

EXCURSION

29 June 2016, Wednesday, 14h

A promenade in old Sozopol

Starting from the Archeological Museum, the group will visit successively the excavations near the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, the South Fortress Wall and Tower and the Ethnographic Museum

Sozopol (Bulgarian: Созопол) is an ancient town and seaside resort located 35 km south of Bourgas on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. Today the town is mostly a seaside resort known also for the *Apollonia* art and film festival, which takes place in early September and is named after one of Sozopol's ancient names.

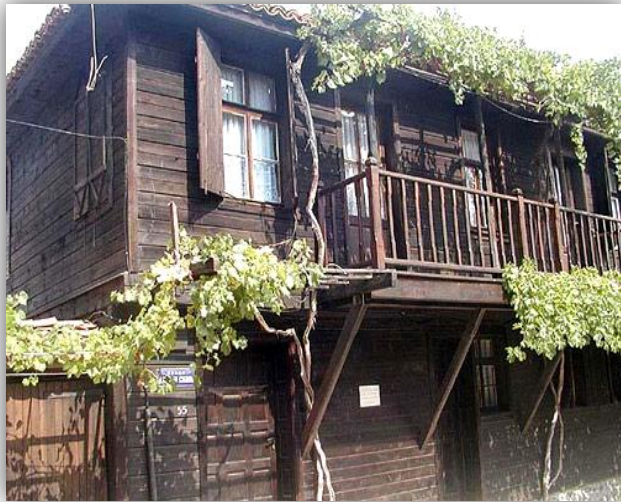


Ruled in turn by the Byzantine, Bulgarian and Ottoman Empires, Sozopol became a part of the to the newly independent Bulgaria in the 19th century.

The first town, *Antheia*, was established as a colony (610-609 BC), originally on a small island, by Anaximander at the head of Milesian colonists. The name was soon changed to

Apollonia, on account of a temple dedicated to Apollo, where a colossal statue was erected of the god Apollo by the Greek sculpturer Calamis; it was 30 cubits high (an ancient measure of length, estimated at 45 to 67,5 cm). In 72 BC, when the Romans took over and pillaged the town, the statue was transported to Rome and placed in the Capitoline Hill. At various times, Apollonia was known as *Apollonia Pontica* (that is, "Apollonia on the Black Sea", the ancient *Pontus Euxinus*) and *Apollonia Magna* ("Apollonia the Great"). By the first century AD, the name *Sozopolis* (Greek: Σωζόπολις) began to appear in written records. During the Ottoman rule the town was known as *Sizebolu*, *Sizeboli* or *Sizebolou*.

Throughout its long history, the town had been an important trade and naval center. It kept strong political and trade relations with the cities of Ancient Greece – Miletus, Athens, Corinth, Heraclea Pontica and the islands Rhodes, Chios, Lesbos, etc. Its trade influence in the Thracian territories was based on a treaty with the rulers of the Odrysian kingdom dating from the fifth century BC.



The symbol of the town – an anchor, present on all coins minted by Apollonia since the sixth century BC, is proof of the importance of its maritime trade. The rich town soon became an important cultural centre. At these times it was called *Apollonia Magna*.

In 1328, Cantacuzene speaks of it as a large and populous town. The islet on which it stood is now connected to the mainland by a narrow tongue of land. Its inhabitants, in the past mostly Greeks, lived by fishing and agriculture. Almost all of its Greek population was exchanged with Bulgarians from Eastern Thrace in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars.

Art flourished in the Christian era. The ancient icons and magnificent woodcarving in the iconostases are a remarkable



accomplishment of the craftsmanship of these times. The architecture of the houses in the old town from the Bulgarian Revival period makes it a unique place to visit today.

