

DROBETA TURNU SEVERIN MEHEDINTI, ROMANIA

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MultiMedia Publishing

Drobeta Turnu Severin

Mehedinti, Romania

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Published by MultiMedia Publishing

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Published by [MultiMedia Publishing](#)

ISBN: 978-606-033-556-6

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Drobeta Turnu Severin

Country: Romania

County: Mehedinci

Status: County capital

Government

- *Mayor: Constantin Gherghe (Democratic Liberal Party)*

Area

- *Total: 55 km2 (21 sq mi)*

Population: (2011 census)

- *Total: 86,475*

- *Density: 1,572/km2 (4,070/sq mi)*

Time zone: EET (UTC+2)

- *Summer: (DST) EEST (UTC+3)*

Website: www.primariadrobeta.ro



The modern town of Drobeta Turnu Severin has a relatively new history. It made its appearance on the map of Romania and on that of the world following General Pavel Kiseleff's decree on the 22nd of April, 1833. The town got its name from the majestic remains of the Severin Fortress which used to look down the Danube and surrounding region at some ancient times. It was erected following a pre-established plan, with wide streets falling perpendicularly onto the Danube or running parallel to it.

The town of Drobeta Turnu Severin which is situated on the Danube and was engaged in commercial activities became one of the modern towns of Romania about the 1900s. Because it was born on the 22nd of April, very close to the religious feast of St. George's (April 23), the inhabitants of the town chose St. George as the patron saint of the city.

The city administers three villages: Duda_u Schelei, Gura Vii, and Schela Cladovei.

Vestiges

Favourable conditions such as climate, soil, vegetation or food turned our town into the cradle of the oldest settlement known in Europe.

Situated on the Danube, the 9,000 year old western residential district of the town, known as Schela Cladovei, has been under the investigation of archeologists for the last 36 years.

It was here that the first dwellings of Europe were built, the first inhabitants were buried, the first vegetables were raised and the first surgical operations were performed. The first works of art were also created here.

This region allows us to get informed about the outcome of the first war events. This was the first settlement to be destroyed as a result of an armed conflict. The Schela Cladovei culture - as it was called by historians - is dated around 7,200 B.C.

Numerous other settlements superposed upon this one led to a flourishing Dacian settlement which was born under the precincts of the present town. The settlement got the name DRUBETA - which in the language of the Dacians meant „the settlement in the cleavage area" - is known to us from later Roman sources.

The conquering Romans gave the name Drobeta to the new town they had settled, taking over the name of the ancient settlement they had conquered.

As for the Dacians, they were not only valiant fighters but also renowned precious metal craftsmen.

Dacians & Romans

Trajan, the famous Roman emperor and general, minutely prepared the war against the Dacians. He turned the Danube into a navigable river and cut its banks in order to create a road in the Iron Gates area which allowed him to concentrate over 200,000 soldiers on the southern bank of the river. Two bloody battles took place between 101- 105.

The interval between 103-105 was used in order to build a stone bridge across the Danube. It enabled the Roman army to complete the conquering of Dacia. The last armed resistance of the Dacians took place in the Orastiei Mountains. Decebalus, the Dacian king killed himself.

In 106, the Dacian territory was turned into a Roman province. The ancient historian Dio Cassius reports on the fabulous spoils of war taken away from the Dacian territory: 165,500 kg of gold and 331,000 kg of silver, the equivalent of ROL 618 million/hard currency in 1916.

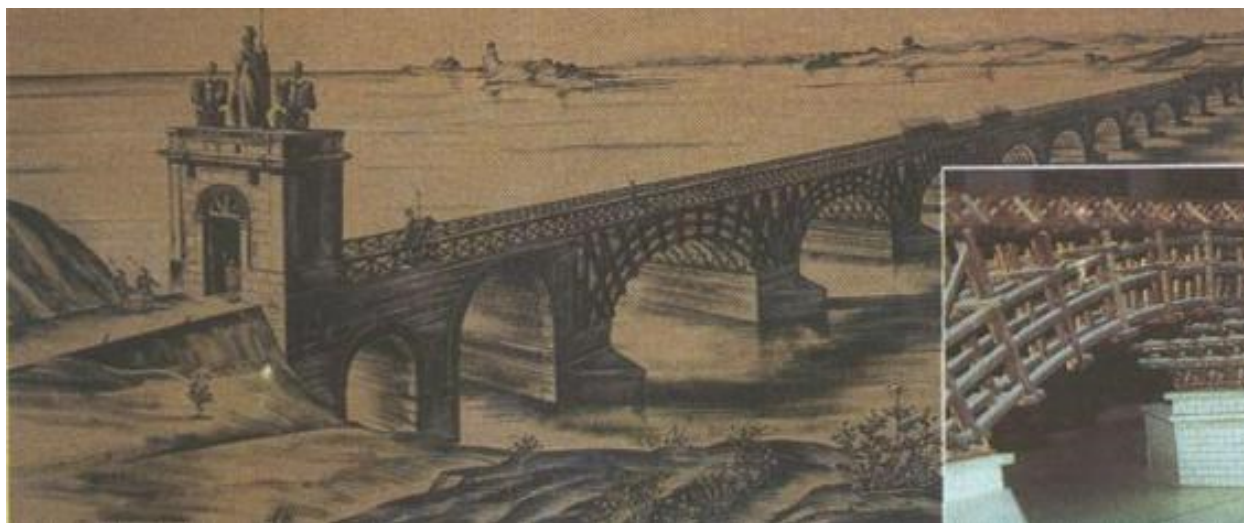
While the bridge was being built, the Roman camp of Drobeta was also being erected having the mission to defend the northern end of the bridge. This was the first stone stronghold to be erected in the province of Dacia. It was a small-sized camp (137.5 x 123 m) which was able to shelter the effective force of an auxiliary body of soldiers.



The Remains of the Roman Camp Drobeta

As the town itself, it went through several erection phases, the present one dating from Constantine the Great's epoch. In times past, several military units used this camp as their base: COHORS I CRAETUM. COHORS I SAGITTARIORUM, COHORS I ANTIOHIENSIIUM as well as many drafts belonging to the Fifth Legion - Macedonlca.

Trajan's Stone Bridge



Trajan's Bridge reconstruction - Drawing

Trajan's bridge from Drobeta was built in only three years (103-105), following the plans of the architect Apollodorus of Damascus, the craftsman of Trajan's Column in Rome.

It was the biggest bridge of the antiquity, ingenious in its technique and shape. Today, it remains work visitors into enthusiasm. Massive blocks of stone together with the oak wood coming from 200 hectares of forest were used to build only its piers. The bridge was 1,155 m long, 18.6 m high and 14.55 m wide.

It was this bridge which allowed the entire Latinity - with its splendor and complexity - to cross the Danube and reach its northern banks.

The Roman town of Drobeta which was erected near the stronghold and bridge borrowed the name - of the ancient Dacian settlement of DRUBETA.

In the middle of the 3rd century, the town was lying over a surface of 60 hectares and had about 40,000 inhabitants. It was the first town in Dacia which, during Emperor Hadrian's reign, bore the title of „municipium", while during Septimius Severus' time, it became a "Colonia". The name of the town, together with the appellative „*splendidissima colonia Drobeta*" was discovered on a honorary altar stone. The life of the town could be traced back to the 6th century when it fell a pray to migratory peoples, thus sharing the fate of other imperial towns.

Middle Ages

During the early Middle Ages, the Iron Gates region continued to be an important area of economic and major strategic interests. It was for more than once that political interests prevailed in front of the economical ones.



Medieval Severin Fortress - N-E Tower

The 12th and 13th centuries turned the Iron Gates area into a field of permanent fighting operations between Hungarian kings and Bulgarian tzars, between Hungarians and Byzantines and between all of them and the legitimate rulers of these places, the Romanian princes and voivodes. Due to these interests, the Iron Gates region is, for several centuries, the centre of European politics.

It was at the end of the 13th century that the western knights erected the Severin Fortress on top of the remains of an older Roman fortress. At the same time, the Hungarian kingship created here the Severin Banate, an administrative and military unit focusing upon the Tartar and Bulgarian dangers coming on the Danube towards Central Europe.

The foundation of the feudal state -whose name was „Tara Romaneasca" (Wallachia) - under the reign of Basarab I, allowed the Severin Fortress to become a Wallachian possession. The Wallachian ruler Mircea cel Batran (1386-1418) strengthened and enlarged the fortress, coined money in the Severin Fortress and favored both Romanian and foreign tradesmen (who were) going through the Schela Cladovei Customs.

The subdual of the Severin Fortress by the Turks and its final destroying opened the way to the Turks towards Central Europe. In 1541, half of Hungary's surface was turned into a Turkish province.

The Modern City

In 1833, the modern town of Turnu Severin made its appearance as a commercial town which was developed following the plans drawn up by the engineer Xavier Villacrose (1835).

It was facing the Danube and had a rectangular shape, including streets which made traffic easier. Several small squares offer a particular charm to the town.

As its erection was a difficult one, the central administrations made arrangements to sell building land to foreigners, too. This is how Germans and Austrians. Serbians, Jews, Greeks and Macedo-Romanians, Armenians, Turks, Bulgarians, Italians and French people came to settle down here.

It is only after 1841 that the town witnesses a somehow accelerated development.

In 1860, the town limits were being settled on the main roads: Craiova Boundery. Varciorovei Boundary (towards the town of Orsova), Agency Boundary (towards the port) and Fair Boundary (northwards). It was then that the weekly fair was moved to the eastern end of the town (towards the village of Cerneti).



The Administrative Pallace

The town officials gave their attention to introducing lighting, sewerage and to paving streets and markets with river stone.

In 1863, the necessary sums of money to build the townhall and the fireman command were finally funded.

In 1888 the Townhall is modernized, repaired and added a storey. It was then that the name „The Municipal Palace" was proudly attributed to it.

„Turnu Severin shows itself in the sunset as in the middle of a decor. Widened, the Danube cuts a curve in the Romanian bank and pushes the town up on a top covered with trees, the thicket of which discloses overlapped houses enveloped in red hallow dies... A western town with beautiful buildings, great schools, wide and straight streets..." (Alexandria Vlahuta, Picturesque Romania")

Memorials

Although it is situated „at the far end of the country", the town of Turnu Severin was the witness of the great historical events of our nation and today, many architectural and historical monuments as well as many street names are a testimony of the sacrifice of the former inhabitants of the town.

The prince Al. I. Cuza directed his steps towards this region while he came „to inspect our military power", and showed „his great contentment for the state of foot soldiers and frontier guards". Even when the prince had left the country, the local people elected him as a member of Parliament, Cuza refused this honour for the benefit of the country. At the crossroads of Smardan and Decebal streets, one can still see the house which hosted prince Al. I. Cuza in Turnu Severin.

In the same street - which was once interrupted by the fountain groove and the „Maioreasa" church - there is also the house which hosted Prince Carol of Hohenzollern when, in May 1866, he set foot on Romanian land for the first time. This building also belonged to Theodor Costescu who donated it to the „I. G. Bibicescu" library.

In order to honour the sacrifice of the inhabitants of Severin during the Nation Reunification War, in 1933, on the occasion of the town centenary, the cooperation between the architect State Balosin, the sculptor Teodor Burca and the stone cutter Carol Umberto led to the erection of the Memorial - Crypt inside the Roses Park.

In the northern part of the town, Constantin Lucaci built an obelisk which is dedicated to the memory of the partisans who fought against the German invaders in the Mehedintiului Mountains where, their group was led by the school master Victor Popescu.

Economy

The development of the town as well as the prosperity of its inhabitants is due to the setting up of the port (1851) and of the ship repair shop (1858) which was the first in our country and became the centre of the future shipyard which was to become the most important one in the 1914 Romania and one of the most significant shipyards on the Danube.

In recognition of the importance of the port and of the economic development of the town, Prince Cuza establishes here the first commercial circumscription (1863).

Being close to the Iron Gates Canal and to the Bucuresti - Craiova - Timisoara railway, the port and the town of Severin become a powerful transit communication junction as it is the place where ship convoys are organized up-stream and downstream on the Danube.

1882 is the year when the Romanian railway and Depot make their appearance. They are followed by the mills erected on the bank of the Danube (such as „Moara de Foc" in 1876) and by the Beer Factory (1856-1858), as well as the Alcohol Factory at Banovita.

After 1900, the Candy Factory (1902), the Slaughterhouse, the Tanning House of the Damianoff Brothers (1906), the Bakery and the Dairy Products Factory are also erected.

After 1960, the town economy grows richer when the Wood Processing Plant complex, the Cellulose and Paper Mill as well as the Heavy Water Plant (ROMAG) and a thermoelectric power plant are also built, during the last decades of the last century.

The economic development also included the coming into being of some banking institutions such as a branch of the Romanian National Bank (1899), the Bank of Severin (1904) and the Commercial Bank.

Energy and Water



The Hydroelectric Power System of the Iron Gates (SHNPF)

The local officials bestowed particular attention to the lighting of the town by introducing street lamp lighting in 1850 and later, the electricity produced by the power plant located in the public gardens (1907).

Today, the kilowatts are pumped by the power giant from Gura-Vaii. Built as a result of the cooperation between Romania and neighboring Yugoslavia, it has an installed capacity of 2,050 Mw, half of which belongs to the Romanian party.

In order to permit an unhampered shipping traffic on the Danube, a sluice was built on either of its banks. They are both provided with upstream and downstream outposts as well as with equipments which are able to ensure lock chamber filling and evacuation operations.

The power plant is also provided with a control tower which helps to regulate and guide sluice traffic.

The sluice lock chamber sizes are in accordance with the recommendations of the Danube Committee for the Lower Danube sector. The Iron Gates I system for navigation

and energy production (S.H.E.N.) is the third in Europe, following the hydropower stations on the Volga river.

A particular problem the municipality had to solve was that of the town power supply. At the very beginning this was ensured by means of casks with water coming from the town fountains and later, from a well that was located in the Radu-Negru square and which was wind powered.

It was only in 1910 that the water plant and the Water Tower started to be erected, the water source being the Danube itself.



The Water Tower

Two of the public-buildings which are emblematic for the town, the Water Tower and the Hall were erected between 1910-1913 and 1904-1906, respectively. The building project of the former belonged to the engineer Elie Radu, while the architecture plants for the latter were drawn up by C.I. Gabrielescu.

Architecture

As there are not too many buildings erected at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the town officials have permanently been concerned with preserving them.

This could be the reason why Calea Traian (Traian Street), the former commercial thoroughfare of the town, together with the area surrounding the Central Park are packed with building in the neoclassical style.

The main streets are lined by smart villa-style houses surrounded by lots of trees.

The new part of the town on the northern side of the historical Center stands out owing to its modern and efficient architecture: main highways, commercial centers as well as new recreation areas.

Public Health

„Baia Comunala" (the Communal Baths) was erected in 1907 with a view to the urban settlement and the inhabitants' health. It became the Firebrigade Headquarters and today it is a representative building for the early 20th century architecture of our town. Larger towns or cities in Romania could not take pride in such buildings at that time.

The setting up of the town garbage crematory in 1914 was one of the important deeds of the local officials. The town has its own sewerage as early as 1870. It has been permanently enlarged due to the town perimeter extension or whenever new streets appeared.

The public health network which includes dispensaries and general hospitals has been continuously developed starting with the „Grecescu" hospital which was erected in 1868.



The County Hospital

The number of hospital beds as well as the complexity of sanitary services increased when the County Hospital was opened in 1985.

Education

Being placed at the crossroads of different borders, Drobeta Turnu Severin has been an education centre irradiating towards the areas south of the Danube. Today, the town has 21 normal programme kindergartens, 12 extended programme kindergartens, 16 primary schools and gymnasiums, 9 secondary schools with various profiles.



TRAIAN Secondary School

At the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year, the first University College of Drobeta Turnu Severin opened its gates for the following profiles: economics, administration and secretarial work.

The „C. Radulescu-Motru" University of Drobeta Turnu Severin was born in the fall of 1999 while the „Portile de Fier" (Iron Gates) University started its activities in 2000.

Among the teachers who worked and gave their best to mark the reputation of the Romanian school one can mention one outstanding name: Theodor Costescu, a remarkable educator, school head and scholar who founded numerous education and cultural institutions, both in our country and abroad, for the Romanians living there. He was the initiator and founder of two major edifices: the „Traian" Secondary School and the Cultural Palace.

The latter is the creation of a group of intellectuals from Drobeta Turnu Severin which was led by Theodor Costescu, dr. Gruiescu and Tache Babeanu. It was erected in order to mark the fulfillment of an old Romanian dream - the Great Union. Its construction began in 1913 but was stopped during the First "World "War and then resumed in 1918. Theodor Costescu's efforts and sacrifice made its completion possible and it could be opened in 1924 when two other cultural institutions were also inaugurated: the I.G. Bibicescu" Library and the „Dr. C.I. Istrati" Museum.



The University College



The THEODOR COSTESCU Cultural Palace

Culture



The IRON GATES Region Museum

The Museum of the Iron Gates Region is only one of the culture centers of our town which has been carrying on an intense activity, contributing to the scientific, musical and artistic education of the town inhabitants and becoming a centre of cultural irradiation for those areas situated south of the Danube which are inhabited by Romanians who have been separated from their brothers by the cruelty of history.

Founded in 1912 by Al. Barcacila, the museum was concerned with preserving the archeological remains of our town, an activity which was begun as early as the 19th century. It thus became a reference institution for the Romanian museography the very moment it made its appearance. Its impressive collections - which have been completed since 1951 with a cultural, scientific and artistical heritage which used to belong to the „Dr. C.I. Istrati" Museum (it was open for some 25 years in the west wing of the Cultural Palace) - contributed to the modern organization of several exhibitions with various profiles: history - archeology, natural science, aquarium, folklore etc. (1972).

The Arts Museum exhibits great values of the Romanian feudal art, as well as artistic creations of the 19th and 20th centuries (paintings signed by famous Romanian artists such as Grigorescu, Tonitza, Palady, Petrascu, Darascu). The eastern wing of the Cultural Palace has been housing the „I.G. Bibicescu" Library (since 1924). It bears the name of its donor and is the richest book donation in Romania (more than 30.000 volumes, including books and Journals).

Subsidiaries of this library have been organized in Romania and on the other bank of the Danube, all of them being endowed with books and furniture. But, of course, this is not

the only place in Turnu Severin where young people can acquire all sorts of technical, artistic or data processing knowledge.



Municipal Stadium

Churches

Who visits the city of Severin will be pleased to enter the spiritual foundations of the Danubian town. The first church was erected in Turnu Severin by its own founders, Major Ion Ciupagea and his wife Dumitrana who were favoured by some governmental help. This building was altered several times between 1872-1906.

As for the „Grecescu” church, it was built in the proximity of the hospital with the same name, in the western area of the town. Its founders, Ioan Stoian Grecescu and his wife Ioana gave this magnificent church their name and chose 'St. John the Baptist' to be its patron. Its value and beauty are given, among other things, by its inside painting, Gheorghe Tatarescu's creation dating from 1872. Two local art teachers skillfully cleaned the painting twice: Alexandru Rasmerita in 1898 and Theodor Zarnea in 1908. The roof of the church which was initially made of copper sheets was torn off by the German invaders in 1917. The present roof was restored in 1920.



The Grecescu Church (1868 - 1872)

An European town from its very beginning, Turnu Severin was a perfect host for all those who were i At the same time, the Hungarian s boundaries inhabitants belonging to other religions. different from the orthodox one: catholic, Israeli, evangelist. Their representatives erected their own prayer and workshop places, schools and cemeteries.

Parks & Public Gardens

Drobeta Turnu Severin is the town of parks and gardens. They made their appearance and developed while the town itself was developing. The first park which appeared in 1959 on the Danube embankment was the Public Garden which today is called the "Dragalina" park and includes the remains of the Severin Fortress as well as the "Theodor Costescu" Cultural Palace

The outline of the Roses Park was sketched between 1895-1899. The park houses the Heroes' Monument-Crypt which was erected in 1933 and the modern building of the Park Hotel.



Roses Park

The Central Park, created between 1899-1901 is located in front of the Administrative Palace and it houses a bust of Emperor Trajan (erected in 1906 by D. Franasovici) and that of King Decebalus (1972, M. Butunoiu).

The „Traian" Secondary School park houses Mihail Eminescu's bust (sculptured by Gheorghe Anghel) as well as the statuary group „Theodor Costescu and the student" (by Ovidiu Onofrei).

The town parks include rare species of trees such as magnolias, tulip trees as well as Ginkgo Biloba, the oldest plant species of the world also called „the living fossil".

In front of the Cultural Palace, a kinetic fountain was built in 1979 and was given the name „Hora de la Balacita" (.the „Hora from Balacitza"). It is a daring combination of light, kinetics and water. Its author is the sculptor Constantm Lucaci.

The museum of the Iron Gates Hydropower Station together with the Turbine Hall, the Vodita Monastery, as well as the St. Ann Monastery of Orsova can be easily reached from Turnu Severin. It is from this region that the wonderful area of Cazane becomes accessible both by water and by and. Northwards and eastwards one can also visit the Topolnitei Hermitage as well as the Strehaia and Gura Humorului Monasteries.

The Days of Drobeta Turnu Severin

Since 1990, the mayoralty of the municipal town of Drobeta Turnu Severin has resumed the festival dedicated to the days of the town and its patron saint. They had been interrupted after the Second World War.

The days of Drobeta Turnu Severin take place every year on the 22nd and 23rd of April when the birthday of the town and the religious feast day of its patron saint are being celebrated. Year after year, the festival has been more and more extensive and better prepared.

The festivals have included scientific debates and symposiums dedicated to the history of the town, feasts, exhibitions, contests, parades of old costumes or of those belonging to the Mehedinti district, musical performances, dances, fire works and, most of all, a lot of good mood.

Almost the entire population of the town has attended such activities enthusiastically. They have had outstanding guests, both from Romania and from abroad.

Every year, various officials from the twin town of Orly (France) and from many other European cities and towns on the Danube take part in the town festival with particular and renewed pleasure.

About the editor

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