



The municipality of Batak encompasses 677.2 square kilometers. The municipality includes the villages of Nova Mahala and Fotinovo, and the city of Batak, which is the municipal center. The municipality is populated with 7520 inhabitants. Batak is situated in the western Rhodopi Mountains, 1036 m above sea level. The relief of Batak is generally mountainous, with an average height of 1500 m above sea level, the lowest point being 770 m and the highest point – the peak “Batashki Snezhnik” – being 2082 m. Just to the south-west of Batak, close to the borders of Batak, Velingrad and rises peak “Sutka,” at 2186 m. To the south of Batak soars peak “Ostri,” where there are plans for a ski lift to be built. To the south is the “Beglika” area, and exceptionally beautiful areas with many rivers and reservoirs. The Rhodopi Mountains enjoy a climate which fluctuates between temperate and mid-alpine. The average temperature varies throughout the year between 8 and 15 degrees (C). The winter is quiet and relaxing and features the most sunny days in all of Bulgaria. The municipality contains four large reservoirs, “Batak,” “Beglika,” Golyam Beglik” and “Shiroka Polyana,” which run north-south through Batak and serve as the foundation of many tourist attractions. The territory contains a wide variety of evergreen trees (spruce and white pine), regions with a lower elevation are filled with beech and oaks, and the higher regions feature beautiful alpine meadows. Batak contains two nature preserves: “Golyam Beglik,” with 415 hectares of centuries old evergreen trees; and “Dupkata,” included in UNESCO’s list of protected areas. Batak contains an array of interesting flora and fauna, unique to Bulgaria and to this region in particular. Batak’s lands are sprinkled with many monuments to the area’s culture throughout the ages. The oldest of these treasures was discovered at the archeological dig “Kremenete,” near the present day reservoir “Golyam Beglik,” by the historian Yosef Shopov, in 1958. Also in this area, in a cave in the locality of “Krivov Chark,” workers excavating building stones uncovered the remains of large animals. Researchers at the institute of paleontology, a branch of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, confirmed the remains as the bones of a rhinoceros. This archeological site contains fossils from the tertiary epoch, a period in which broad-leaved trees and mammals began to appear, and the Rhodopi region lacked snow and cold winters. An old Roman road runs through the area, from Pazardjik, to Peshtera, to Batak, passing through an area once known as “Kasukskoto Kale” or “Batashko Gradishte,” located to the northeast of present-day Batak. Along this road also stood the castle “Biglata.” To the east of Batak stood the “Novamahalska.” Castle, and in the vicinity of the peak “Batashki Snezhnik,” stood “Kamenishko” castle. In the “Beglika” area stood two interesting castles, “Monastira,” in the “Gerdjikov” meadow, and the “Toshboazko” castle, just south of the dam wall of the present day reservoir “Golyam Beglik.” According to one legend, the “Toshboazko” castle belonged to a Bulgarian Princess from Chepino, but after the Ottoman Empire began arriving in the Balkan Peninsula, the Rhodpi Mountains were the last region to be occupied, and subsequently the castle was destroyed. In the area surrounding the castle, the foundations of a monastery can still be seen today. The area provides spectacular views of reservoir “Golyam Beglik.” Within the municipality is the famous “Kemerov Most,”(Kemerov Bridge) which amazes many tourists with its beautiful

design. Situated in a beautiful setting spanning the “Vuchna” river, the “Kemerov Most” is a unique monument of culture in the Rhodopis, and attracts many visitors and historians. History describes Batak as the member of the Bulgarian community that paid the heaviest price to deliver the nation to freedom and independence from the Ottoman Empire. Batak began as a small village, first recorded in writings from the 16th century, nestled deeply in the bosom of the Rhodopi Mountains along the banks of the Old River. Throughout the 17th century, Batak was settled by people from the neighboring villages, mainly from the “Chepin” area. Far from the eyes of their Ottoman enslavers, throughout the period of occupation, the people of Batak kept alive a spirit of independence and freedom. The freedom-loving and hard working people mastered the trades of logging, raising cattle, and woodworking. By the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, Batak was already a prosperous community. A church was built (1813), and a primary school (1835), and the more prosperous and more inquisitive students from Batak traveled to Plovdiv, Pazardjik, and abroad to study. The name of Batak will always be associated with the heroism of Bulgaria’s April Uprising. In the winter of 1876, feverish preparations began for the uprising. The men prepared their weapons, and when bullets could not be found, they used the pits of cherries. On April 21st, the commission learned of the premature outbreak of the revolution and immediately, in the “St. Nedelya” church, declared the uprising in Batak. The approximate number of fighters taking part in the uprising was 1,000. In the first days of the uprising, the enemy was surprised and frightened by the determination of Batak’s fighters. The first clash took place on April 30th. With indescribable heroism, the fighters of Batak fought back the advances of the enemy army. One after the other, 4 color-bearers of the Turkish army were killed. In some places, they fired with cherry pits. But when the army of Ahmed Aga Barutanliyata arrived with 8000 soldiers, the people of Batak were confronted on all sides and forced to fall back to the village, where they continued their battle. Every house, yard, church and school was transformed into a scene of life and death struggle. The enemy showed unheard of cruelty and ruthlessness. In an unparalleled atrocity, about 5,000 were killed and the village was burned to ashes. Making no distinction for sex or age, the marauding army slaughtered their victims in the worst ways. “The sight we saw there,” writes the American journalist January MacGahan, “was more than we could cope with, everywhere death and horror.” Word of the massacre reached the western press, and eventually provided the impetus for the Russian – Turkish war. When you visit Batak, the church “St. Nedelya,” the museum, and all the other historical places, you are unable to shield yourself from the spirit of the past, the spirit of the thousands of heroes that sacrificed themselves for the freedom of Bulgaria