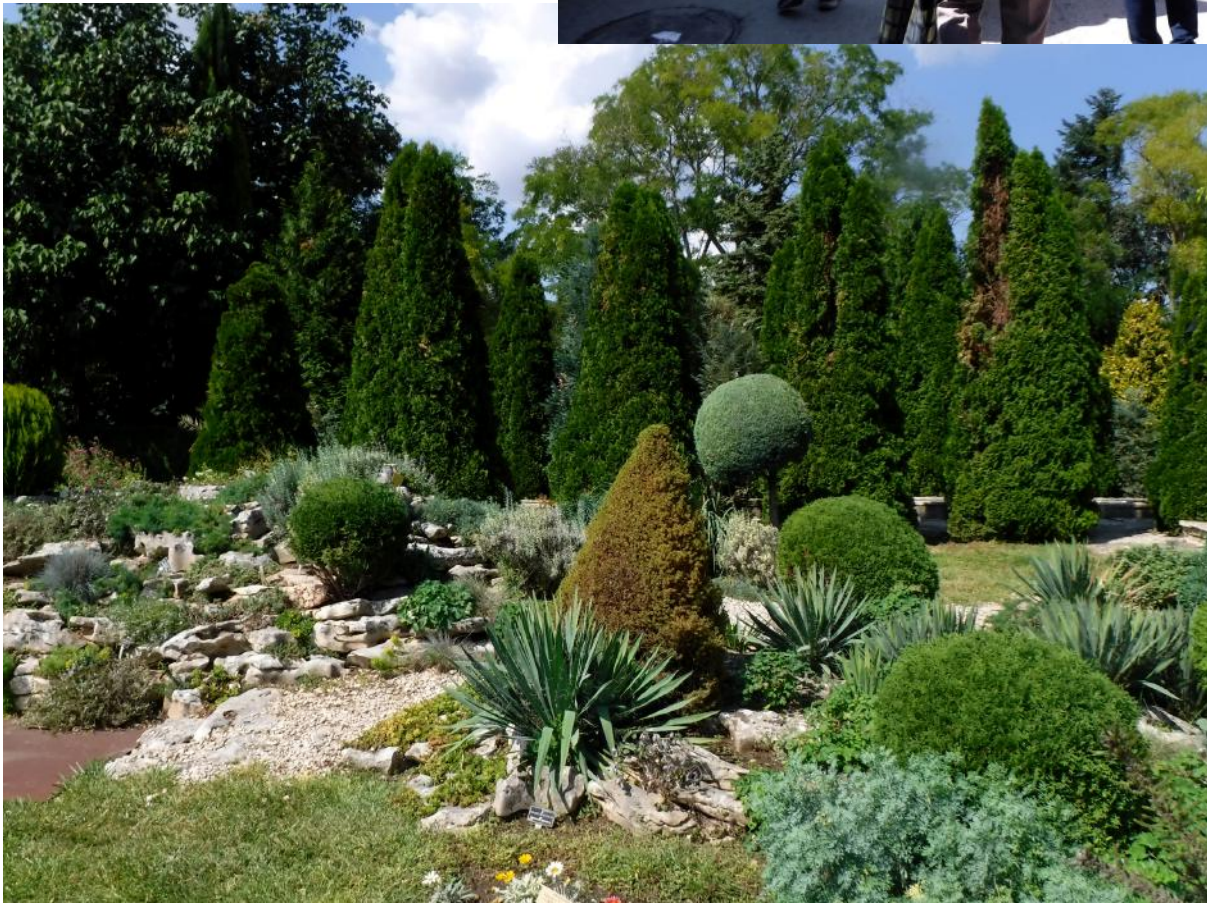
Дружеството започва да функционира официално от 21.12.1923, когато е издадена заповедта на Министерството

Officially, the Society started functioning from December 21, 1923 with the publication of the Ministry of Public Education's





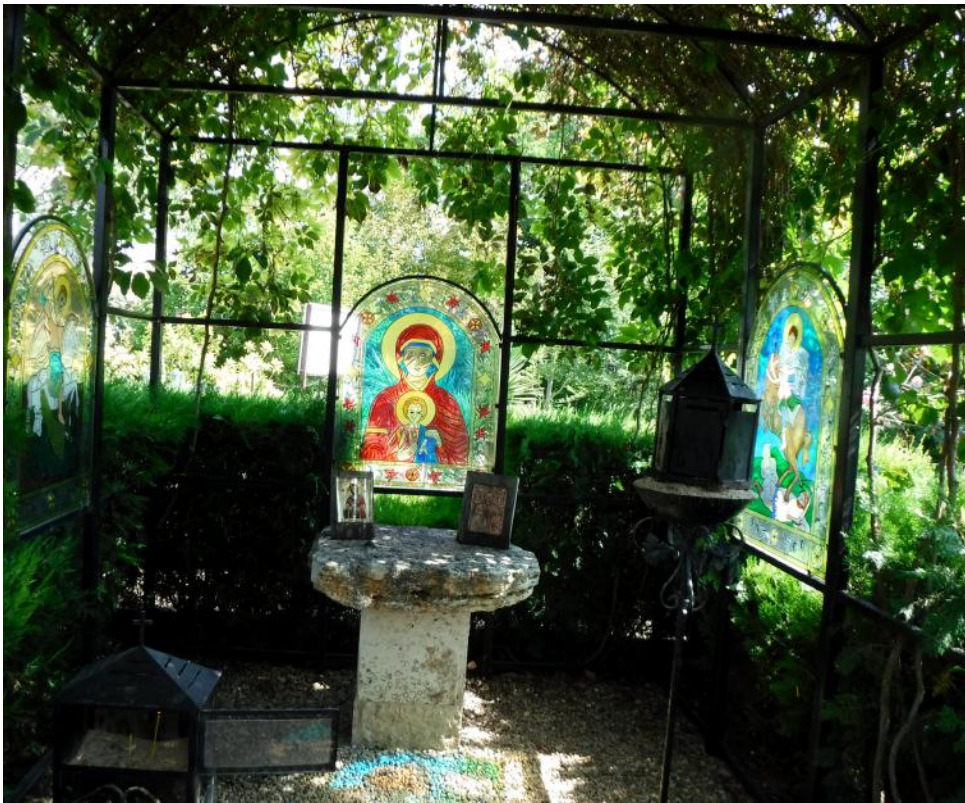
From one of the stalls I later bought a set of pink nesting dolls I bought for Jillian, and Mike got a great cap. A **matryoshka doll** (**Russian**: матрёшка, IPA: [mɐˈtrʲɔʂkə] (listen[ⓘ])), also known as a **Russian nesting doll**, **stacking dolls**, or **Russian doll**,^[1] is a set of wooden **dolls** of decreasing size placed one inside another. The name "matryoshka" (матрёшка), literally "little matron", is a **diminutive** form of Russian female first name "Matryona" (Матрёна) or "Matriosha".^{[2][[]*full citation needed*[]]} A set of matryoshkas consists of a wooden figure, which separates, top from bottom, to reveal a smaller figure of the same sort inside, which has, in turn, another figure inside of it, and so on. The first Russian nested doll set was made in 1890 by **Vasily Zvyozdochkin** from a design by **Sergey Malyutin**, who was a folk crafts painter at **Abramtsevo**.





Constantly walking, which is fine, and climbing/walking up hill on uneven smooth stones, which was not so fine! Cveta and I, I'm on one of the Queen's thrones, of which there are a couple as she was given some. The gardens are set on a steep hillside and descend in six terraces to the sea, s Supposedly one terrace for each of the queen's children. Next page Cveta's mom Marianna and Dad Cristo, and Mike pose with us. Far below is the beach and the Black Sea.



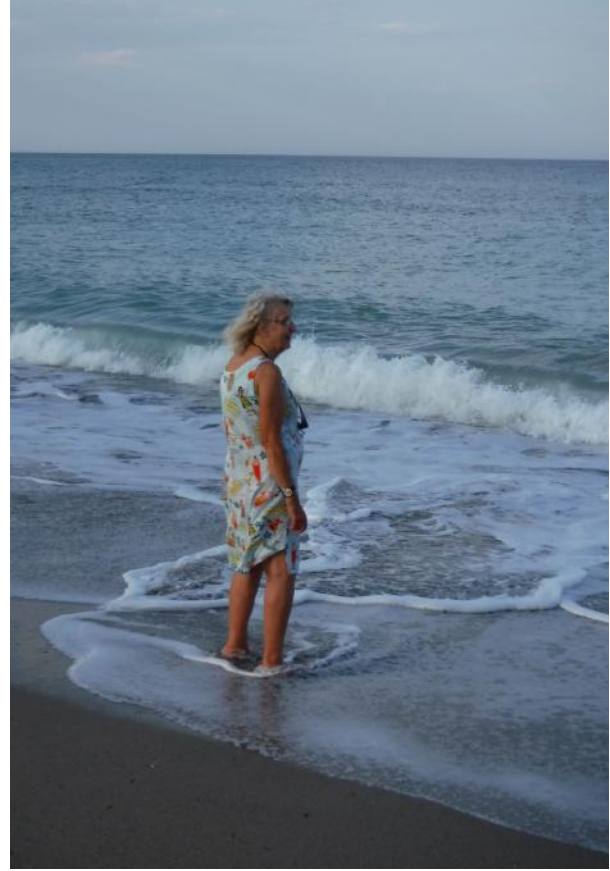




НИКОЛАЙ ЯНАКИЕВ
"ПРОЛЕТНИ ЛЪЧИ"
NIKOLAY YANAKIEV
SPRING WATERS





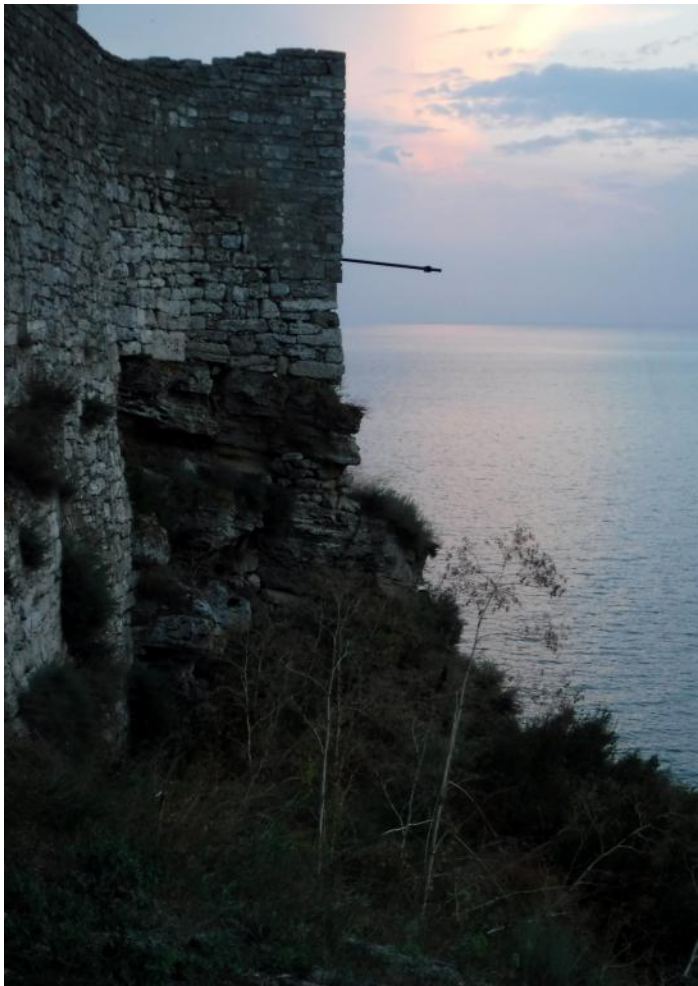


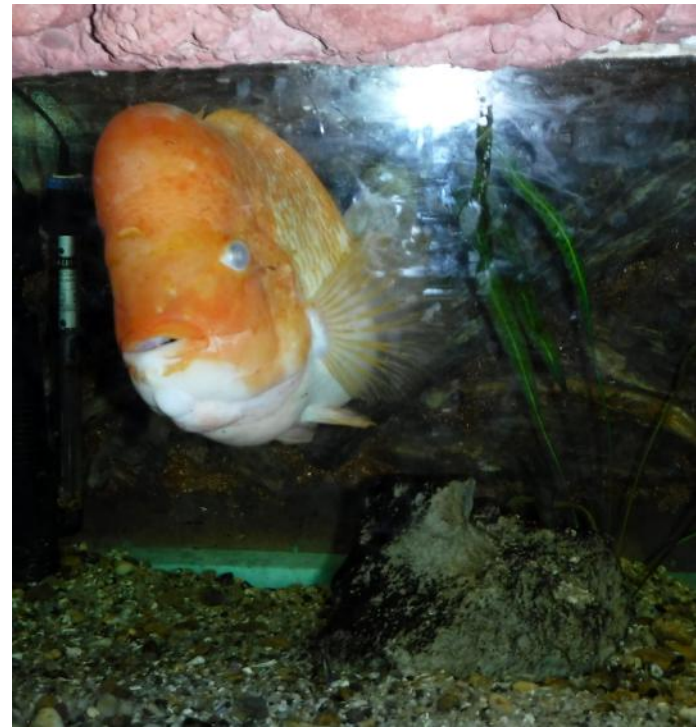


Somehow that same day we went to a country fair where I watched and listened to groups of women/girl singers in traditional costumes of different regions and the others tasted different foods (I had some, but wanted to see the show), as well as a quick trip to get our feet wet in the Black Sea. We ended up at fairly newly discovered ruins at Cape Kaliakra, ruins so early there is talk of the Golden Fleece having been there. Ended with late dinner in the restaurant in this park.

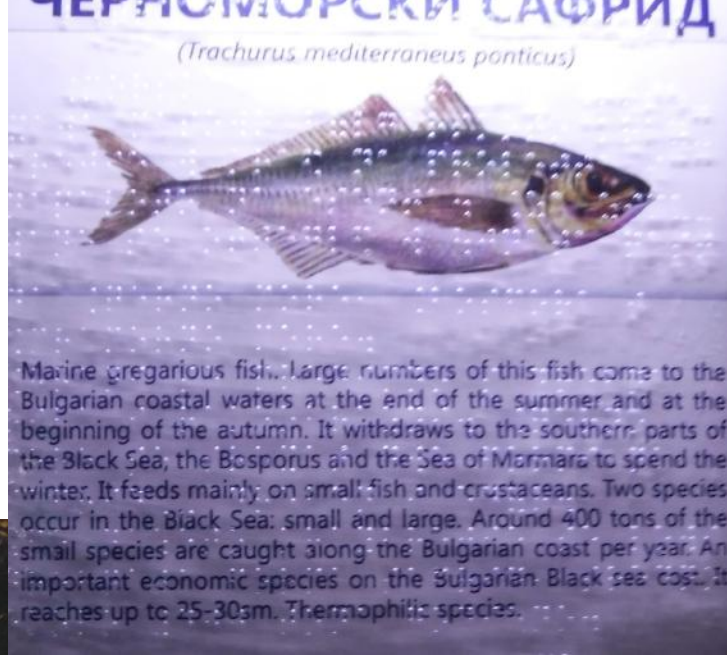








Basically you enter a room with the lady who takes the admission (I think it was 4 lev or \$2.40), That room also has photos with some of the history of the aquarium and shelves with some specimens. One tiny corner has shells and some souvenirs, but nothing with Varna Aquarium on it, no tee shirt I could buy. I'll design one and Gard knows how to make a decal which can be ironed on a tee shirt. So my only souvenir of the Bulgarian aquarium scene is I paid 1.5 lev which was pressed into a small scene of the aquarium, from the one lev coin. From that room there is a hallway with small tanks. Two rooms are entered from that hallway and both have specimens in tanks, skeletons, and some fishes



in tanks, including the handsome orange fish you see on the preceding page (looks like a garibaldi, but isn't). Finally there is a very large hall which has a central room behind the scenes, so basically you walk around it and see the larger tanks. Lots of Black Sea fishes, some cichlids, a sting ray (the hog face one), small Silver Shark (not really a shark), some turtles, Koi and carp, and in the hallway, smaller fishes, like tetra, neons, guppies, and more. A few labels were in Braille more in English

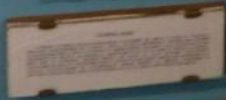
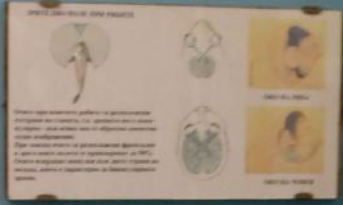
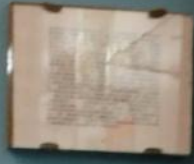


I met an English woman from Dorset, England, who had her Bulgarian grandson in tow. Literally the only English/American tourist I saw/heard the whole time. Bulgaria is beautiful and the Bulgarians friendly and the prices are so reasonable/cheap. Now is the time to visit, for sure! Most people don't speak English (why should they?) but I think it is now being taught in some schools. Guides do, & larger hotel receptionists






СЕТИВНИ ОРГАНИ ORGANS OF SENSES



ЧЕРВЕНОУШАЯ КОСТЕНОЖИВА
(*Trachemys scripta elegans*)



The red eared slider lives in standing and slow-flowing basins in South America. A very common and adaptable species. The menu of red eared sliders is diverse and includes various small water animals and fish. Plants are also part of its food. It has red figures behind its eyes and hence its name.





Marianna is rightfully proud of her garden.. Rt:she shows a few of the tomatoes. She has veggies & flowers, showed me photos on her Ipad of the garden in August tho' it still blooms. 3rd floor apt,wood stove, view from above





9/18 from Gabrovo to Stokite. I was one day in Hotel Orlovets 9/17 then 9/18 in the mountain house of Cveta's Aunt DeeDee (Diana) and Uncle, then back to Gabrovo to Hotel Orlovets for the 19th and 20th. While I waited for Uncle to pick us up I painted in Marianna's garden (was in her apt. first; Cveta and Marianna were hanging wash up on the fire escape. Bulgarians have washing machines in homes, but dry wash on lines on balconies, makes it picturesque). Anyway, I had my painting kit that I've carried all over the world starting with Africa in 2001, and postcard size paper. Cveta liked the one on the left & Marianna the tomato one so I gave them those. I got to sketch or paint several times, especially when they climbed really high; I'd sit half way up and paint.





Cveta's uncle drove us to Stokite, a village in the municipality of Sevlievo, in Gabrovo Province, in northern central Bulgaria, high up in the Balkan Mountains. We were in the upmost house of theirs, a beautiful chalet. Left Aunt Diana, Marianna, Cveta. Below: I sketch Above: 1st thing we saw, horses on the road



It kind of blew our minds that the first thing we saw when we arrived at the upmost house (of 3 they built) that the (hobbled so they couldn't really run too far away, & would go home)first thing we saw was the horses. This place is so lbeautiful; I could have stayed & painted and written for days.Cveta used to visit summers and so enjoyed being back. She picked & arranged a lovely wildflower bouquet.



Me, picking grapes at the lowest of their houses, in the actual village. Then you ride up to the highest home.





Food, food, food...and all of it good. Try this, have some of this, you'll love this...and I did. I'm sorry the photos above are blurry and/or dark because you see Aunt Diana, DeeDee for short, which is what Jillian calls me!, Cveta's uncle, and his mom, who is 84 and the shepherdess, really, for she milks the goats (there are also two sheep). I had fresh goat's milk in my coffee the next morning. Cveta constantly translated for Mike & me, but I was able to make jokes and we understood each other and laughed and laughed and it was great. I also tried the typical

Bulgarian drink you're supposed to have with salads, rakia (ракия) which brandy they made on the farm from plums this year. Also good.





The **village of Stokite** is located in [North-Central Bulgaria](#). It is part of [Sevlievo Municipality](#), [Gabrovo District](#). It is situated in a mountainous area, at 403 meters above sea level.

The village serves as one of the entrances to National Park "Central Balkan" and is a starting point to many peaks and interesting places in the Stara Planina Mountain.

In Bulgarian (Native transliteration):

[Село Стоките](#)

Region: [North-Central planning region of Bulgaria](#)

District: [Gabrovo district](#)

Municipality: [Sevlievo municipality](#)

Latitude: 42.8670006

Longitude: 25.0669994

Altitude: from 300 to 499

Distance by air to the capital city Sofia:

144.283km

Area Size: 132.951km²

Population: 215 people

(31.12.2013)**Cveta's aunt**

just retired from

teaching, altho' she had

to go back to Grabovo

at 5 am the next day

to substitute. They have

an apartment in

Grabovo.









Above: breakfast the next morning Uncle, Marianna, and Granny had already eaten in the lower house; they just kept us company while we ate. Uncle made coffee (twice) & Granny had milked the goat (which milk was in the Coke bottle) I had a cup of it + 2 ½ cups with coffee. Rt:my room





Top left: Gerry's apt. great dinner there Tues. Night, friend of Cveta's from an English course years ago. Gerry had gifts for me! Luckily I brought them wine! Above: my solo tour...every where, from early morn to late night people sit at cafes and talk. No cell phones; they talk.

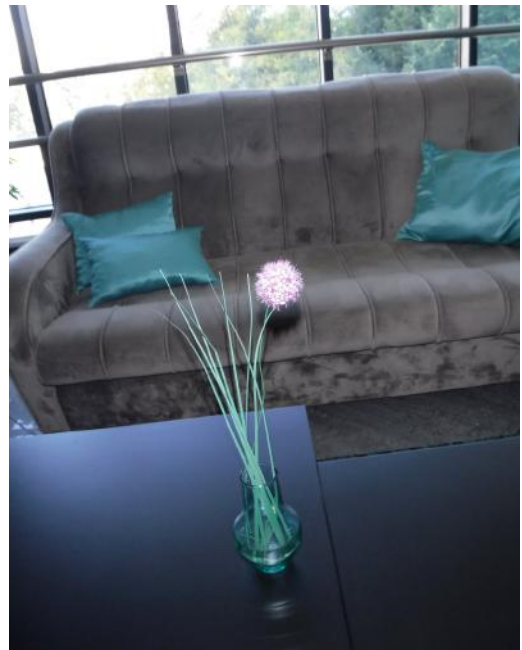


My hotel in Gabrovo- outstanding. About \$35. a night with big breakfast, elevator, reception spoke English. Easy to walk all over. **Какво ви предлага хотел Орловец ? Hotel Orlovet's Gabrovo Huge breakfast on 6th floor with great views.**



Michael and I at Billa, the supermarket quite close to my wonderful Hotel Orlovets. That hotel is within walking distance of so much of Gabrovo including the Todorova's home, the Museum of Humor and Satire, the Billa, and much of the most beautiful section of Gabrovo, including the church I visited and that great yellow Baroque home.

You also see two more artistic parts of Hotel Orlovets. Everything was chosen with an eye to beauty. And...the free breakfast was served on the top, 6th floor, with interesting views in every direction from the outdoor terrace.





One night we visited Cveta's long time friend (they went to English speaking classes together) Geri Todorova and her husband. She served an amazing dinner which we all loved. Note the serving bar and cabinets that her husband designed and installed. Also the tiny balcony garden they have. BTW their apt. building is so colorful and I was able to use it as a landmark when I wandered on my own. Mike pointed out that I could see it from way downtown.





HISTORY

Gabrovo is a town with a unique history. It originates from the conversion of Tarnovo in the capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire in the 12th century and the consequent importance of the way through the Shipka Pass. According to legend Racho Smith is the founder of Gabrovo, from his anvil is gone livelihood of the village. A village of free and skilled in warfare people who take the security of patya. Te had the privilege to pay less taxes, to retain ownership of their land and produced by them. Locals staged his life as an integral part of the Bulgarian state, built a church, cloister and linked its existence with the passing relics of St Petka, the cult that is maintained to this day. The conquest of the country by the Ottoman Turks changed radically their livelihoods and almost no impact on their belonging to the Orthodox lifestyle and their habits. They continued to guard the pass, because of which belonged to the paramilitary squads dervetnzhiiite as already called keepers of the way. With the funds raised from the idea of Gabrovo Vasil Aprilov in Gabrovo is open the first new Bulgarian secular school, which became a model for education in the Bulgarian lands.





Sign above says "Insurance Broker"
Once you know the Cyrillic alphabet
some of the words you can figure
out, Broker is the same, but not
insurance.

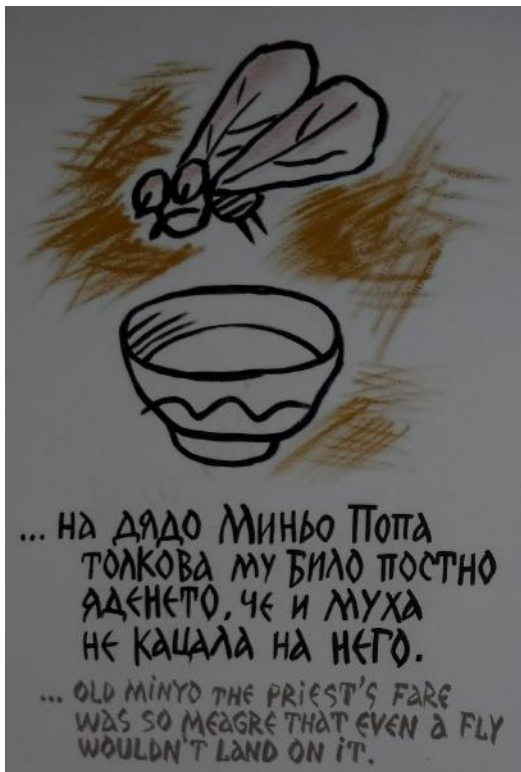


Morning 9/19 Cveta had
more dental work; Mike had
shower at my hotel and was
reading/relaxing, but he
started me out on my solo
exploration (walking) of the
beautiful city of Gabrovo. I
had a glorious time just
wandering. Lit a candle for
my mom, dad, and Ron in
this church bought tiny
icons, as well.









Later in the afternoon 9/19 we all made a tour of the famous House of Humour and Satire in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, an exposition of traditional local humour art, including cartoons, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and verbal humour. The House combines features of a museum and an art gallery. Aunt DeeDee joined us (we really get along well, even with the language discrepancy).





**The Gates
Central Park, New York, USA, 1979-2005**

The installation in Central Park was completed with the blooming of the fabric panels on February 12, 2005. *The Gates* could be seen from far away through the leafless branches of the trees. The grid pattern of the city surrounding Central Park was reflected in the rectangular structure of the commanding saffron colored poles while the serpentine design of the winding paths and the organic forms of the bare branches of the trees were mirrored in the continuously changing rounded and sensual movements of the free-flowing fabric panels in the wind.

The Museum is awesome! Four floors...below you see the lovely lady who took our admission (only about \$3.) and actually guided us around the whole first floor, having to do with humor/satire about Grabovo. The other floors had art, a special floor Cristo Retrospective-Gard I had walked thru Central Park when the Gates were up. Cveta discovered Cristo's mom's name was Cveta Dimitrova! Also exhibit of Socialist video games! McDonalds game is at left.





I'd seen this fantastic restaurant overlooking the Yantra (Bulgarian: Янтра on my solo exploration in the morn,so we had an afternoon beverage break after the Museum of Humour Satire,Cveta, Mike, Cristo Marianna, DeeDee, and I.My creamy minty mango drink was delicious.





Cveta had arranged a walking tour our first afternoon in Plovdiv, of the Old Town. Our guide spoke excellent English really knew his history. We walked up and down uneven rocky streets. Rents are high, houses expensive in this magical section of Plovdiv.

Plovdiv is the oldest continually inhabited city in Europe.

While it's hard to summarize 6,000 years of visible history, an obvious highlight is the enormous, partially unearthed Roman stadium below the main street. Just 10 paces away, the 600-year-old Dzhumaya Mosque still serves the Turkish families that stayed behind after the collapse of Ottoman rule.

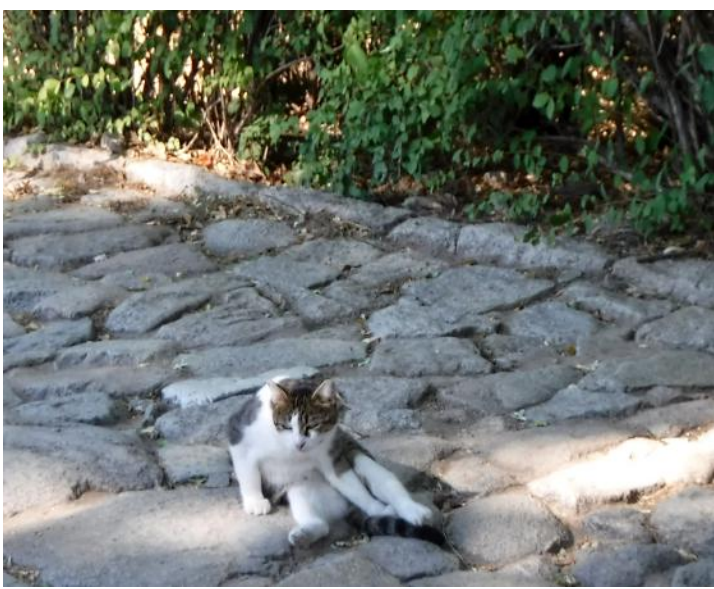
Plovdiv's old town, with its winding cobbled streets and elegant revival-era townhouses, is perfect for a leisurely evening stroll.

Commanding the heights above the old town is the ruined fortress of Nebet Tepe.

Thracian tribesmen were the first to establish a settlement on this site, and the fortress they built was further developed by Macedonians and then Romans.

When the Ottomans pushed their imperial frontiers beyond Plovdiv, they partly demolished the fortress so it couldn't be used by Bulgarian rebels -- yet the ruins that remain are magical, especially at night.





Sometimes billed as the most beautiful house in the old town Plovdiv Regional Ethnographic museum is the second largest specialized museum of this type in Bulgaria. It is an acknowledged scientific-educational institution and an attractive center for cultural tourism. The museum was established in 1917 and since 1938 it has been located in Kuyumdzhieva house, a cultural monument of national significance. Below: me in front of it. Left; Mike shows how narrow the streets are.

Sadly, all over Bulgaria there are a lot of feral cats and in Sofia and Varna feral dogs. They are hungry, limping, & you feel badly for them. Sofia, the capital, is where I had contact with beggars. Also lots of street entertainers, good ones.





Located in the center of Plovdiv, 1,950 feet from the Roman Theater, Old Plovdiv House in Kapana Area offers air-conditioned accommodations with free access to a sauna, a Turkish bath and a fitness center. Complimentary WiFi is available in all areas. Therapeutic massages are also offered on site at a surcharge.

The units come with flat-screen cable TVs and each features a private bathroom with a shower. The apartments enjoy private terraces with city views and come with well-appointed kitchens. Guests of Old Plovdiv House in Kapana Area can enjoy traditional Bulgarian dishes in the on-site restaurant, which is set in a historic building. Further dining and shopping options are available





GEORGIADI HOUSE

The Georgiadi House is one of the most beautiful examples of the Bulgarian Revival architecture. It was built on the order of the rich came from an old Plovdiv family, frieze Georgi Kendindenoglu, who Soon after the construction of his home, Georgi Kendindenoglu gave it as a dowry for his daughter's wedding to the Greek merchant from Thessaloniki, Dimitar Georgiadi.

The house was built in 1848 by the prominent Bulgarian master Hadzhi Georgi, who came to Plovdiv from Constantinople. It is representative of the symmetrical house, widely spread in the 19th century. Around spacious rooms, in the building has 251 sq.m. area and an impressive volume of 3,120 cubic meters. The ground floor is formed as a covered indoor courtyard with flagstone, which plays a connecting role between the street and the backyard. Characteristic of the entire building are the beautifully carved ceilings, the skirting boards, the built-in cupboards and the richly decorated wall niches called "alafanga" (meaning – in a "French skeleton consists of hewn oak beams and the filling between the m – from traction for the first floor is the large hall (parlor) with an original platform for the orchestra in the event of social evenings and celebrations. The house was completely restored in 1960 and declared immovable cultural value of national importance. Today, the house is used for the Bulgarian National Revival Exposition of the Regional Museum of History – Plovdiv.

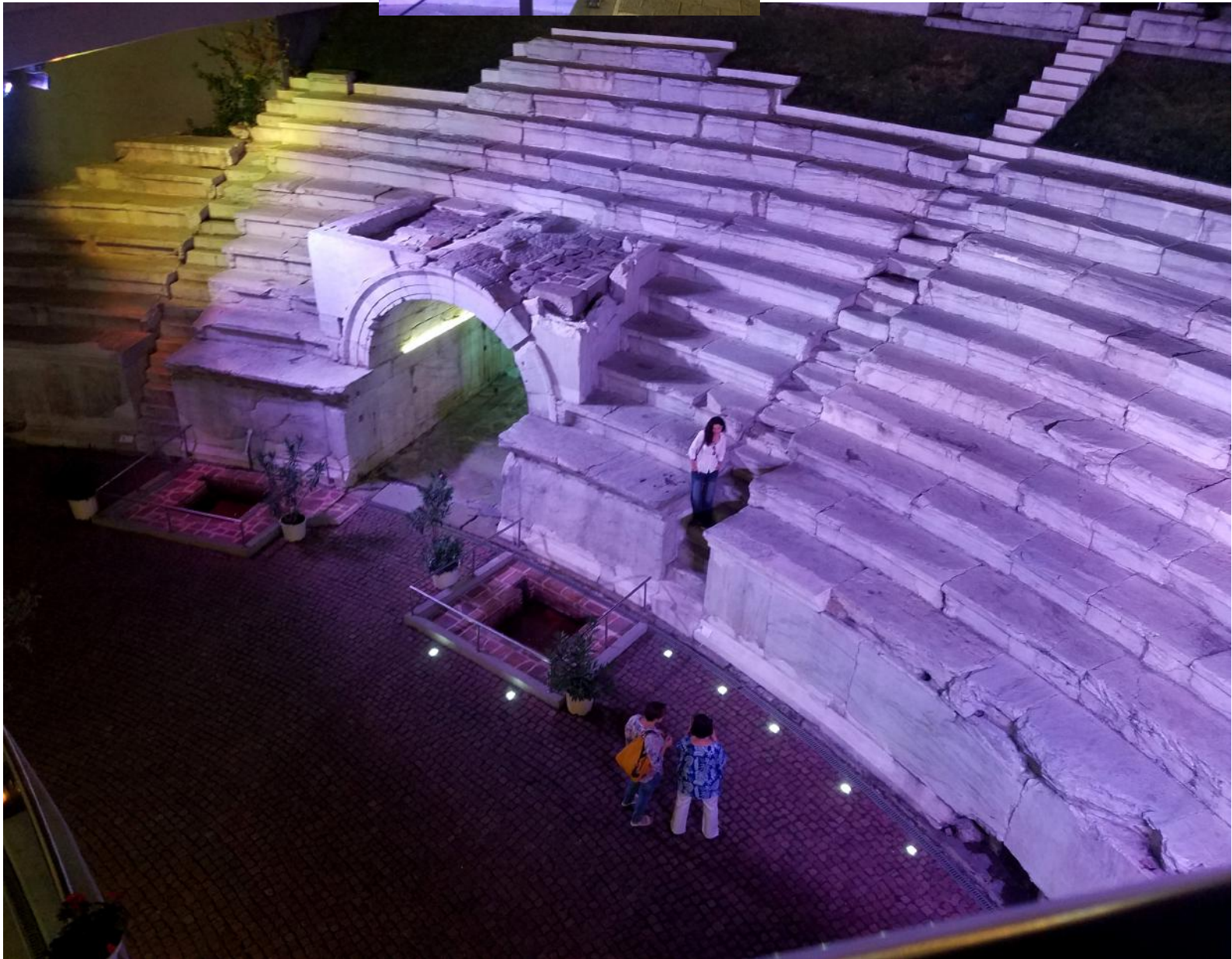


It can be seen in the house of the rich Plovdiv merchant, Dimitar Georgiadi. The house was built by the Rhodope master, hadji Georgi Hadjijski, in 1848. Owner of the house was the rich Plovdiv merchant-tailor, Georgi Kendindenoglu, who demised it as a marriage portion to his daughter, Helena, for her marriage with Dimitar Georgiadi.



The Roman theatre of Plovdiv is one of the world's best-preserved ancient theatres, located in the city center of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. It was constructed in the 90s of the 1st century AD, probably under the rulership of Emperor Domitian. The theatre can host between 5000 and 7000 spectators and it is currently in use. Plovdiv is the first Bulgarian city chosen to be European Capital of Culture. In 2019, twenty years after the city was a host of the Month of Culture in 1999, it will celebrate the most prestigious cultural initiative of the European Union. European Capital of Culture is a unique project for Bulgaria which provides new opportunities for the development of the potential of the city and new international visibility and a perspective on Bulgarian culture as a whole.









Plovdiv—amazing how they recently uncovered the longest gladiator area ever and can show parts of it under the city itself. Sad, how many feral dogs, as well as cats there are, and some of the poor things are treated badly. Some are rather wild and one has to be careful.





The name of the game is climb—aft.9/20 walking tour of Plovdiv Old Town includes these early ruins. Plovdiv is an ancient city built around 7 hills, in southern Bulgaria. The Roman-era Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis, which once seated around 6,000, now hosts opera and concerts. *they were setting up for a concert when we climbed up here! Then we went back down into town and...* Night, you can see the end of the ancient stadium of Philippolis. Unbelievable how the Bulgarians can show you these ruins and yet not destroy the modern streets on top. They are still discovering history here.



The Roman Stadium in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, is among the largest and best preserved buildings from the time of the Ancient Rome in the Balkan peninsula. The facility, approximately 240 m (790 ft) m long and 50 m wide, could seat up to 30000 spectators. Today, the northern curved part of the stadium is partially restored and is one of the most recognisable landmarks of the city among the many preserved buildings from Roman times.

There are several spots in the town where you can see part of this stadium.

ДЖИНДЖИФИР(DIOSPYRUS LOTUS)



Дървесен вид, произхождащ от района на Кавказ и Близкия изток. В манастира е пренесен и култивиран от старите монаси. Много близък до райската ябълка(diospyrus kaki). Достига до 30м височина. Плодът е малък, топчест(колкото череша), ядлив при пълно съзряване. По традиция се използва за подобряване вкуса на манастирската ракия, оттам и името ѝ – „Джинджифирка“.

DATE-PLUM/CAUCASIAN PERSIMMON (DIOSPYRUS LOTUS)



The native region of the species is Caucasus and southwest Asia. It was brought into the monastery and cultivated by the old monks. The tree grows 100ft, and the species is very similar to the persimmon (Diospyrus kaki). The fruits are small, round and edible. The tradition says to use it to make monastery's rakya (grapes brandy) better. Monks put them in the bottles after the distillation. Because of that its name becomes "Gingzifirka".

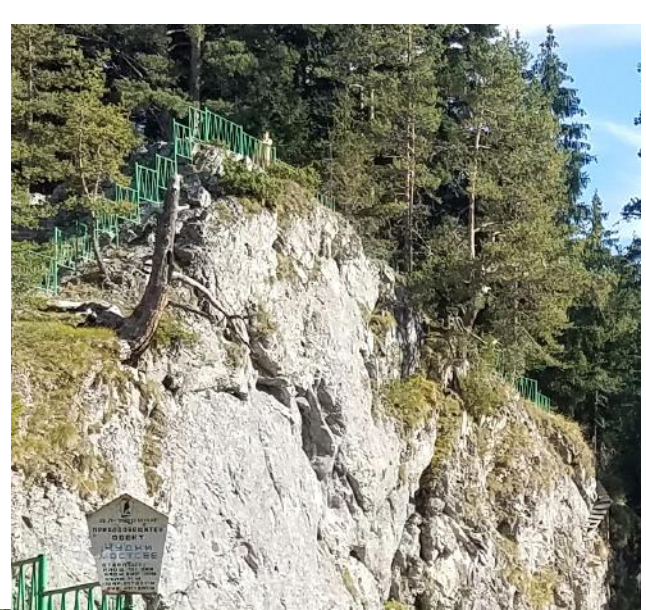




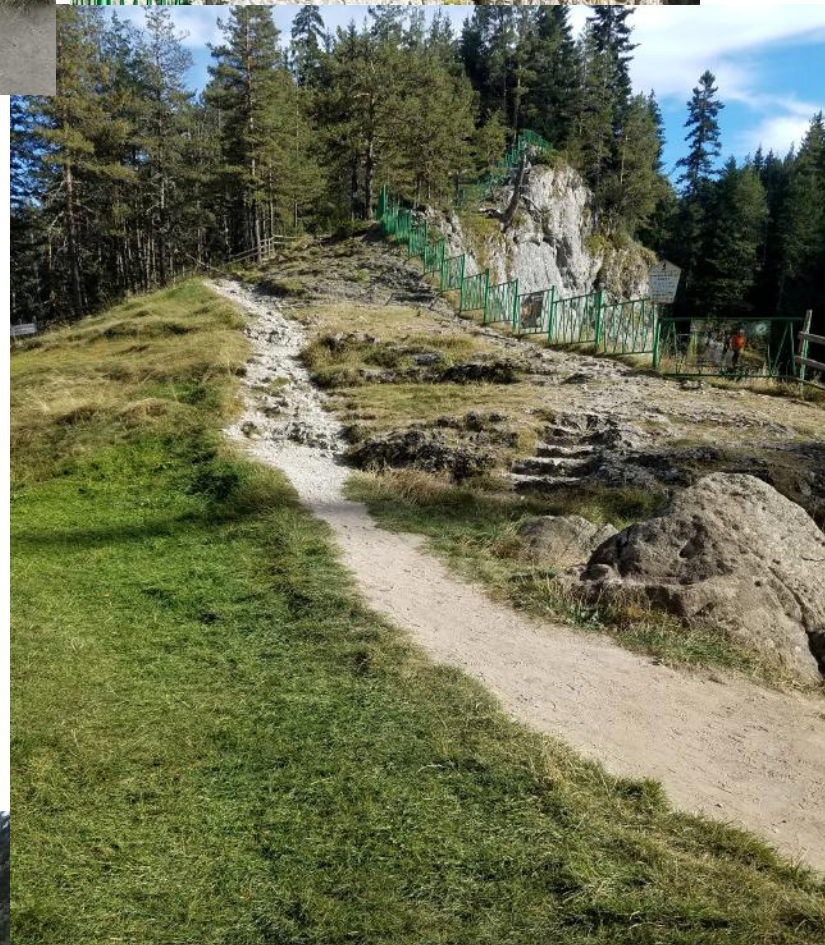
Wonderful Bridges, Bachovo Monastery and Assen's Fortress Trip

A lot to do in one day! With lots of climbing and walking. I'm fine with walking, not so great on slippery rock paths, and of course, I have a fear of heights. So I'd climb as much as I could and sometimes just sketch or paint (tiny watercolor set and water brushes, postcard size pad, convenient). Luckily we'd had a brief driving break between Bachovo Monastery.. and 12 monks still live there; we saw their wash on the line, and the fortress before the Wonderful Bridges. I was sorry I couldn't get down to the Bridges...I could maybe have gotten down, but up?





BTW the cook, the bald guy in red, was also the catcher for anyone who ziplined. After Mike, Cveta, Ani, and Marianna climbed down further to explore "the Wonderful Bridges" natural rock formations. I'd had enough of heights & climbing, so sat and sketched.



Unbelievably, after climbing around the monastery and the fortress we went to this mountainside restaurant. After lunch, Cveta was so excited because you could still zipline. See the mountain above and then detail of where you climb down, no outside guard rail, to get to where you zipline. Ani went too. Sometimes I think they are like Thelma and Louise! I tried to photograph them while a yellow jacket crawled round my sneaker and bare ankle. I did get some of it on video.

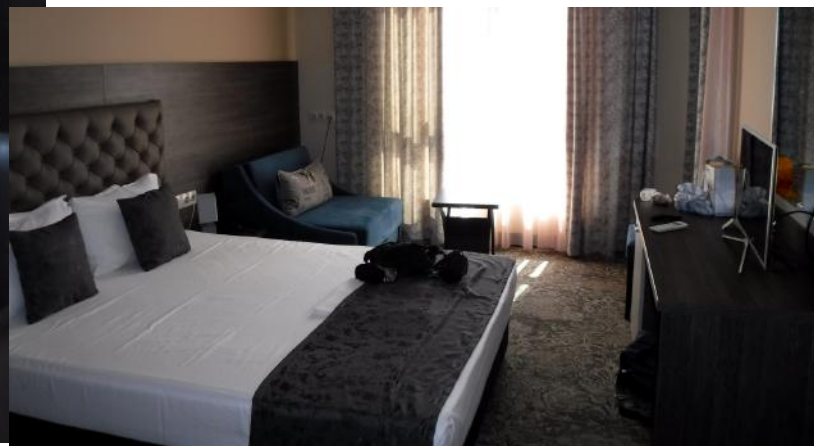


After a full day of exploration, we eat dinner with more friends of Cveta, who've driven from Sophia to Plovdiv for this—he is a forensics policeman and went to University with Cveta. You also see one of the best ever appetizers—some sort of avocado mix with shrimp on top. We kept the guides 3 and 4 ½ hrs past their usual time (yes, Cveta paid them extra), partially because they wanted to show us more. We had a woman, Demetrious, and Stoli. They'd all worked in York Harbor, Me at one point!





Below: Walking Plovdiv. Above: Jillian's favorite Paw Patrol in Bulgarian late at night! Also—3 recycle bins
Two pix of my fancy digs at Plaza Hotel, brand new, in Plovdiv (\$60. a night, but my equally fancy Hotel Orlovets in Gabrovo was only \$35. a night, breakfast included, and it was more centrally located. I was also in two AirBnBs.



The ancient [Thracian](#) city of **Perperikon** (also **Perpericon**; [Bulgarian](#): Перперикон, [Greek](#): Περπερικόν) is located in the Eastern [Rhodopes](#), 15 km northeast of the present-day town of [Kardzhali](#), [Bulgaria](#), on a 470 m high rocky hill, which is thought to have been a sacred place. The village of Gorna Krepost ("Upper Fortress") is located at the foot of the hill and the gold-bearing Perpereshka River flows near it. Perperikon is the largest [megalith](#) ensemble in the [Balkans](#). **It is thought that** the famous Temple of Dionysius is located at this location.^[1] A visitor centre is being constructed at a cost of 2.4 million [Euros](#) funded by the [EU](#).^[2] **Bulgarian archaeologist [Nikolay Ovcharov](#)** started the excavation works at Perperikon in 2000, and revealed the remains of ancient architectural complex.^[3] **Human activity in the area dates back to 5000 B.C.** The first traces of civilization on the hill date from the [Bronze Age](#), while the [ceramics](#) found on the place date from the Early [Iron Age](#), as well as the impressive round [altar](#), almost 2 m in diameter, hewn out of the rocks. At Perperikon, a twelve days' journey from the sea, Medokos called himself king of Thrace after [Sitalces](#)'s death in 424 BC, but failed to hold a throne.^[4] **Archaeologists have uncovered a giant** multi-story [palace](#) and an imposing [fortress](#) built around the hill, with walls as thick as 2.8 m. This dates from the time of the [Roman Empire](#). [Temples](#) and residential quarters were also constructed in the fortress. The megalithic complex has been laid in ruins and re-erected many times throughout history.



Even up high there was a little shack and some men gathered with water. I know Cveta and Ani spoke with them a short while. The climb up that high was difficult for me, slippery slope part of the way, although I want the smoother, longer way. Even so, I did not go to the top, but stayed lower so I didn't see the details of holes where I guess lodgings were? I bought a guidebook in English & a map. Mike said the top just sort of looked like what I'd already seen, although not with a 360 degree view. Whew!



With my fear of heights and different health issues, I was quite content to stay half way up, especially when I know that those times I take time to sit and sketch or paint are the times I really remember better. The guide, Stoli, was quite amazed that I'd actually painted a picture...see left, and my subject, below, while he, Ani, Cveta, Mike, and Marianna were climbing. I was quite happy to sit and watch and paint. I showed them my tiny paint kit and the great water brushes.

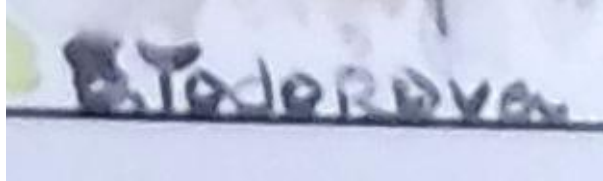
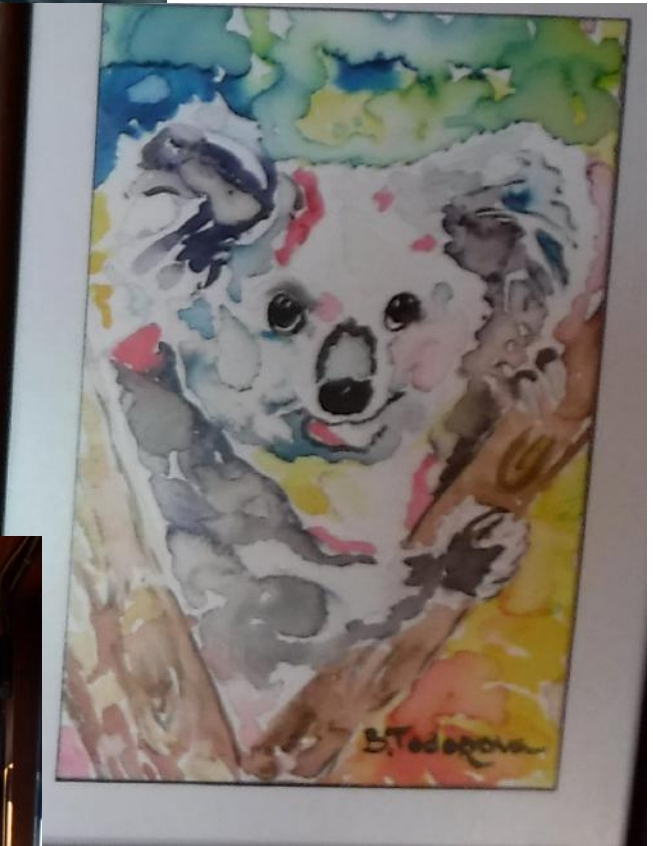




After Perperikon we ate an excellent lunch at some place in a village someone at the ruins recommended. There were 4 hungry kitties there who I gave a little bit of my traditional Bulgarian fish dinner which had been made specially for us (way too much food with the salad and a Bulgarian chocolate dish). This place is also a guest house; I'd stay there. Name & address below.







Found Bulgarian watercolorists Galina Todorova, Selma Todorova, and Maria Todorova, but no B. even when I checked the images section

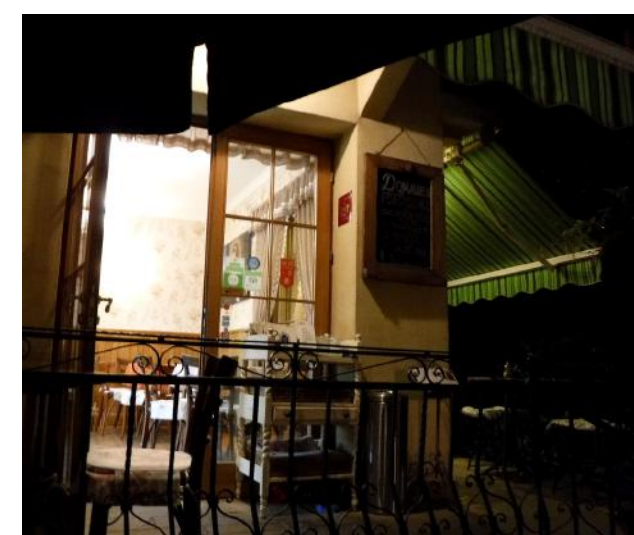


After a morning climbing Perperikon and a huge late lunch in the village Mike & I thought were headed back to our Hotel Plaza in Plovdiv. No! One more place. We didn't go to the very top, good thing we didn't as it was dark when Stoli, Marianna, Cveta, & Ani came down, and we all walked thru the woods on a road to the small parking lot, using cell phones as flashlights. Lots of mystery about Belintash.

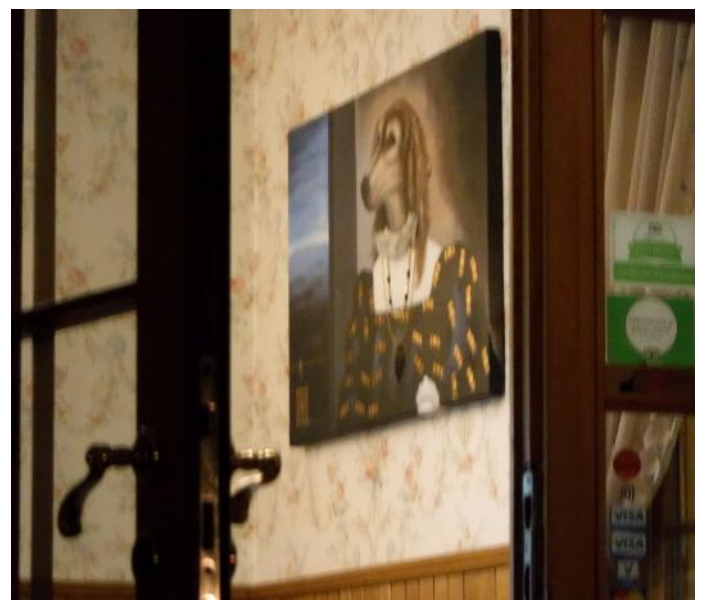
Belintash is a small plateau in the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria bearing traces of human activity. It is assumed that this is a cult site of the ancient Thracian, though the very essence and purpose are not yet fully understood. [Asenovgrad](#), [Plovdiv Province](#), [Bulgaria](#) The Thracian sanctuary Belintash has a special energy. That would say almost everyone that have passed 50 km from Plovdiv to the rock formation. The legends about the place are many, but until now it is not yet proven how occurred Belintash and what purposes it served.

Because of the found near by silver plate that is part of a ritual dedicated to the Thracian god Sabazius it is believed that Belintash was sacred to the Thracian tribe Besi. Ritual niches and grooves seem to prove this theory. According to others, however, the place is a really stellar card as round carved niches accurately reflect the stellar constellations Orion, Little Bear, Ursa Major and Leo. During the equinoxes the sun lights in a specific way the grooves in the rock and the neighboring Karadjov peak, which is actually the crater of an extinct volcano.





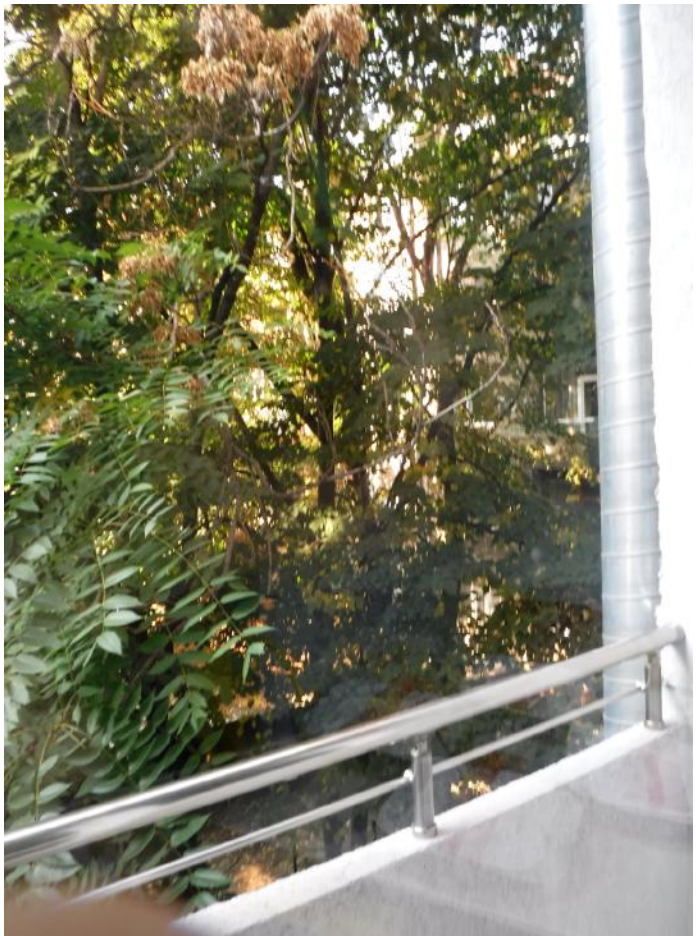
So Sunday 9/23 we'd gone from Plovdiv to Sofia, walked the Pedestrian Way, had ginormous lunch, siesta, walk, and then we decided to just eat dessert at a hidden courtyard place Ani knew. After all, Ani lives in Sofia (she's the CFO of a multi-city optical cncern). Then we walked some more. Of course.





Each place I stayed in Bulgaria(5in 10 days)was beautifully decorated. As Cveta said, Bulgarians are aesthetically inclined. The lamps, prints, fixtures, color schemes, all thoughtfully done. I took lots of photos. As in Varna, in Sofia we stayed in an apartment, 3 floors up, very well decorated, owned by a Bulgarian woman who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Cveta & Mike had one bedrm, Marianna & I the other; Ani lives in Sofia. I took photos of the two corners where I would need to change direction in case I forgot how to get back from my walk. Also here, the kitchen, living room, and bedroom I was in. Next page, one view was street,the other trees. Also, in our room you see a clown fish like I have & picture of silver dollar shells.







мина мина матанска ie Mina Mitanska and me on the last morning of my Bulgarian adventure, having breakfast at an outdoor café (of course), Mina teaches English and is Ani’s teacher and mostly, good friend, in Bulgaria. Cveta and Ani the best of friends since they were 3 or 4 years old, Ani said Cveta was born 19 days later than she was and she, Ani, has been waiting for Cveta all her life (Ani always on time, more go-go-go, and Cveta not so). They are in constant touch even when Cveta is back on Maui. I’d brought my 3 books over, gave them to Mina, who was especially glad to have them when I showed her that her students could read them & then go to YouTube to hear the correct

pronunciation. So she was the perfect person to get the books. Right: one of Cveta’s classmates from University who came to Sofia to see her. He spoke mostly Bulgarian and does write poetry in beautiful calligraphy; he’d met Marianna before. Above and below: my breakfast—frothy creamy milk & you stir the coffee crystals into it, and Eggs Florentine—3 poached eggs on fresh cooked spinach, with Emmanthaler and parmesan cheese. Of course, delicious.





Always, always people press food on me..try this; it's typical Bulgarian....., and I ate and ate and it all was delicious. Probably ate twice as much as I do at home, but because I walked so very much and plenty of that was uphill, I lost 4 lbs. Top row is Ani introducing me to my first Bulgarian food, a snack on the way from Sofia to Varna—we stopped at a BarBQ place she likes and I had Shopska salad

Main ingredients Tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, peppers, sirene
sirene (white brine cheese), and parsley





A selection of bottles

