

OHRID

Pearl of the Balkans

- Cultural Heritage
- Natural Beauty
- UNESCO Legacy

Macedonia

Founded ~200 BC

UNESCO 1979

Lake & City



OVERVIEW

A Living Museum on the Water

Ohrid is one of Europe's oldest continuously inhabited cities, sitting on the shores of Lake Ohrid in southwestern Macedonia. With over 365 churches, a thriving old bazaar, and an ancient fortress, Ohrid is often called the "Jerusalem of the Balkans."

The city's roots stretch back to Neolithic times; ancient Macedonians called it Lychnidos, meaning "**City of Light.**"

365+

Historic Churches

~3,000

Years of History

288 m

Lake Depth

35,000

Inhabitants

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE



Cultural Heritage

Inscribed 1979

- One of Europe's oldest and finest examples of urban architecture
- Over 365 Orthodox churches spanning Byzantine, medieval and Ottoman eras
- Rare 11th-century frescoes in St. Sophia Cathedral
- Birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet through Saints Cyril & Methodius disciples
- Plaošnik archaeological complex with 5th-century basilica mosaics
- Ancient fortress of Tsar Samoil dominating the old city



Natural Heritage

Extended 1979

- Lake Ohrid is one of Europe's deepest and oldest lakes (over 2 million years old)
- Home to more than 200 endemic species found nowhere else on Earth
- The lake acts as a living laboratory for evolutionary biology
- Crystal-clear waters with visibility up to 22 metres deep
- Unique 'living fossil' species such as the Ohrid trout
- Designated as a rare 'dual heritage' — only one of 39 such sites worldwide

One of only 39 sites in the world inscribed for BOTH cultural and natural outstanding universal value.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Byzantine Churches

Over 365 medieval churches, one for every day of the year. St. Sophia Cathedral (11th c.) features exquisite Byzantine frescoes. Church of St. John at Kaneo perches dramatically over the lake.

Cyrillic Alphabet

St. Clement and St. Naum — disciples of Saints Cyril and Methodius — founded the Ohrid Literary School here in 886 AD, creating the Glagolitic and early Cyrillic scripts.

Samoil's Fortress

The ancient fortress of Tsar Samoil crowns the hilltop above the old city. Built on foundations from Hellenistic times, it offers sweeping panoramas of the lake and city.

Old Bazaar & Architecture

The charming old bazaar (Čaršija) and Old Town preserve traditional Macedonian architecture with overhanging upper floors, cobblestone streets and wooden craftsmanship.

Plaošnik Complex

Ancient 5th-century Early Christian basilica with stunning floor mosaics. The site was restored in 2002 after excavations revealed the original foundations of St. Clement's church.

Living Traditions

Ohrid Summer Festival (est. 1961) brings classical music, theatre and ballet to iconic historical sites. Local crafts include Ohrid pearls — unique lustrous beads made since antiquity.

POINTS OF INTEREST

01 Church of St. John at Kaneo

Iconic 13th-century church perched on a cliff above the lake. Perhaps the most photographed spot in Macedonia.

02 St. Sophia Cathedral

11th-century cathedral with rare Byzantine frescoes, one of the finest collections of medieval art in the Balkans.

03 Samoil's Fortress

Medieval fortress from the 10th century on Hellenistic foundations — stunning views of the lake and old city.

04 Plaošnik & St. Clement

Early Christian basilica (5th c.) with brilliant mosaic floors, rebuilt monastery church of St. Clement and Panteleimon.

05 Ohrid Old Town

Maze of cobblestone lanes lined with traditional architecture, antique shops, galleries and waterfront promenades.

06 Bay of Bones Museum

Remarkable reconstructed prehistoric stilt settlement on the lake, dating back to 1200–700 BC.

07 National Museum

Housed in the Ottoman-era Robev Residence, showcasing archaeology, icons and regional history across three floors.

08 St. Naum Monastery

Monastic complex at the southern tip of the lake, surrounded by springs, peacocks and ancient chapels.

LAKE OHRID — NATURAL WONDER

One of Europe's Ancient Wonders

Lake Ohrid is estimated to be between 2 and 5 million years old, making it one of the world's oldest lakes and a rare sanctuary of evolutionary biology. Its extraordinary clarity — visibility up to 22 metres — and stable temperatures have allowed species to evolve in isolation over millennia.

The lake is shared between Macedonia (two-thirds) and Albania (one-third), and both nations collaborate on its protection. Ohrid trout (*Salmo letnica*) is a species unique to these waters, along with over 200 other endemic species.

358 km²

Surface Area

288 m

Max Depth

**2–5
Million**
Age (years)

22 m

Visibility

200+

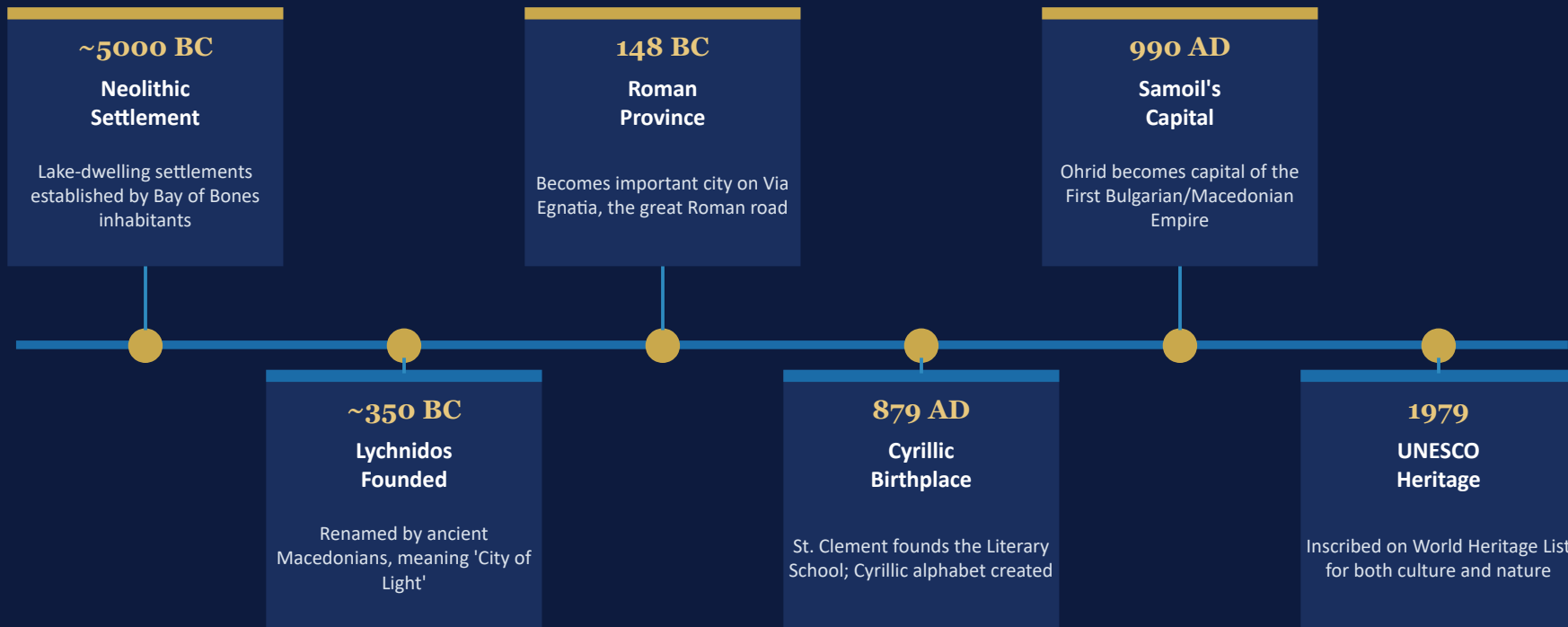
Endemic Species

**693 m
a.s.l.**
Elevation

Conservation Significance

Lake Ohrid is a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and part of the Ohrid-Prespa transboundary biosphere reserve — one of few European sites where freshwater biodiversity has survived virtually unchanged since the Tertiary period.

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME



VISIT OHRID

Where history meets nature — and every stone tells a story.

Ohrid is more than a destination — it is a living archive of human civilisation and one of Europe's last truly unspoilt natural lakes. From ancient churches and Byzantine frescoes to crystal waters teeming with endemic life, Ohrid's dual UNESCO status is a testament to a place where culture and nature have coexisted in harmony for millennia.

Come and discover why travellers call it the soul of the Balkans.

Best Time to Visit

May – October

Airport

Ohrid St. Paul (OHD)

UNESCO Status

Dual (1979)

Country

Macedonia