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„Thermal spa Kezhovica, opportunities for tourism development“

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## Abstract

Subject of this article is the spa Kezhovica and opportunities for its tourism development. First part of the paper provides general information related to the spa, its location, the historical development and current condition and capacity. The second part natural and anthropogenic resources for tourism development are processed and presented. The third part is devoted to the features of water and the medical treatment abilities of the spa. The last section includes conclusions and recommendations for future development of Kezhovica.

Keywords: Thermal Tourism, Kezhovica, Shtip

### 1. Location, historical development and current condition of the spa Kezhovica

Kezhovica is located on the right bank of river Bregalnica in about 2 km southwest of the city center of Stip, which is the cultural, administrative and educational center of the eastern region. The site of these thermo-mineral waters is situated between both hills "Isar" and "Kumlak" on the left and "Merite" on the right side of the river Bregalnica (Taskov, 2004). Mountain Plackovica which is located in the immediate vicinity is suitable for picnic and recreational activities and rich with numerous caves. The most visited cave of all these is "Kjup" which is most accessible, then "Golema Peshtera" which is spread to a length of 600 meters, and as well as the caves "Ajducka" and "Turtel".

Spa Kezhovica has a favorable traffic connection, and this area exactly involves several important routes between eastern Macedonia and Povardarie which serves as a junction between many regions (Stip Guide, 2002). Developed road traffic, a rail line and the airport for non-commercial flights that exists since 1924 (Kralev, 2009). At the airport a training for pilots, glider pilots, as well as training for parachutists, modelers and paragliding is conducted all year round (<http://aerostip.weebly.com/index.html>). As an upcoming plan it is to build a cargo airport near the city of Stip.

There are many legends regarding the existence of Kezhovica. One of them, which is related to the discovery of mineral water, comes from the legend of the shepherd

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Kezho who had wounds on his body. As he was digging in the area he revealed hot water bath and began to wash the wounds he had on the body, and after certain time he was healed. It is assumed that the name Kezhovica is derived from this legend. As of the existing written information about the origin of the spa it is suggested that it was first built by the Turks in the late seventeenth century consisted of a facility with a primitive building and pool. Besides bathing, these mineral waters were used for washing whitening garments by the locals. This water is nowadays used for washing traditional way by residents of Novo Selo as well (<http://www.exploringmacedonia.com>).

Nowadays Kezhovica, operated by the Public Company - Isar, owns well-equipped bathrooms and swimming pools, as well as a rehabilitation center. The bathroom, in terms of its activities offers the following activities: providing conditions for spa bath to all citizens, bed and breakfast accommodation, washing and ironing sheets and any kind of clothes. In swimwear bath section there are male and female general section with changing rooms and 15 separate shower cabins. The accommodation section has 12 rooms with 32 beds and main kitchen and diner. The bath service includes various kinds of dry and water treatments (<http://www.stip.gov.mk>), and the Rehabilitation Center has 100 beds (<http://www.exploringmacedonia.com>).

## 2. Natural and anthropogenic resources for tourism development

The average air temperature in the bath is very favorable, which gives an opportunity for a high season throughout the year. The low level of precipitation during the year are also a good prerequisite for the development of spa tourism, as well as the average annual solar radiation length (6.5 hours per day).

Flora and fauna is of great importance for the development of spa tourism. The Cote of Bregalnica surrounding is a good spot for walks and rest. A very important activity within the spa tourism are hunting - fishing and mountaineering goings-on. The most common types of games are pheasant, partridge and rabbit. Deer, wild pigs, wolves, foxes and other wildlife are encountered at mountain Serta.

Besides the healing conditions, climate and landscape in spa Kezhovica, river Bregalnica which is nearby can also be used for attractive holiday. Therefore, tourists can walk along the shore and go fishing and swimming in certain places and periods. Kezhovica also provides an opportunity for sport at its football court. From The historical development of the city Stip begins with the iron period, and a well-known archaeological site is a place called "Meri" with specific grave constructions. The city Astibo is dating since ancient times. Isar Fortress originates since the second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century. The main trademark of the town is "St. Archangel Michael," church and other famous churches such as "St. Nikola", "St. Jovan Krstitel", "St. Spas", "St. Archangel", "Uspenie na Sveta Bogorodica"- which is located in Novo Selo. Old Town - Bargala is located at the mountain base of Plackovica and derived from the V - VI century. Several facilities have been establish in it such as: Episcopal Basilica Episcopal

residence and more. All these cultural and historical monuments are of great importance for tourism development because they are quite attractive. Stip's museum - is a place that can be visited and reviewed, built in a style that is fun to watch and review, and numerous archaeological discoveries and artifacts could be found and visited (<http://www.stipmuzej.com.mk>).

Tourism development an important factor and manifestations. Stip vicinity and the surrounding area are places where many kinds of events are held. One of the most famous events is "Stip - Cultural Summer" held during the summer months and involving many artists. Another important event is the festival of fun melodies "Mak-Fest" which includes a number of well-known domestic and foreign musicians (<http://www.makfest.com>). In recent manifestation is also "Pastramajlija" where catering facilities accentuate qualities of "Pastrmajlija" specialty which traditionally is prepared in this city.

### 3. Features of the water

The mineral water in Kezhovica never changes over the seasons, but its ingredients are constant. Those elements are Important for the health and recreational activities, which is presented in Table No. 1 below (in one liter).

Table no.1, Ingredients of the water in Kezhovica

No.	Elements	Milligrams
1	Sodium	0,5332
2	Calcium	0,01588
3	Potassium	0,01650
4	Magnesium	0,0000218
5	Chlorine	0,5189
6	Sulfate	0,1502
7	Hydro-carbonates	0,4388
8	Sicilium –oxygen	0,092
9	Aluminium -oxygen	0,0002
10	Iron-oxygen	0,0003
	Total	1,766

Source: Tashkov, N., „Touristic values of spas in R. of Macedonia”, Stip, 2004

In Kezhovica the abundance of water from the two sources is 3.5 liters per second, and the water temperature is 62° C (<http://jpisar.com.mk>). This means that it belongs to a group hyper-thermal waters. Kezhovica waters are well-known for its radioactivity. Therefore they appear among the highly radioactive water. Kezhovica since a long time ago been used to treat human disease. This water is used in two ways, by drinking and bathing (Trpcevska). According Vidanovikj Chanev (Canev, 1982), these waters treat the following diseases:

- Neurological disorders and sciatica;
- Neuro-vegetative system;
- Rheumatism;
- Disease of the joints;
- Diabetes;
- Goat disease- Arthritis;
- Allergic diseases and other infections of the Goat;
- Chronic diseases of the lungs;
- Bronchial asthma;
- Infertility and reduced potential of both sexes;
- Arteriosclerosis and high blood pressure.

Thanks to the possibility to heal, many people today have successfully been treated in spa Kezhovica. Positive move is the government action, through which a large number of pensioners visiting this facility at a seven-day stay that is financially covered by the relevant ministry.

#### 4. Conclusion and recommendations for future development

Kezhovica and its thermo-mineral waters have been used since ancient times as it is known by many legends. The location if this spa represents a kind of advantage, because it is located near the town of Stip, which is the hub of the East. Climatic conditions, geographical features, natural and anthropogenic spa resources which are numerous enrich and fulfill the stay of all tourists. The water and their treatment opportunities are the main motives for visiting the spa, which has a modest accommodation and offers limited services. This spa is operated by a public company. Recommendations for the development of this spa as well as increasing the number of tourists and visitors are as follows:

- Improving the quality of accommodation and food services offers;
- Increase of the number and types of treatments that are offered;
- Improvement of the accommodation condition for visitors;
- Public-private partnership;
- Making a website and increase promotion activities;

- Refining and horticultural improvement of the natural environment in the vicinity of the spa;
- Initiating operation of sport fields near the spa;
- Protection of the natural environment;
- Making arrangements for the tourists;
- Exchange of experiences and cross-border cooperation.

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