



Belgorod-Dniester (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy)

Belgorod is a small town on the river Dniester, a two-hour car journey from Odessa. At first sight it has little more to recommend itself than the many other modest provincial towns you come across in Ukraine. Yet, look closer, and you will find one of the most interesting archaeological sites of the Greek colonisation: the remains of the polis “Tyras” lie here; the place in which Herodotus once lived and wrote. You will also find one of the largest ancient fortresses in Europe: Akkerman or “The White Fortress”. A tour from Odessa to Belgorod lasts around 8 hours.



Belgorod is a little town which lies 90 kilometres outside the city of Odessa. It has 60 thousand inhabitants, a small port and a shoe factory. The modern day life of the town is no different to thousands of other towns across the Ukraine. So what draws hundreds of thousands of tourists to this place every year?

This spot proved equally irresistible to the Ancient Greek colonisers because of its particularly favourable geographical credentials: a large fish-rich freshwater liman (estuary), the only area of high ground in the region, a natural haven from the sometimes fierce maritime winds and the fertile black earth, despite the proximity to the coast. And so thus, in the 6th century B.C., the Tyras polis was founded.

Throughout its long history the settlement of Tyras has been described with reference to both real and mythical people and events: the Scythians, the Sarmatians, Herodotus, King Darius III of Persia, Alexander the Great, the poet Ovid, Heracles and the list could go on. All these peoples and individuals have some connection with Tyras.

Archaeological excavations have only been undertaken in a small section of the town. The remains of the polis remain untouched on account of the sub-



sequent discovery of the incredible ancient monument that came to be known as the Akkerman Fortress (the White Fortress). This is one of the best fortified objects in Europe with a footprint of more than 9 hectares. The length of the walls are 2.5 km, the moat is 14 metres wide with a depth of 20 metres.

It is an interesting history. For more than 300 years the fortress belonged to the Ottoman Empire, but there is a debate about the time of construction and who actually commissioned the fortifications. Was it the Genoese, the Venetians, the Golden Horde or the Moldovans?

Who built what and who made what precise contribution to the development of the fortress, nobody knows for sure. But one thing is certain: the fortress is ideally situated in the landscape and photographs of the structure always come out really well ...

There are other places of interest in Belgorod-Dniester which are less well-known but certainly no less historically significant; for example, the Sarmatian tomb and a mediaeval Armenian church.

The excursion we propose will last approximately 8 hours.