



Olbia – an ancient Greek town on the northern Black Sea coast

Olbia lies at the mouth of the river Bug and was founded around 7 BC by colonists from Miletus.

The excursion from Odessa to Olbia archaeological site takes you through incredible landscapes in the region of the southern Bug and the Dnieper. Both rivers were important waterways in ancient times and remain so today. The entire region is of enormous significance in terms of the ethnography of Ukraine.



A journey from Odessa to the archaeological excavations of an ancient Greek polis takes you through an amazing region of the Southern Ukraine: The Pobuzhe (around the Southern Bug river) and the Podneprov'e (around the river Dnieper). These historically vital waterways are both a unique natural ecosystem and culturally sacred, central to the formation of the Ukrainian national identity.

The polis Olbia was founded during the time of the great Greek colonisation in the 6th century B.C. According to archaeologists, the father of history himself – Herodotus – settled here in 450 B.C. and composed the fourth volume of his “Histories”, “Melpomene”. Alexander the Great’s army failed to take this city and it survived until the 4th century A.D., when it was destroyed by the Huns and never rebuilt. This fact makes it all the more valuable to academic study as it is one of very few ancient cities whose ruins were not covered by subsequent medieval settlements.

One of the most intriguing topics to study in relation to the ancient Mediterranean world, is the establishment of mutual cooperation between the Hellenic and other peoples (the Barbarians). The polis of Olbia was one of the



Oleshky Sands, the largest
expanse of sands
in Ukraine

points of contact between such different cultures and civilisations and therefore offers fascinating insights for the academic and interested tourist alike.

Olbia lies some 150 km from Odessa and 20 km from the town of Nikolaev and an excursion there can be completed in a day. However, if you can designate two or three days to the trip, we propose taking a look at some amazing natural and cultural sites to enable you to discover these well-kept secrets of Southern Ukraine:

- The *Oleshky Sands* which encompass the largest area of open sands in Europe, along with the greatest area of artificial forest (planted upon the sands to stabilise the zone). The general area of the landscape is 150 km by 30 km.
- The *Kinburn Peninsula* (on the lower Dnieper, Kherson Oblast): a unique natural ecosystem 40 km long and 10 km wide. More than 400 lakes are to be found here, both freshwater and brackish which attract more than 240 species of nesting birds. Swathes of grass steppe alternate here with artificially planted pine forest. On the lowlands, especially valuable relict



Dnieper near
Nova-Kakhovka

forests are to be found. These date back a very long way and were even described by Herodotus, who named them “Gileya”.

- The *Mertvovod* is a small river that flows across the oldest landmass of Eurasia and which has formed amazing slot canyons in pink granite. It used to have a sacred status amongst the Scythians.
- *Askania-Nova* is a biosphere reserve which consists of a zoological park, a botanical garden, and an open territory of virgin steppe.
- *Nova-Kakhovka* is a picturesque town on the banks of the river Dnieper where you can see the result of successful socialist construction, as well as the problems that it brought with it. The town is recognised as a “Monument of Architecture”.

On this trip you will also travel through places that were originally founded as German and Swiss colonies.