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In-Cult



Knowledge Section

Bulgarian cultural treasures

University of Ruse "A. Kanchev"

Ruse, Bulgaria

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BG_1 | Rose Festival

The festival is held on the last Saturday of May, when the picking of roses in the valley is in full force. The day has a festive and entertaining character. The program includes:

- 1) Rose picking ritual It involves amateur groups - mummers, singing and dancing groups for authentic folklore, the new Queen of Roses and 6 little companions. In the rose gardens, tourists are given the opportunity to take part in the process.
- 2) Procession of the Queen of Roses It starts from the rose gardens, passes through the streets of the town of Karlovo and reaches the central square, where on a special stage the cultural program continues.
- 3) Holiday in the Rose Valley It includes an official opening ceremony and a rich folklore program.
- 4) Demonstration of rose oil extraction and tasting of rose products In the Historical Museum in the city, in front of guests and citizens is demonstrated the process of rose oil extraction from the beginning of the last century.
- 5) Happy children's afternoon As an innovative event, a children's contest "Mini Miss Rose" is organized here. It is attended by children aged 4 to 8 years.
- 6) Festive fun This is the evening program that ends the Rose Festival in Karlovo. There is a rich and varied entertainment program for the citizens and guests of the city.

BG_2 | Surva/ Survaki

“Surva/ Survaki” is a unique Bulgarian tradition for health and prosperity from ancient times to nowadays.

It marks the beginning of the new calendar year – 1st January. Survakane is symbolically hitting on the shoulders face-to-back / face-to-face with the hosts using survaknitsa and calling special spells for health and prosperity for the owners of the home and for their entire family. Children usually are the survakari who make survakane. They receive pretzels, sweet things and money.

Survaknitsa” has the magical power to make wishes more real.

It looks like: number 8; letter Φ with a snake as a symbol of wisdom; 3 circles that express The Holy Trinity and maintain health and wealth in the home all year round.

It is made of dogwood - a symbol of health, longevity and wisdom.

The survaknitsa is decorated with: red thread to prevent disease; sheep wool in different colors to ward off evil forces and diseases, coins for wealth, hot peppers, popcorn, dried fruits, pretzels for fertility and abundance.

When the celebration finishes the survaknitsi are left in places where they cannot be reached by human hands.

The words of the survakari are, for example:

Surva, surva, Happy Year

Golden wheat in the field

Red apple in the garden

Full house with silk

Alive - healthy in the New Year!

BG_3 | Cyrillic alphabet

Naum, Clement, Angelarius, Sava and Gorazd, the students of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, were invited to Bulgaria by Boris I, the king of the First Bulgarian Empire to teach the clergy of the state the Slavic language and script. Two academies were established in Ohrid and Preslav. At the end of the 9th century, Naum came up with the Cyrillic script. A simplified version with 44 letters only (now 30 letters) was created by Clement.

Despite the 500-hundred-year Turkish domination, Clement's alphabet did not disappear. It helped to preserve Christianity and the Bulgarian nation and language. It is so perfect that you write what you hear, and you read what you see.

The Cyrillic is used or was used by 400 million people and over 50 languages around the world.

Other than in Bulgaria, the Cyrillic is the official alphabet of 12 countries such as Northern Macedonia, Mongolia, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, etc.

15 % of the world's population are educated using the Cyrillic alphabet. The 24th of May is the official holiday dedicated to the Bulgarian alphabet. The earliest Cyrillic inscription found on Bulgarian territory dates back to the year 931.

In 2007, the Cyrillic alphabet became the third official alphabet of the European Union after the Latin and Greek alphabet.

BG_4 | Neptune's Evening

Neptune is the Roman god of sea and running water.

Every year citizens and guests of the Ryahovo village, Ruse region meet together on the Danube's bank for the traditional river festival. In this way, they mark the end of summer and the beginning of the autumn.

In 1956 they began to call the holiday Neptune's Evening, because it became part of the festivities organized for participants in the International Tourist Regatta on the Danube. This is the longest river contest in the world of this kind.

Neptune's Evening takes place on a stage located meters from the Danube's bank. The organizers of the festival are the Ryahovo community center and the Cultural House "Know yourself - 1911".

The meeting with Neptune is preceded by the appearance of the water sorceress, who must prepare people for the coming of the Lord of the water. At sunset, Neptune with his retinue appears from the depths of the river. Under the guidance of the water sorceress, Neptune baptizes adults and children, giving them names of river dwellers.

The celebration lasts until late in the evening with many songs, folklore dances and games.

BG_5 | Ritual Bread for Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve is the night before Christ was born. The whole family gathers at the table, which contains an odd number of dishes – 7, 9, 11. The hostess prepares dolmas (cabbage leaves) stuffed with rice, stuffed dried red peppers, boiled beans, boiled wheat, pumpkin pie, boiled dried fruit, boiled brandy and red wine.

The most valuable food on the table is the ritual bread. The images on the bread depend on the main activity of the host and his expectations for the future. They can be directly related to agriculture (wheat, corn, fields), animal husbandry (cow, pig, birds), household (house, barn, dog), trade (barrel) and others. A coin must be put in the bread in order to have health, luck and prosperity in the family next year. The one who gets the coin will be the luckiest and wealthiest of all.

The oldest man goes out to fetch the ritual log for the fire. This is a thick log from an oak or a pear tree, which burns slowly and keeps the fire burning the whole night long.

The host breaks the ritual bread and gives a piece to each member of the family, leaving one piece for the animals and one for the land. Then everyone eats the delicious dishes of the hostess. This is how the whole family celebrates Christmas around the table.

BG_6 | Lazarus Day/ The Day of St. Lazar/ Lazarovden/ Lazaritsa/

In order to preserve the cultural and historical wealth of the region, the Municipality of Slivo Pole, supports the organization of theatrical performances such as "Lazarovden" by retirement and youth groups.

St. Lazarus' Day is a holiday closely associated with Easter, which occupies an important place in Bulgarian folklore traditions. It is a holiday of nature and of young girls (Lazarki), who after this day are allowed to get engaged and get married accordingly.

In the dramatic play, young girls carry a basket of eggs. They go around the village, enter every house and sing a song for each member of the family. The hostess presents them with bread with honey, a bunch of geraniums and a coin - for success, health and luck. She also gives them white eggs, which they have to paint next week, for Easter. The first egg should be red - for the joy of the soul, the second should be yellow - the grains should be golden, the third should be green - for lush meadows, and all other should be colorful - for colorful gardens. After the visits, the lazars go to the Danube and drop their wreaths into the river. This is a race. The girl who's wreath comes first, will be the leader of St. Lazarus' Day next year and will be the first to get married.

BG_7 | Living traditions: Bagpiping in Kalofer

The bagpipe accompanies every local holiday. This wind instrument is the musical emblem of the city of Kalofer. The bagpiper entered the sub-Balkan town through settlers and established itself as a local tradition, especially with the development of animal husbandry. In the first half of XX century the mastery of the Kalofer bagpipers gained wide popularity, their performances came into the focus of the gramophone industry, radio and music folklore. The earliest audio documents date from that time. We find the first ones in the personal collection of gramophone records of Larry Weiner (USA) - recordings of Slavi Dermendzhiev, published by the gramophone company "Favorite Records" (1911). He was the first bagpiper to play "live" on the program of the state Radio Sofia in 1936.

The folklorist Raina Katsarova recorded "in the field" another prominent bagpiper - Fallyo Tsvyatkov. The fame of the Kalofer bagpipers grew rapidly. Thanks to their performing activity, recording activities and media appearances, they bring the local musical dialect into supra-local spaces, reaching new audiences.

The bagpipe is still a dear instrument for Kalofer residents. Hereditary musicians learn the bagpipe craft in the family, the skills are passed from father to son, from grandfather to grandson.