



Belvedere Point at The Cultural Natural Reserve Orheiul Vechi

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

Anna was a young woman filled with excitement and anticipation. She had just received important news that she was eager to share with her beloved. News that led her on a journey of discovery about the rich cultural heritage of Moldovan traditional fine crafts and priceless artifacts.

Arriving at the Cultural-Natural Reserve "Orheiul Vechi", nestled in the heart of Moldova, Anna discovered a wonder of nature. The reserve stretches along the Răut River gorge and the landscape was defined by the winding course of the river and towering cliffs that creates a hemispherical amphitheater. This place couldn't appear overnight, it must be a **result of the millennial impact of human genius on the environment, located in a natural fortified space created by nature, thought Anna.** Recalling her knowledge of geography and history, Anna concluded that here nature and history have merged into harmony, creating a special cultural landscape consisting of natural and man-made objects.

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

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The surrounding stones whispered to Anna that *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” on the hill where the Belvedere platform is located.*

Anna saw a “Belvedere platform” and went there to have a better view of the place. The platform was recently constructed, and was offering the chance to experience the breathtaking beauty of the area without damaging its natural state and preserving the place for future generations.

From the Belvedere Platform Anna could take in the entire view of the Raut River gorge, the archaeological complex of Orheiul Vechi, and more. Anna admired the beauty of the landscape with its unusual geomorphology, and its surroundings rich in subsistence resources: chernozem soils that are enormously productive, meadows and medicinal herbs. *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.*

Seeing the surrounding Anna now understood why since prehistoric times, humans have been attracted to the area.



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With this image in mind Anna closed her eyes to feel the history of the place and the murmur of nature. She remembered her grandmother's words as her thoughts ventured deeper into the lush and verdant hills of the Orheiul Vechi reservation. The rustling of the leaves, the thrill of the birdsong, and the soft whisper of the wind became a symphony that played just for her. She felt like she was discovering a new world.

At that time the only thing that existed was the rhythm of her breath and the beating of her heart. The world around her transformed, no longer just a collection of plants and animals, but a living, breathing entity that welcomed her with open arms. Each blade of grass, each grinder, each snail became a character in her own personal story, a reminder of the boundless beauty that surrounded her.

She felt her heart grow lighter and her spirit soar. She felt like she was walking in the footsteps of her grandmother, and that each step she took was a step closer to finding her own home within the wild, untamed beauty of nature.

As a nature enthusiast she was delighted in the peaceful beauty of the reserve. The picturesque view of the valley was like a hidden gem, tucked away behind the peaceful cliffs.

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

The vegetation within the reserve is equally diverse, ranging from forests to steppe and meadows. The intersection of the forest, steppe, and forest-steppe areas has created a unique and varied landscape that is sure to impress and delight nature enthusiasts.

At the Belvedere Platform Anna started to discover the soul of Moldova at Orheiul Vechi, where timeless beauty lies in wait. She embarked on a journey to understand the essence of the culture and heritage, where humility, strength, and vulnerability are woven together to create a tapestry of depth and courage. Anna let the peaceful and serene landscape be her guide as she uncover the secrets of the nation. Here she could take a step back from the fast-paced world and embrace the stillness of a timeless village, where eternity was born and continues to live on.

The landscape guided her look on the opposite side of the platform, where she saw a cape dotted with grottoes that have been adapted over time into cave settlements. Some of them seemed to be functional even today, as she observed a monastic cave on the opposite promontory in the Butuceni village. Above the cave monastery was installed a stone cross and arranged a Bell Tower.

Curious to find out more about that complex, Anna decided to continue her journey to that direction, to discover the secrets of the cliffs.



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