

# Museum of Honey



## Museum of Honey – Kosharitsa Village, Nesebar Municipality



Republic of Bulgaria,  
Southeastern Planning Region



- **Challenge-based solution:**
  - Sustainable infrastructure and resource management
  - Technology transfer and innovations
- **Type of innovation :**
  - Process Innovation
  - Marketing Innovation
  - Product Innovation
- **Source of innovation:**
  - Practice

## Summary

The first and only Honey Museum in Bulgaria was established in 2001 by beekeeper Kiril Kirov in the village of Kosharitsa, nestled in the foothills of the Balkan Mountains near the Sunny Beach resort. The museum features a beekeeping exhibition, a demonstration apiary, honey tastings, decorative hives, a glass observation hive, and an apitherapy cabin known as the “House of Health.” It also presents the history of honey production and trade in the region, linked to the ancient town of Nessebar. All bee products are sold directly to end customers. The museum actively participates in events, including the International Honey Festival in Nessebar. The initiative supports the local economy, promotes biodiversity conservation, and introduces visitors to the natural and cultural heritage of the Black Sea region. It stands as a successful example of apitourism, where entrepreneurship, ecological awareness, and authentic experience are brought together in a sustainable tourism model.



## Museum of Honey

### Description of the Challenge

Humans have been domesticating bees for over 10,000 years, primarily for honey and other valuable bee products. In a debate held at the Royal Geographical Society in London, the Earthwatch Institute declared bees the most important living species on the planet. Scientists continue to warn that bees are at serious risk of extinction, with recent studies estimating that around 90% of the global bee population has already disappeared.

Beekeeping in Bulgaria has deep historical roots, dating back to the time of the early Bulgarians. The country was once a prominent producer of honey and beeswax. In the 21st century, amid globalization and environmental degradation, eco-friendly forms of tourism - including bee tourism - are growing in popularity. Bee tourism, a form of ecotourism, focuses on beekeeping and bee products. It offers visitors the chance to explore apiaries and bee museums, observe beekeepers at work, learn about the health benefits of bee products, and understand the ecological interdependence between humans and bees.

Within the framework of the blue economy, the development of bee tourism in the coastal regions of Bulgaria's Black Sea is especially important for biodiversity conservation, given bees' vital role in plant pollination. Bee tourism helps protect bee habitats and supports healthier ecosystems overall.

Moreover, it offers development opportunities for rural coastal areas, generating employment, increasing local incomes, and fostering sustainable economic growth in small communities. Bee tourism also promotes local products - such as honey, pollen, wax, and royal jelly - strengthening small-scale producers and the regional economy. It raises public awareness about the importance of bees and beekeeping for environmental health and human wellbeing.

Beekeeping is an integral part of the cultural heritage of many regions. Bee tourism supports the preservation and promotion of this heritage, reinforcing its place within the broader context of the blue economy.

Kosharitsa is a village of about 1,500 residents, located 3-4 km from the popular Sunny Beach resort. It is a quiet, well-developed village nestled in the foothills of the Balkan Mountains. The area is part of the Natura 2000 network, as it lies along the Via Pontica bird migration route, and is near the Kalinata Nature Reserve with its pristine alluvial forest. The surroundings offer many eco-trails, fishing spots, and mountain biking routes. The local economy is driven by tourism, traditional crafts, and agriculture. Due to its proximity to major coastal resorts, numerous guesthouses have been established in the village.

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## Description of the Innovation

The creation of Bulgaria's first and only Honey Museum in the small village of Kosharitsa is a notable example of sustainable development in the field of apitourism. Founded in 2001 by renowned beekeeper Kiril Kirov - recipient of numerous awards, including the title "Beekeeper of the Century" - the museum showcases the craft of beekeeping through a blend of education, demonstration, and sensory experience.

Kirov manages two apiaries. The main one, with 200 hives, is located near the village in a linden forest close to the sea, rich in wild herbs and nectar-producing plants. A smaller, demonstration apiary is situated on the museum grounds. Annual yields average 20-30 kg of honey per hive in a normal year. With the support of EU programmes, Kirov has upgraded his hives and equipment. His production - honey, propolis, wax, pollen, and bee bread - is sold directly to end customers.

Spread across 6 decares (approx. 1.5 acres), the Honey Museum traces the history of beekeeping and the evolution of tools and techniques used in honey production. The location is symbolic: ancient Nessebar, nearby, was a centre for honey and beeswax trade dating back to the Thracian era. Historical accounts describe ships departing from its port, loaded with honey and beeswax destined for the Near East and India, and caravans transporting these goods from the Eastern Stara Planina, Strandzha Mountains, and Thracian plains.

To bring this history to life, the museum curator has created engaging displays of reconstructed hives from different periods and cultures, as well as modern systems used globally.

Visitors can taste a variety of bee products, including honey rakia (brandy), and explore decorative hives modelled after local landmarks - such as the Church of St. Stephen in Nessebar and a Khan's yurt. A unique glass hive allows for direct observation of a bee colony's daily life.

Another highlight is the "House of Health" - a wooden apitherapy cabin where guests can breathe air filtered through beehives. In the museum shop, visitors can purchase dozens of types of pure honey and bee products, sample honey-based sweets, drinks, and dishes, and enjoy a truly immersive experience in traditional and ecological beekeeping.

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## Description of the business model

The business model of the Honey Museum in the village of Kosharitsa is built on a combination of elements that ensure its sustainability and continued development. Alongside its exhibition on the history of beekeeping, traditional and modern hive types, and the uses of bee products, the museum operates a shop offering a wide range of honey and related goods. Visitors can also enjoy meals and beverages made with honey, contributing to a rich and immersive experience.

The beekeeper sells his products - including honey, propolis, beeswax, pollen, and bee bread - directly to end customers. The museum is actively promoted through school visits and educational events, which help raise awareness among Bulgarian audiences. Its location near major seaside resorts also draws numerous foreign tourists.

The museum's audience includes children and youth, individual travellers, families, organized groups visiting Nessebar and Sunny Beach, beginner beekeepers, and locals interested in apiculture and regional traditions.

A key driver of visibility and product promotion is the annual International Honey Festival in Nessebar, launched in 2002 with the support of Nessebar Municipality and initiated by Kiril Kirov himself. He was the first participant in the festival's honey exhibition and received dozens of offers from small organic and farm product retailers. Today, his descendants continue to attend the festival each year, showcasing their honey and bee products and expanding their reach among business clients.

The family's products are now available in a major retail chain in Sofia as well as in several local stores along the coast. Due to the unique nature of the museum, promotion is carried out primarily through media coverage, travel agencies, and participation in regional and national fairs, farmer markets, and other events.

Inspired by the success of the Nessebar festival, a similar event - "Honey, Sea, and Sun" - is now held each summer in Pomorie, where local beekeepers present their products to hundreds of international visitors.

The creation of the Honey Museum in Kosharitsa and its successful establishment as a tourist attraction near the Bulgarian Black Sea coast exemplify a strong synergy between sustainable agricultural production and innovative tourism. It offers a model for developing new forms of alternative tourism - specifically apitourism - that support local economies while preserving natural and cultural heritage.

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## Contact:



Kosharitsa Village, Nessebar Municipality



<https://agri.bg/novini/zivot-na-selo-burgaskoto-selo-kosarica-prez-ocite-na-edin-pcelar>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j52pxr0Jj3g>

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