



Ahtopol is the southernmost Bulgarian Black Sea town. It is located on the seacoast, on a rocky peninsula north of the Ahtopol Bay. It is 14 km southeast of Tsarevo and about 85 km south of Bourgas. Having come into being as an ancient Hellenic colony, during its restoration after the invasions of the Barbarians it was named Agatopolis (The City of Happiness). The Mediterranean chronicles mention Ahtopol as a commercial harbour, sheltering numerous Byzantine, Catalanian, Italian and other ships. After the establishment of Danubian Bulgaria, the settlement had the fate of most of the Bulgarian Black Sea towns: it was alternatively in Bulgarian and in Byzantine hands, until the 14th century, when it was captured by the Turks. The history of Ahtopol is also connected with a multitude of attacks and plunders by buccaneers. In 1918 the town was almost completely destroyed by fire and later rebuilt again. Under the name of Ahtopol it was marked during the 15th century. As a resort town, Ahtopol is attractive for its warm and quiet sea, the spacious strip of the beach, covered by fine sand, and its adequate tourist facilities. The village of Varvara is located 3 km north of Ahtopol. The resort is mostly visited by those, looking for seclusion, while its coastline is a true paradise for frogmen with its attractive underwater world. The beaches are rocky. About 5 km south of Ahtopol is the mouth of the Veleka River, the longest river of the Strandja Mountain (147 km). The region of the river mouth has been declared a protected locality. The valley of the Veleka River, steeped in fresh verdure, is attractive by the unadulterated beauty of the Strandzha Mountain. Most of the river valley is overgrown with dense forests; the river waters are rife with fish and turtles, while the vicinities, abounding in rock formations, resound with the singing of numerous and most diverse birds. It is an incredible experience to float by boat against the current of the river, into the heart of the mountain, where the sea has brought sand to the river mouth with and it becomes navigable for more than 8 km.