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## BSB831 / HERiPRENEURSHIP

### WORK PACKAGE: T1

**WORK PACKAGE TITLE:** DESIGNING A COMMON FRAMEWORK TO JOINTLY MANAGE AND COMMUNICATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNESCO HERITAGE IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA

**ACTIVITY CODE:** A.T1.2

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** Building the Heritage Experience Inventory at UNESCO designated Areas in the Black Sea Basin

**DELIVERABLE CODE:** D.T1.2.2

**DELIVERABLE TITLE:** Statement of Significance

D.T1.2.2 Statement of Significance

COUNTRY: Republic of Moldova

Name of the Asset: *Belvedere Point at The Cultural Natural Reserve Orheiul Vechi*





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**Cover:** “Belvedere Point” Old orhei, R. of Moldova.  
View to the river Raut and cave church.

**Source:** Business Development Capital SRL

**Significance:** The place where nature can be observed in combination with human living activities.

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## CONTRIBUTOR

### Mariana Mischevca

Mariana Mischevca holds a Master degree in History from Moldova State University and a post-university research scholarship (Erasmus Mundus) at the Faculty of History at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University from Iași, România. Mariana Mischevca has worked at the Ministry of Culture since 2018, being responsible for the museum sector and intangible cultural heritage. Her main responsibilities are: elaboration of politics; coordination of the subordinated institutions' activity; coordination of the activities of the experts' commission; organization of cultural events etc. She is the national coordinator of the European Heritage Days (program of the Council of Europe) and the focal point for the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Her knowledge of the intangible cultural heritage is a valuable asset for the project implementation. She is fluent in Russian, English, and Romanian.

PROJECT AFFILIATION: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL  
Heritage Expert and Consultant

### Ostapov Alina

Alina Ostapov has a Master in Architecture from Technical University of Moldova, Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Department of Architecture. She is a doctoral student at the Institute of Cultural Heritage, specializing in Theory and History of Architecture and passed training courses „Architectural Conservation” and „Support to promote cultural heritage in the Republic of Moldova through its preservation and protection”. As well she has a certificate for cultural and creative leaders in the framework of EU - Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme.

She gained experience being involved in projects like: "Community Guided Urban Strategies in Historic Cities (COMUS)"; „Support to promote cultural heritage in the Republic of Moldova through its preservation and protection”; "From tradition to contemporaneity". Alina is a communication manager in international projects and collaborated with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova as an Expert-evaluator of cultural heritage projects. She is fluent in Romanian, Russian and has a good level of English and basic knowledge of Ukrainian.

PROJECT AFFILIATION: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL  
Expert - Cultural Heritage and History of architecture



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## RECORD SHEET 07: ASSET NAME

Belvedere Point at The Cultural Natural Reserve „Orheiul Vechi”

### SECTION 1: ASSET ID

#### Name

Belvedere Point at The Cultural Natural Reserve „Orheiul Vechi”

#### Category Civil

#### Unit of Recording

- NATURAL HERITAGE       MAN-MADE HERITAGE  
 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

#### Select unit of recording

Heritage Item

#### Subcategory

Archaeological Site

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## Website

<http://orheiulvechi.com/patrimoniul-cultural/complexe-lupestre/>

## Location

**Country:** Republic of Moldova

**Region:** Orhei District

**Locality (town, village):** Trebujeni com

**Address (street, number):**

**Geographic location (coordinates, altitude, relief, waters):**

47.31088899246342, 28.96555275271227

**Access:** The Orheiul Vechi Archaeological Landscape is situated in the central eastern side of the Republic of Moldova, in the Orhei District, Trebujeni. The distance from the Capital Chişinău is approximately 52 km to the North East, on the M2 and then R23 roads.

**Working Hours:** 24/h

**Prices of the services:** Free of charge (at the moment of elaboration of this document)

## Ownership

**Ownership:** Public;

**Owner:** Ministry of Culture;

**Present function:** Cultural Natural Reserve Orheiul Vechi (2008)

**Former functions:** Museum Complex „Orheiul Vechi”

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## Gallery

		
<p>Road descent to Belvedere point, BDC 2022</p>	<p>Road descent to Belvedere point, BDC 2022</p>	<p>Road descent to Belvedere point, BDC 2022</p>


  
**ANTRIM** **BDC**  
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Belvedere point, BDC 2022



Nature around belvedere point, BDC 2022



Nature around belvedere point, BDC 2022

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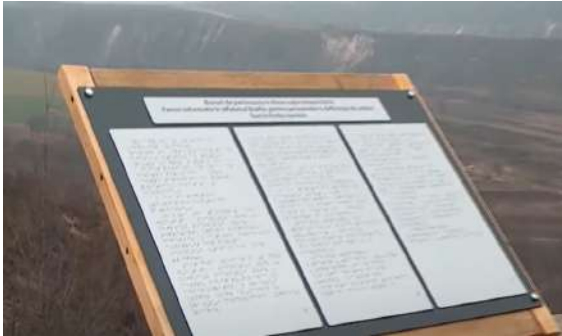


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<p>View of the nature, BDC 2022</p>	<p>Information in Braille, BDC 2022</p>	<p>information board, DBC 2022</p>
		

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Belvedere point, view to the cave church, BDC 2022

Belvedere point, view to the cave church, BDC 2022

Belvedere point, view to the cave church, BDC 2022



Belvedere platform, BDC 2022

Source: Business Development Capital SRL (BDC), 2022

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## Landscape Elements

(Buildings, streetscape; heritage, farming, vegetation, fauna, waters, etc):

The Cultural-Natural „Reserve” is located in central-eastern part of Moldova and lies along the gorge of the lower course of the Răut River, 14 km upstream from the confluence of the Răut and the Dniester Rivers. Administratively, the Landscape comprises the territory of the Trebujeni and Butuceni villages, belonging to the Trebujeni commune of Orhei district. At the same time, the unusual and severe terrain around the Landscape render it perhaps the most naturally defensible in the region.

The Landscape resembles a hemispherical amphitheater of 3,500 meters (East - West) x 1,500 meters (North - South), one that is defined by the Răut’s steep and high banks. The extremely tortuous course of the Răut, 15 to 20 meters wide, has carved embedded meanders, which together stretch for 7,000 meters, through limestone bedrock. The downstream left bank is nearly upright and reaches ca. 100-148 meters in altitude. At the western and southeastern ends of the escarpment, two natural passages, respectively 80 meters and 300 meters wide, link these naturally fortified central areas to the surrounding region.

In the southern part of the Landscape, the Răut has cut a very sharp loop that encloses, from the north, south and west, the limestone Promontory "Butuceni". The length of the promontory is 3,000 meters (East - West), and the widths vary between 15 meters in its western end and 300 meters in the eastern one. Its altitude gently increases eastwards, from 1 meter at its western end to 120 meters at the eastern one.

The Landscape is beautiful because of its highly unusual geomorphology, and it and its surroundings are *rich in subsistence resources*: chernozem soils that are enormously productive, meadows and forests rich in wild fruits and medicinal herbs, many springs of fresh water, varied aquatic and terrestrial fauna. *At the same time, the area abounds in building materials: limestone, sand, clay and wood.* The Landscape provides excellent natural defensive conditions, not just the natural escarpments, but also because it is at a generally higher elevation than the wide surrounding areas, while **the Răut and its tributaries ensure the connection with the Black Sea, where maritime trade flourished since the 5th Millennium BC.** These factors combine to render the landscape of *Orheiul Vechi* very different from the rest of the region. That





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is why, *since prehistoric times, humans in large numbers have been attracted to the area.* Therefore, the density of archaeological evidence is unusually high within the Landscape.

### Belvedere Point

On the promontory of the Old Orhei was created a belvedere platform that allows visitors to enjoy the surrounding and the beauty of the area without harming the nature.

Taking into consideration the high flow of visitors to this landscape reserve, in order to avoid the negative consequences on the natural environment and archaeological sites in the area, the first Belvedere Platform in Old Orhei was built.

The capacity of the platform is 20 people and has an area of 38 m<sup>2</sup>, being completed with a paved access road, 115 m of protection railing, information panel and artistic lighting system. Also on the platform there is a desk with information about the cultural heritage of the Cultural-Natural Reservation "Orheiul Vechi", made in the Braille alphabet, for the visually impaired, to ensure a perceptible image of what surrounds them. Thus, the platform gives access to people with special needs, thus strengthening their social inclusion.



Architecturally, a simplified image is proposed, repeating the outlines of the relief and the color of the place. Local masons took part in the construction, which gives the work authenticity.

The purpose of the Belvedere Platform in Orheiul Vechi is to create the necessary conditions for the maintenance of the cultural and historical environment of the reserve, to direct the flow of visitors to specially equipped areas, to avoid subsidence of the soil and the destruction of the plant carpet over large areas with the possibility of developing new types of tourism and thematic routes.

Also, the administration of the reserve is focused on attracting tourists with special needs and involving everyone in the process of getting to know the cultural and

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natural heritage of the country. The platform provides a truly accessible tourism, while at the same time responsibly preserving the cultural heritage and natural resources that exist in the Republic of Moldova.

The development of the Belvedere Platform at Orheiul Vechi will serve as an example of reducing the degradation of high-interest areas and creating conditions to stimulate their attendance through thoughtful, attractive signage and infrastructure.

Belvedere Point offers the opportunity to see the gorge of the Raut River and the archaeological complex of Orheiul Vechi at a glance. On the opposite side, you can see a cape with many grottoes, which over time were adapted for cave settlements. On the left side, you can see the old city of Shehr al-Jedid.

## Natural Patrimony of the area

### Aquatic System

The cultural-natural reserve "Orheiul Vechi " benefits from very rich aquatic natural resources, these representing an essential element of the complex. By specific means they have been capitalized by man since ancient times, thus constituting another type of combination of the natural phenomenon with the cultural one. The practical necessities forced the man from the Orheiul Vechi area to invent and build various technical systems for extracting drinking water, these having the shape of wells of different types and depths or arranged water springs. From a *hydrogeological point of view, the Orheiul Vechi area is a component part of the Moldavian artesian basin.* Within the limits of the historical-natural complex Orheiul Vechi, six aquatic horizons are highlighted:

- The horizon of alluvial, alluvial-eluvial deposits of Holocene age (al-adQIV).
- The horizon from alluvial deposits of Eopleistocene - Upper Pleistocene age (alE-QIII).
- Sporadic waters from eluvial, eluvial-deluvial deposits of the Upper Pliocene-Holocene age (e, ed, N23-QIV).
- The aquatic horizon from the alluvial rocks of the Upper Pliocene (aN22-3).
- The aquatic horizon from the rocks of package III of the middle Sarmatian (N1S23).
- The aquatic horizon of the middle and lower Sarmatian (N1S1- N1S22).

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## The Fauna

The fauna is also an element that highlights the originality and uniqueness of the Orheiul Vechi Reserve. The hydro-geological and vegetal diversity of the reserve determined the development of a quite varied fauna, which covers practically all the ecological niches.



The reservation includes 144 vertebrate fauna species, including a significant number of insects and mollusks, all of which are concentrated in 7 ecosystems: forests, steppe meadows, meadows, rocks, rivers, agricultural and rural localities.

The European Red List includes 3 species of the flora of the reserve: *Genista tetragona*, *Lilium martagon* (Forest lily), *Schivereckia podolica*, and 2 species are included in the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and natural habitats in Europe (Bern Convention, 1979). Plant species included in the Red Book of the Republic of Moldova (2015):

- endangered species: *Aconitum lasiostomum*, *Cotoneaster melanocarpus*, *Ornithogalum boucheanum*, *Sempervivum ruthenicum*, *Sorbus domestica*, *Stipa tirsia*;
- critically endangered species (CR): *Hypericum montanum*, *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, *Paronychia cephalotes*, *Saxifraga tridactylites*;
- vulnerable species (VU): *Alyssum gmelinii*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Fritillaria*, *Galanthus nivalis*.

## The Vegetation

The originality of the vegetation within the „Orheiul Vechi” Reserve lies in its location in a specific rocky region, located at the intersection of the forest area with that of steppe and forest-steppe. This determined the formation in this space of a very varied vegetal carpet and of diverse ecosystems.



Within the „Orheiul Vechi” Reserve, various types of vegetation are found: forest vegetation, steppe, meadow, aquatic vegetation, marsh and petrophilic vegetation.

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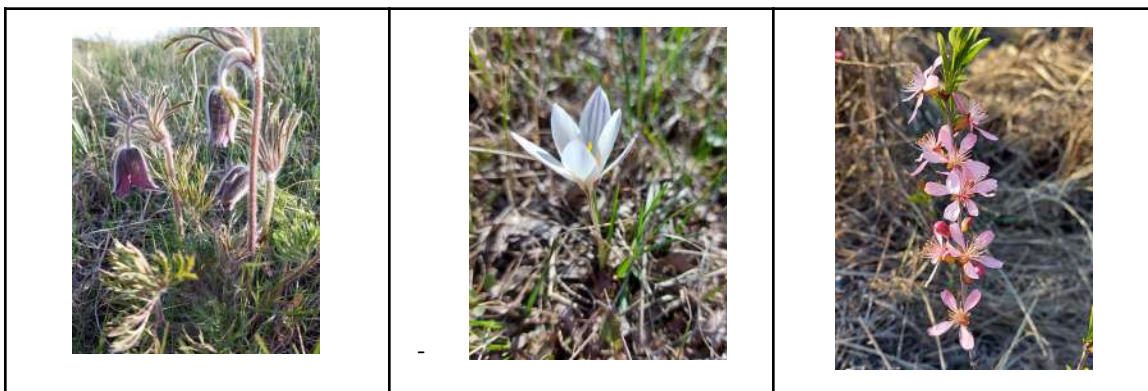
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Overall, the flora of the reserve includes over 500 species of vascular plants, of which 62 are rare species, protected nationally and internationally. Among them are 17 species included in the Red Book of the Republic of Moldova, 25 species included in the Red List of Romania, 10 species included in the Red Book of Romania, 18 species are included in the Red Book of Ukraine.



## Cultural heritage

### The Cave Monastery Peștera

From the Belvedere Point tourists can admire on the opposite promontory *the cave monastery “Peștera”*, located at the northern edge of Butuceni village. The monastic complex consists of two basic units: the church and the body of monastic cells. Above the monastic complex, on the surface of the Butuceni promontory is installed a *stone cross* (17th - 18th centuries) and arranged a *Bell Tower* (1820).

### Dating/ Period and Functions

*Belvedere Platform* was inaugurated in 2021 offering a great view of the sights and new attraction for tourists.

*Orheiul Vechi Cultural-Natural Reserve* was established by art. 6 of Law No. 251-XVI of December 4, 2008. It is a public institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova. The Reserve includes historical and cultural heritage assets (archaeological sites, cave complexes, vernacular architecture complexes, ethnographic objectives), traditional settlements), natural heritage goods (geological

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and landscape ensembles, flora and fauna), terrestrial and aquatic surfaces in which the regulated capitalization of natural resources is carried out, agricultural, industrial and tourist activities are practiced.

It has an area of 4978.99 ha and a protection area of 6085.57 ha. The perimeter of the Reserve is 43517.29 m, and the perimeter of the protection zone is 48647.86 m. Furceni and Brănești villages) - 381.57 ha, Susleni - 8.06 ha, Mașcăuți - 647.17 ha and Molovata - 17.59 ha.

The protection zone of the Reserve includes territories from the communes / villages Trebujeni - 68.35 ha, Susleni - 633.76 ha, Piatra - 338.60 ha, Ivancea (villages Furceni and Brănești) - 1255.18 ha, Mașcăuți - 2597.97 ha, Holercani - 479.42 ha, Mărcăuți - 232.16 ha, Molovata - 480.13 ha.

In the central part of the Reserve is delimited the *Orheiul Vechi Archaeological Landscape*, nominated in 2015 for inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The *Archeological landscape* occupies an area of 539.12 ha with a perimeter of 13232.04 m and has a protection area of 10525.433 ha, which corresponds to the space of the Reservation.

Orheiul Vechi is one of the most important archaeological sites in the Republic of Moldova containing traces of human habitation from the Palaeolithic to the present time. Systematic archaeological research began in 1946 and has continued up to now (Postică 2006, 14-17). The result of archaeological investigations has been the discovery of 26 sites from the Palaeolithic to the modern age, 5 hill fortresses from the ancient period and 2 fortresses from the Middle Ages, 2 medieval cities, 6 cemeteries from the ancient and medieval times, 177 cells in the limestone rocks by the river Raut from the Middle Ages to the modern age (Postică, Boboc, Chirică, Buzilă, Lazu, Corcimari, and Zub-cov 2010, 53-57).

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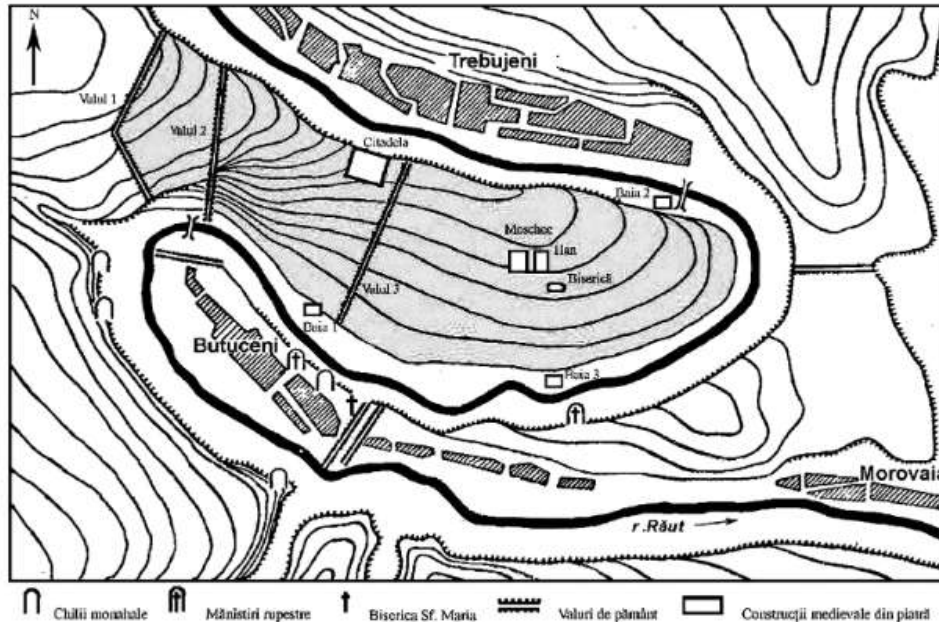


Fig. 1 - The general plan of the Orheiul Vechi site (after Postică 2006, Fig. 1).  
<https://www.cceol.com/search/viewpdf?id=870069>

I - ancient settlements on the territory of the Orheiul Vechi Museum Complex (Upper Paleolithic, Neolithic, Cucuteni-Tripoli culture);

II - the Getae (relations with the Greek colonies);

III - the emergence of the Medieval city and the domination of the Golden Horde. New Town - Shehr al-Jedid, 1340s-1360's of the 14th century (crafts: blacksmithing, pottery, house building, ornaments, bone processing, coinage);

IV - Orheiul Vechi - border fortress of the Medieval state of Moldova, 15th-16th century (occupations of the inhabitants: house construction, tile craft, agriculture and fishing, pottery, blacksmithing, ornaments and bone processing, cult objects);

V - folk art - the 18th - 20th centuries - continuation of the old tradition (traditional costumes, embroidery, carpets, stone and wood carving).

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## Description (history, features etc.):

The Orheiul Vechi Reserve due to its picturesque scenery and historical potential, where nature and history have merged into harmony, is a special cultural landscape consisting of natural and man-made objects.

This complex is actually an open-air natural museum, where time seems to have stopped, and the connection with the past is striking.

Archaeological research carried out at the *Orheiul Vechi* has uncovered many well-preserved settlements. The earliest of them is a Late Paleolithic (ca. 30 - 20,000 BC) campsite. Several long-term rural settlements were uncovered at the gentle slopes of the „Peștera” Promontory. One of such settlements dates from the Copper Age (the *Cucuteni culture*, ca. 4,500 - 4,000 BC), another one dates from the Early Iron Age (*Chișinău-Corlăteni culture*, ca. 1,200 - 900 BC). At the same place, Middle Iron Age (the *Getaean culture*, ca. 400 - 200 BC), Late Iron Age (the *Poienestî-Lucașeuca culture*, ca. 200 - 100 BC), and early medieval period (ca. 500 - 1,300 AD) sites have been found; some have undergone limited test excavations to establish dates. The well-preserved traces of two urban medieval (ca. 1,300 - 1,550 AD) settlements are located at the top of the „Peștera” Promontory. Also, many single potsherds have been found within “Peștera”; they date from the Late Bronze Age (*Noua culture*, ca. 1,400 - 1,100 BC), the Early Iron Age (*Saharna-Cozia culture*, ca. 900 - 800 BC), as well as from the final stage of the Iron Age (*Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov culture*, ca. 200 - 400 AD).

The richest, best preserved and most visible settlements at the “Peștera” Promontory, date from the 12th - 16th centuries AD. They were uncovered by archaeological investigations carried out during the last 60 years. This research revealed that in the XIIIth - XIIIth centuries AD, a rural fortified settlement existed at the top of the promontory.

Around 1,241 AD, the Tatar-Mongols conquered this fortified settlement. At the first half of the 14th century, the local chiefs of the Golden Horde founded a town of central-Asian type Şehr al Cedid / Yangı Şehir (meaning New Town) in the same place. Until 1368, when the Tatar-Mongols left the town because of pressure from Lithuanian and Moldovan armies, it was the most important political, administrative, economic, military and religious center in the region. The archaeological remains of this town include the well-preserved ruins of the fortification system, several houses, a palace,

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a mosque, a caravan serai, a mausoleum, three baths, and many other structures built of local limestone or bricks.

Soon after 1368 AD, one of the most important Moldovan medieval towns, Orhei, was built on the remains of the Tatar-Mongol town. Archaeological features that pertain to this town include many structures: among them, the fortification system built of earth and wood, which barred the natural entrance to the settlement from west; and the citadel and the residence palace of the regional government. During the middle of the 16th century, at the demand of Turkish authorities, which since the XVth century had been exercising political and military control over the region, the Moldovan authorities destroyed the fortifications. After that, the town decayed and turned into a rural settlement. In the 18th century, the inhabitants abandoned the settlement and moved to the present-day Trebujeni village.

The earliest archaeological evidence at the „Butuceni " Promontory was uncovered around the present-day church. It dates from ca. 900 - 800 BC, and apparently belongs to the Thracian *Cozia-Saharna culture*. In ca. 500 - 300 BC, the Getaes settled here and transformed the entire promontory in a very well fortified settlement. During that period, the Butuceni Getaean fortress was one of the most prominent in the region. It is one of the largest fortified settlements (3,000 x 100 m) in the Getaean world of that time. Its fortification system was ingeniously adapted to the natural landscape. It was highly complex, as it combined the natural fortification characteristics of the promontory and the human-made structures. Thus, the high and upright banks, as well as narrowness of the promontory were the main elements of the natural fortification. To enforce it, Getaens barred the promontory by several outer and inner ditches and ramparts. They dug ditches deep in the rock and built the ramparts of local wood, stone and earth. One of the most outstanding and well preserved features uncovered within the Butuceni fortress is the circular sanctuary, which is the earliest of this type in the Getaean world. This settlement is the richest in Greek Pontic imports (displaying a particularly high percentage of amphorae) as compared with other "barbarian" settlements of the region. At the southern foot of the promontory, on the territory of the present-day Butuceni village, an open Getaean satellite settlement dating from the Vth - IIIrd centuries BC has been found.

Field investigations *at the „Butuceni " Promontory* also uncovered traces of the *Cucuteni culture (5th - 4th millennium BC)*, as well as 8th - 9th and 14th century settlements. From ancient times until today, the „Butuceni" promontory was often treated as a sacred place, seen as a source of religious inspiration and an appropriate

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location for cult practices. Important evidence for religious practices include about 200 carved into the limestone escarpments along the Răut. *The earliest were dug in the XVth century AD.* Many of them were - and some still are - the scenes of religious rituals. Most of the caves were used as shelters for the monks. In some of them, floor plans and other evidence suggests that they were used as churches or places of prayer or rituals. One can see many religious texts and symbols engraved in the cave walls, the earliest dating to the medieval period. Significantly, a still extant Orthodox Church was erected in 1904 at a location close to the Getaean sanctuary and the medieval cave churches and monk shelters.

A modern visitors center with an Exhibition Room is located on the territory of the Reserve. There are displayed prestigious archeological vestiges discovered during the archaeological excavations. The exhibition is structured according to the historical ages and reflects all the important stages of human civilization from the Orheiul Vechi micro-zone, beginning from Paleolithic till late Medieval Ages. In the museum complex are stored heritage objects that comprise 6 thousand items of inventory (tools, arms, metal and glass jew els, coins, etc.) and more than 100 thousand fragments of ceramics. The museum collections include precious ethnographic items (fabrics, traditional peasant clothing, etc.), elements of medieval and modern architecture, shown during thematic exhibitions.

### ***The stone fortress of Orheiul Vechi*** **placed on the left side of the Belvedere point**

The stone fortress of Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei), known as “the citadel”, was located on its north-western out-skirt of the River Raut right bank, on a cape surrounded from three sides by water and high steep cliffs, between the modern villages of Trebujeni and Butuceni. In the 60s of the 14th century that place was a large eastern-type settlement, identified as the New City (Shehr al-Jedid/Yangi-Shehr) or the westernmost urban settlement of the Golden Horde Empire. And after 1370, the Moldavian city originated there, known today as the Orheiul Vechi. Archaeological investigations have shown that the citadel was built in the times of the Golden Horde. It’s the only fortress of the Moldavian principality, adapted to the early structure like the brick building of the elon-gated plan and included the ancient Turkic mausoleum in the 19th century. Some scholars believe that this is the palace of Emir Demetrius, who converted to the Christianity, while others see in this structure the khanqah the abode of dervishes, the “Muslim monastery” (khanqahis in Persian - and khaneqa and khanegah arises from it; tekke is in Ottoman-Turkish, and tekije and takia arises from

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it; zauiyah is in Arabian, from which comes zawia and zaouia). The hypothesis of the construction of the palace of the Tatar prince Demetrius is an improbable one, the version of the khanqahs is much more convincing. At some point, the khanqah from Orheiul Vechi could turn into a fortified khanqah, with some features like both the abode of the Sufis and the eastern ribat. An analog can be the fortified khanqah of Pir-Guseynon from the Pir Sagat River (Azerbaijan) and a fortified khanqah of Hoca Ahmed Yesevi from Turkestan (Kazakhstan). It is possible that the Golden Horde authorities were planning to build other objects here and, perhaps, would like to create a memorial and representative complex, playing the role of an essential outpost of Islam in the western possessions of the Golden Horde.



Photo view of the ruins from the west (photo M. Bacinschi, online source).

### **Bird watching in the nature**

Around 100 species of birds live at the "Orheiul Vechi" cultural-natural reservation, which represents a third of the total number of birds that can be seen in the Republic of Moldova. Visitors have the chance to bird watch in every natural habitat: in meadows, forests, waters, villages, and agricultural fields. The guesthouses in Trebujeni and Butuceni have binoculars that you can use for a better experience.

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## Person and Event History

Persons, Events and Organizations associated with the History of the Building/Site/Area/ Period (start date, end date for each):

The name of „Orheiul Vechi” comes from the homonym town that existed in these places during the late medieval period. The term of „Orhei” is a linguistic echo of the medieval town („Orhei” coming from a Mongol term *Urga*), meaning palace and residence, but also from „ruins of a palace”, the latter meaning reflecting in fact the situation on the abandoned town at the beginning of modern times).

The exceptional defense potential of the Landscape and its connection to the natural trans-regional communication network have been ingeniously turned into account during the Early Iron Age and the Middle Ages by the societies whose main resources were provided by war, trade and political domination. The most remarkable parts of the Landscape are: the compact group of Getae fortresses (6th - 3rd centuries BC), the Mongol town of Shehr al-Jedid (ca. 1330 - 1369 AD), and the Moldovan town of Orhei (ca. 1370 - 1540 AD). All of them were the most important political-and-military, economic and cultural centers in the region.

The archaeological remains within the Landscape reveal very intense demographic and cultural interferences, bringing together peoples and cultures specific to the territories between China and Carpathians, Anatolia and Baltic Sea. The many religious edifices uncovered within the Landscape - shrines, temples and monasteries - display the succession and coexistence of different religions: pagan, Muslim and Christian, while the laic buildings combine oriental and Carpatho-Danubian architectural styles.

The Mongolian town Shehr al-Jedid (in translation - the New Town) has passed through two basic periods. During its early period the town predominantly showed the elements characteristic to nomadic military camps. During the second period it transforms into a nearly fully oriental town.

The architecture of Shehr al-Jedid town includes various public buildings, built in oriental style, characteristic at that time for the Islamic world of the vast Eurasian space. These constructions were erected by foreign architects and craftsmen, brought here during Mongol expansion from different territories, including Central Asia, Povolgia and Caucasus.

The architecture of Shehr al-Jedid town is characterized by public buildings of stone and/or brick. Among them can be distinguished: the *Mausoleum*, the *Tasch Hauli*

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*Palace*, the *Juma Mosque*, the *Caravanserai* and the three *Baths*. Also there were documented various handicraft workshops (pottery, jewels, metallurgy, etc.) and multiple dwelling houses (on ground or buried) provided with technical installations typical for oriental culture, like *tandyr* oven or *sufa* stove with heating system *khan*.

The urban settlement founded during the Mongol domination at Old Orhei, known in the literature as the Shekhr al-Dzhedid City (= New Town) is situated in the Răut River Valley (a tributary of the Dniester River), in the district of Orhei, 60 km North-East of Chişinău (the Republic of Moldova); it includes many cultural levels, from Prehistory to the late Middle Ages (15th–17th centuries). The Shekhr al-Dzhedid City, placed on a dominant height and surrounded on three sides by the meandering Răut River, was an important political and economic center in the region in mid 14th century, especially during the period 1363–1365, when it was the residence of Abdallah, Khan of the Golden Horde.

According to the researchers interested in the history of the cities founded by the Mongol khans, Shekhr al-Dzhe-did (=Yangi Shekhr) was one of the 17 administrative and artisan centers within the Golden Horde with the right to mint coins bearing the name of the city. The artisans brought from the empire came with architectural canons, with construction techniques and materials assessed for centuries, which they used masterfully when they edified the settlements within the Răut valley. The topography of the city was determined by the influence of Mongol civilization, the central perimeter of the settlement being dominated by three monumental buildings: a mosque and two Caravanserais. Commercial areas, workshops, three oriental bathrooms, the district of the urban patriciate, homes of simple city residents, two cemeteries, etc, were identified in the archaeological campaigns. The artisans' quarter was placed in the eastern part of the city and it comprised workshops of potters, jewelry makers, blacksmiths, etc, surrounded by diverse annex structures, cisterns/tanks for water preservation, as well as dwellings, hearths, etc. The cemeteries were placed at the western periphery of the city. A testimony of the intense circulation of merchandises from the Crimea, from the region of Lower Volga or from more remote areas of the Mongol empire was the discovery of a rich collection of luxury clay vessels, coins and other payment methods, such as the treasury of 65 silver ingots recently found at Old Orhei in 2007.

After the Mongols had abandoned the Prut-Dniester region in 1369, the area from the bank of the Raut, named by the autochthons "Orhei", became the most important fortification at the eastern border of the Country of Moldova. Orheiul Vechi's

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prosperity and heyday in that period chronologically corresponds with the years under the great reigns of Alexander the Kind (1400-1431) and Stephen the Great and Saint (1457-1504).

Within the medieval urban network of Moldavia, the settlement at Orheiul Vechi represented a phenomenon whose particularities emerged from the specificity of its geographical location and its unusual relief.

The medieval fortress of Old Orhei represented a fortification that organically combined architectural elements formed by nature and architectural elements created by the human genius, a fact noted by several researchers. From this point of view, the Old Orhei citadel represented a joint creation of nature and civilization; a work carried out by the course of history, a work wrought by nature for millennia and finalized by man in the Middle Ages.

Orheiului Vechi occupies the surface of the "Pestera" promontory, formed by the bed of the Răut River near the villages of Trebujeni and Butuceni, at a distance of about 15 km to the south from present-day Orhei. This territory, with an area of 2000×700 m, represented a place fortified by nature, which had all the typical characteristics of a fortress. From the north, east and south, the territory of Orheiul Vechi was protected by the water and the steep Sarmatian limestone banks of the Răut River, with a height of about 70-100 m. The only access road to the area of Orheiul Vechi in the Middle Ages was on the west, at the foot of the promontory, where there was a bridge connecting the city to the outside world. A possible annihilation of this bridge should have the impact of closing access to the settlement and transforming it into a classic fortress. However, the current archaeological picture shows us that in the nominated sector from distant times there were two huge earthen fortifications, which protected the settlement from foreign invasions.

### ***Orhei fortress in the strategy of Ștefan cel Mare***

King Ștefan cel Mare, like his predecessors, had to know quite well the strategic and military particularities of the settlement at Orheiul Vechi. The fact that the settlement was located near the Dniester River, but at the same time in the central part of the eastern border of Moldova, led the great ruler to make this fortification the most important point for the defense of Moldova borders. The Orhei Citadel, in the last quarter of the XVth century, had to provide the defense of Moldova at an unpredictable border, which could be affected from the east at any moment. For that reason, Ștefan cel Mare has introduced the Chief Governor administration of the Orhei

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who is mentioned in historical documents immediately after the invasion of the Tatars in 1469 and the victory of Stefan the Great from Lipnic.

Starting with the year 1470 Ștefan cel Mare built a new strategy in the security politics of the eastern border of Țara Moldovei. In the context of this strategy, a new place was reserved for the city-fortress Orhei, which became the central element in protecting these borders.

During this period, Ștefan cel Mare established the administration of Orhei, which was governed in the next three decades by prominent persons of the time, members of Sfatul Domnesc (Prince’s Council): Radu Gangur, Galeș, Vlaicu with his son Duma, Grozea Micotici, etc. *Due to their high status, they contributed to the growing role that the fortress from Răut had to play in the general defense policy of Țara Moldovei.*

Starting from 1470 and until 1494, the governors of Orhei represented a constant factor in the politics of Moldova. The importance of Orhei in the reign of Stefan the Great is told by the fact that the uncle of the Chief Governor, Vlaicu, together with his son Duma, the cousin of Stefan the Great, was appointed mayor of this city and during 1481-1484, Vlaicu and his son Duma were constantly at the top of the list of great boyars in the Royal Council.

Orhei was a natural fortress endowed with additional fortifications built at different stages of its evolution, including in the period of Ștefan cel Mare’s rule, when, with the help of the governors, new fortifications were built, or repaired the old ones. Three fortifications date from this period: two big earthen and wooden walls meant to block the entrance to the settlement from the west and a stone citadel situated in the central part of Orhei city.

An argument supporting the importance of Orhei fortress in the politics of the sovereign Ștefan cel Mare is the endowment of the fortress with fire artillery, documented archaeologically by the discovery of two splendid bronze cannons.

Before the discovery in Orheiul Vechi, four artillery pieces of the XVth century were known in Romanian space. The oldest is considered to be a bronze bombard found in the citadel of Giurgiu, dated 1445, possibly from the time of the battle of Vlad the Impaler.

The use of bronze cannons in the defense of the Orhei fortress during the reign of Stefan the Great is eloquent evidence in favor of the special role of this fortress in the

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defense of the eastern border of the country and the special attitude of the great ruler to this fortified place.

The discovery of two cannons in Orheiul Vechi is an echo of a large-scale military event associated with the history of the citadel city on the Raut River. The fact that these very precious items, carefully hidden by the defenders of the fortress in the backfill of the ruined complex, and subsequently not taken out of the "shelter", speaks of the tragedy of the events that took place at that time. Taking into account the upper chronological limit of dwelling no. 52 (in which cannons were found) is established on the basis of coins of the first decade of the XVIth century (Postică 2006a, 114-116) and, judging by written documents, the named tragic event may have been of the Crimean Tatars, led by Beti Girei in 1510, who, according to the chronicler Grigore Ureche, “without news with a large number of Tatars in three places they entered the country, plundered from Orhei to Dorohoi and above the Prut River, plundered and enslaved many people” (Ureche 1988, 142).

The indication in this context by the chronicler of the fact that the Tatars plundered the territory of the country from Orhei is an important evidence that the fortress on the Raut River, at the end of the XVth century - beginning of the XVIth century, was the "Rubicon" of the eastern Moldavia. However, the special attitude of Stefan the Great to the fortress of Orhei came from this very premise, which at that time, being comprehensively analyzed, allowed the king to build a perfect strategy for the defense of these borders with the expected result, evidence of this fact is the stability in this region over the past three decades XVth century.

A new stage in the history of the Răut fortress began after 1494 when the governors of Orhei ceased to be members of the Royal Council, a fact that led to its gradual degradation and abandonment until the middle of the 16th century.

**The Reserve became an ideal host for cultural events due to its unique natural landscape and the rich history formed over time.**

One of the most impressive is *DescOperă* (eng.- „discover”, actually meaning “discover the opera”) festival - a special music event, of rare beauty, held at the foothills of the Orheiul Vechi Reserve cliffs. This event brings opera and classical music out of the traditional settings into the heart of nature. The festival goers have the opportunity to enjoy perfect weather, fresh air,



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beautiful scenery and classical music, performed live on an improvised stage, set right in the middle of nature.

The festival is held annually, each third weekend of June and is visited by more than 5000 local and foreign tourists from Sweden, Germany, Austria and Romania. During the event, the spectators can discover the beauty of classical music in a genuine rural landscape. The natural amphitheater provides an ideal sound for the orchestra and the voices of opera soloists. The participants have the opportunity to visit and explore the Reservation - the site, the monastery, the Christian ruins, the museum and the households of the local people.

The idea to organize an open air opera concert in Orheiul Vechi Reserve belongs to the Austrian conductor Friederick Pfeiffer who in the summer of 2015 visited the National Opera and Ballet Theatre „Maria Biesu” of Chisinau to conduct a production of Verdi’s “Requiem”, in the memory of Maria Biesu. During his stay, he was accommodated at Butuceni, where every morning he strolled along the Reserve enjoying its scenic landscape to find inspiration to better rehearse Verdi’s music. On one of such strolls he met Anatol Butnaru - the host of Eco-Resort Butuceni and that is how the idea to hold a musical event at the foothills of ancient cliffs, in the heart of nature, was born.

The event is reflected by press and by several TV posts, and the project results are used in order to promote Orheiul Vechi as a touristic destination and unique natural landscape.

Thus, the first edition of *DescOperă festival* opened in June of 2016, with a traditional production of Verdi’s “Rigoletto” and “Requiem”. In June of 2017, at the Festival’s second edition, the National Philharmonic „Serghei Lunchevici” joined the festival with both a symphony production and a gala-concert of J. Strauss music, while National Opera and Ballet Theatre „Maria Biesu” performed G.Bizet’s “Carmen”. The third edition of June 15-17, 2018 featured opera productions by Strauss, Verdi and Orff. In 2019, great artists evolved on the scene: the National Philharmonic „Serghei Lunchevici” (conductor Friedrich Pfeiffer, Austria), Valentina Nafornița, Rusanda Panfili, Sergiu Mușat etc.

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Photo source: ANTRIM

Another great event that is related to the Reserve is the organization of the **European Heritage Days in 2020**. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research launched an awareness campaign on the necessity of conservation of the cultural heritage with the generic **The Archaeology of the Cultural Heritage**. The organizers invited the public to discover the heritage monuments and sites nearby and to discover their history, customs and traditions.

The campaign started at the Cultural-Natural Reserve „Orheiul Vechi” with the involvement of the Foundation CARITAS Moldova. The volunteers and local people collected the waste found on the Reserve territory, together with the students from Fine Arts and Design Faculty, the State Pedagogical University „Ion Creangă”. During the EHD activities, the students gave a new life to the waste and transformed it into art objects.

The activities ended with the inauguration of the exhibition **Butuceni ArtObject**.

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## SECTION 2: SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

### Designations

#### NATIONAL

The Status of the Monument protected by State is stipulated in the Register of the monuments of the Republic Moldova protected by State, approved by the Decision of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova no. 1531/1993 (Central Zone: no. 1,066 - the Getae Butuceni Fortress; no. 1,067 - the Butuceni complex of caves; no. 1,069 - Bosie Pârcalab Monastery; no. 1072 - medieval city Orhei archaeological Reserve; no. 1,073 - Peștera cave Church, belfry and the stone cross; no. 1,074 - Butuceni funeral stone; no. 1240 - Trebujeni I; no. 1251 - Orheiul Vechi Citadel; no. 1,248 - The cave near Trebujeni; no. 332 - Mașcăuți fortress).

The Status of the Cultural-Natural Reserve is stipulated in the Law on the creation of the Orheiul Vechi Cultural and Natural Reserve, no. 251/2008 and the Decision of the Government on the creation of the Orheiul Vechi Cultural and Natural Reserve, no. 228/2009.

The Cultural-Natural Reserve „Orheiul Vechi” is the only such institution in the Republic of Moldova. It was created in order to protect, preserve and save for the present and future generations the cultural landscape „Orheiul Vechi”, which represents a set of historical-cultural and natural-landscape monuments in the Răut river gorge, micro-zone of Trebujeni, Butuceni and Morovaia villages in Orhei district, with exceptional value for national and international civilization.

The Landscape is well known in the Republic of Moldova and among international specialists and it represents a group of exceptional archaeological sites, located in a natural fortified space, with unique features on the world scale. Being a result of the millennial impact of human genius on the environment, the Landscape Orheiul Vechi represents an extraordinary deposit of heritage values, a place of rare beauty and great attractiveness which deeply impresses each visitor.

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## UNESCO

In 2014, the unit of cultural heritage *The Archaeological Landscape „Orheiul Vechi”* was created by the Order of the Ministry of Culture with a surface of 539,127 ha. In 2017, the landscape was included on the UNESCO Tentative List in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of the landscape focuses on a vision of analysis and presentation of the archaeological heritage in the central area of the Cultural-Natural Reserve „Orheiul Vechi”.

It was proposed for the nomination on the UNESCO World Heritage List based on the criteria (II) and (V) of UNESCO. According to them, *the „Orheiul Vechi” represents a remarkable example of human traditional settlement, of using the landscape, of interaction between cultures, human and nature, which become vulnerable to the impact of contemporary irreversible changes. The nomination file was composed from three archaeological sites: „Peștera” (Orheiul Vechi), „Butuceni” and „Mașcăuți”, which contains archaeological artifacts from 23 ancient settlements dated from the Upper Paleolithic Era (20-30 thousands years B. Chr.) until the modern epoch.*

## Statement of Significance

The exceptional defense potential of the Landscape and its connection to the natural trans-regional communication network have been ingeniously turned into account during the Early Iron Age and the Middle Ages by the societies whose main resources were provided by war, trade and political domination.

The archeological remains within the Landscape reveal very intense demographic and cultural interferences, bringing together people and cultures specific to the territories between China and the Carpathians, Anatolia and Baltic Sea.

Human settlements have brought significant transformation to the landscape through building the large defensive structures and digging over 200 caves and grottoes, as well as by the dramatic deforestation. Thus, the Orheiul Vechi Landscape is the joint work of nature and man.

The rarity and unique characteristics of the Orheiul Vechi cultural and natural Landscape also contributed to the arrangement and development of sacred spaces. It

<sup>1</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6220/>

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is well known that rocks and caves are often deified, or are used as areas for carrying out religious, magic and ritual acts.

**Authenticity:** The landscape is made exclusively of original material. Geological formations, vistas, the Raut River, and even soils remain essentially as they were many millennia ago. All archaeological structures are of original fabric; only a few of them have undergone anastylosis, and all of these with minimal consolidating material. Most of the archaeological structures from the Palaeolithic until the Medieval period have not been excavated. Excavated structures have been well documented, consolidated and preserved. Excavated artifacts have been cataloged, treated for conservation, and deposited in appropriate storing condition. The location and setting convey a very strong and unique sense of place. The traditional use of the landscape for agriculture is very much in evidence, as are the ritual and religious uses of dramatic landscape features. Although the villages surrounding the project date more recently than the Middle Ages, the traditional architecture and use of symbols and color resonate with that time period and do not distract attention from the drama of the landscape. There is almost no modern construction, and that which is present today will be removed or concealed through landscaping according to the management plan for the site.

**Integrity:** All elements of this naturally fortified archaeological landscape possess great integrity. Archaeological material has been inventoried and evaluated over 60 years of research; from this is clear that the overwhelming majority of such material remains are well preserved and in situ. Within the Landscape are more than 1000 archaeological structures, including settlements, cemeteries, churches, caves, mosques, caravanserai and dwellings, etc. Among these, more than 300 have undergone limited testing by archaeologists, and exposed remains have been consolidated and protected. Although much of the landscape has been in continual agricultural use for many centuries, the disturbance to archaeological remains has been superficial due to the absence of deep plowing. The scientific and historical importance of these remains is outstanding. They contain material with the potential to clarify the role of “barbarians” in the ancient world: analyzes so far suggest that they mediated between the cultures of Europe and Asia in ways that have not yet been understood. Future archaeological excavations might further indicate that the occupation of Orheiul Vechi by Tartars, portrayed in European literature as devastating to civilization, might have ultimately enriched civilization on a global scale. Further, the landscape as sensed by the visitor retains enormous integrity. Stunning, panoramic views convey in a glance the advantages conveyed to humans by the landscape in terms of protection and inspiration. Essential resources, including water, rich soil, and

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abundant building material that enabled the inhabitants to withstand sustained assaults on this position are still very much in evidence. Most cultic and ritual complexes (caves, churches, and altars) are in clear view. Any economic activities and natural processes, which would threaten the landscape, are under the permanent monitoring and control of officials (the Administration of the Reservation, local governments, the Ministries of Culture and Environment).

### **Nature**

*From a hydrogeological point of view, the Orheiul Vechi area is a component part of the Moldavian artesian basin.*

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Common borders. Common solutions.



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