

Museums in the Balkan

Preface

Discussing all the museums you can find in the Balkan, i.e. in countries like Bulgaria; Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, and so on, would be a tall task. I'm not even remotely up to that. All I can and will do here, is to give a small impression of what I saw in some museums I visited in 2025.

Moreover; I will pretty much limit myself to whatever the museums had to offer with respect to the “[Danube Culture](#)” covered elsewhere in the hyperscript. Ans I will keep it very short.

These museums I have visited:

- **Belgrad** (Serbia) National Museum
- **Lepenski Vir** (Serbia) National Museum; Muse of Lepenski Vir
- **Nessebar** (Bulgaria) Archaeological Museum
- **Novi Sad** (Serbia) The Museum of Vojvodina
- **Rousse** (Bulgaria) Regional Historical Museum
- **Sofia** (Bulgaria) Museum of National History
- **Sofia** (Bulgaria) National Archaeological Museum
- **Varna** (Bulgaria) Archaeological Museum
- **Vienna** (Austria) Naturhistroisches Museum

There are many more museum, of course. I like to mention:

- The **National History Msueum of Romania** in Bucharest, which was closed when I was there. It contains, among other things, the “Thinker of Cernavoda & The Sitting Woman of Cernavoda; the amazing ceramist highlighted [here](#)
- The **Cucuteni Neolithic Art Museum** in Piatra Neam that also exhibited some of the objects shown in the Danube culture module.
- The **Cucuteni Archeological Site Museum** close to Târgu Frumos.

Serbia National Museum in Belgrad

The Serbian National Museum in Belgrade is a must for aficionados of the Danube culture. It contains countless interesting objects, including stuff from Lepensky Vir. The display of the objects seems to be fairly new and well lit. Plenty of explanations and a time line you can follow:



I'm showing just a few of the ojects; there are many more. The museum is not just for archaeology but also shows art (including a Breughel and Hieronymus Bosch) and other things.



Anthropoid Figurine

No! It is actually a figurine of the Starcevo-Deronje culture, see below under "Novu Sad". Starcevo culture is an archaeological culture of Southeastern Europe, dating to the Neolithic period between c. 6200 and 4500 BCE.

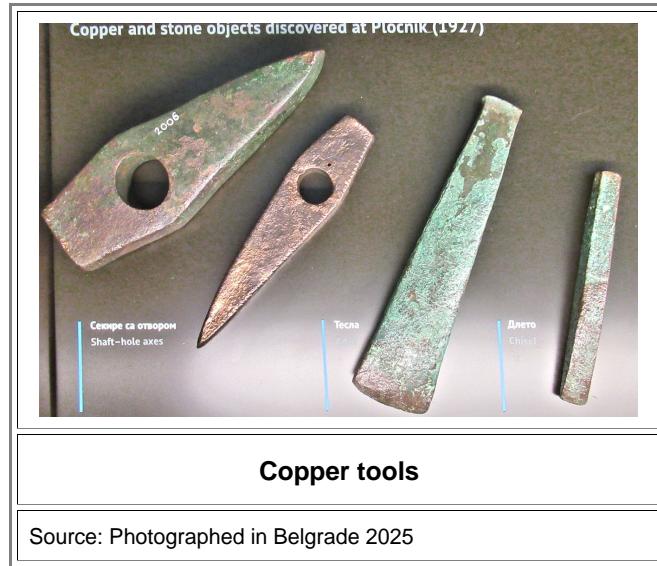
Source: Photographed in Belgrade 2025



Vinča figurines, about 4800 - 4500 BC

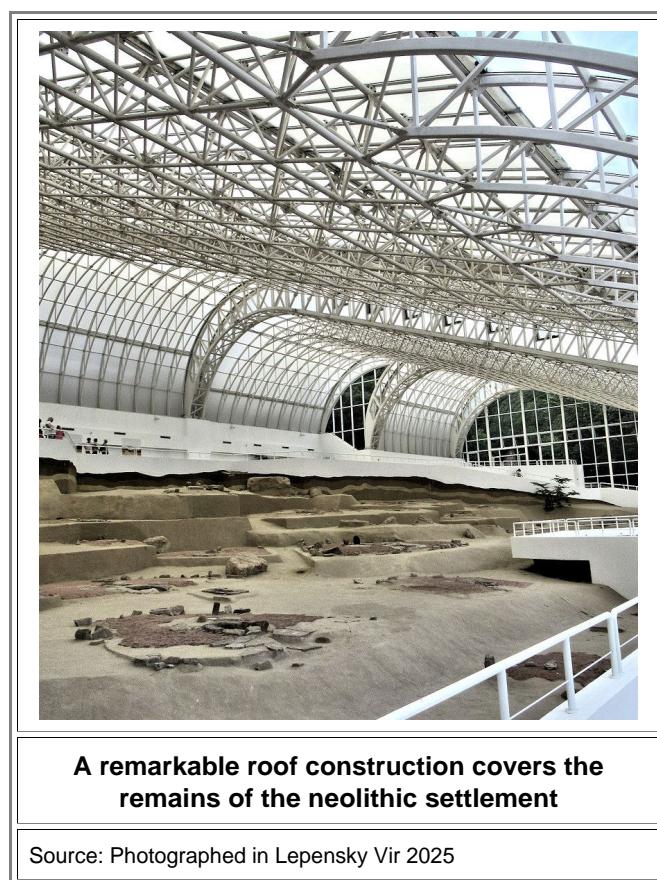
Source: Photographed in Belgrade 2025

They also had plenty of copper things; some even restored to their original appearance (never done in Western Museums) plus good texts to go with it.



Lepensky Vir

Le⁺pensky Vir in Serbia shows the remains of a neolithic settlement that existed between 9500/7200 and 5500 BC. The site is covered by a spectacular building.



● The huts of the stone age people contained humanoid sculptures of "Fsh head Gosds



A Fish-head God .

Source: Photographed in Lepensky Vir 2025

▶ We have seen these Gods before in the Belgrad Museum:



Fish head gods in ihe Belgrad Museum:

Source: Photographed in Belgrad 2025

● Having the same object displayed in two museum (one then usually the “National” Museum) seems to be quite commoner in the Balkan. One of the object is obviously a coy but it is not always clear which one that is. It is also quite common to restore objects by “plastering over” misusing parts. It is cunningly done and you won’t always notice. In the West that would be heresy but I actually quite like it.

▶ Below some Fish Gods displayed in the museum:



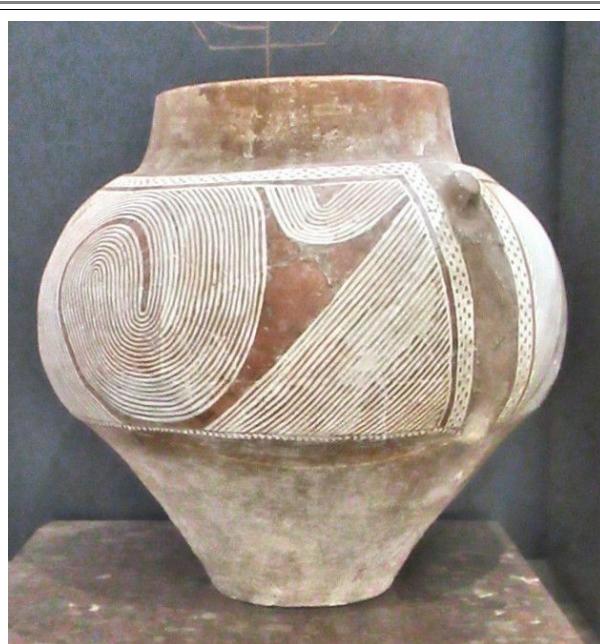
Fish head gods and a pot

Source: Photographed in Lepensky Vir 2025

- Fish head gods (?). and quite nice pottery. The museum features all the other stone age tools and things which I will spare you. The population lived almost exclusively from fishing (as ascertained from an analysis of what was found in the mittens (=ancient garbage dump / toilet) The fish heads gods here are copies, the originals we had already seen in the Belgrade museum. Or is it the other way aroundß?

Nessebar (Bulgaria) Archaeological Museum

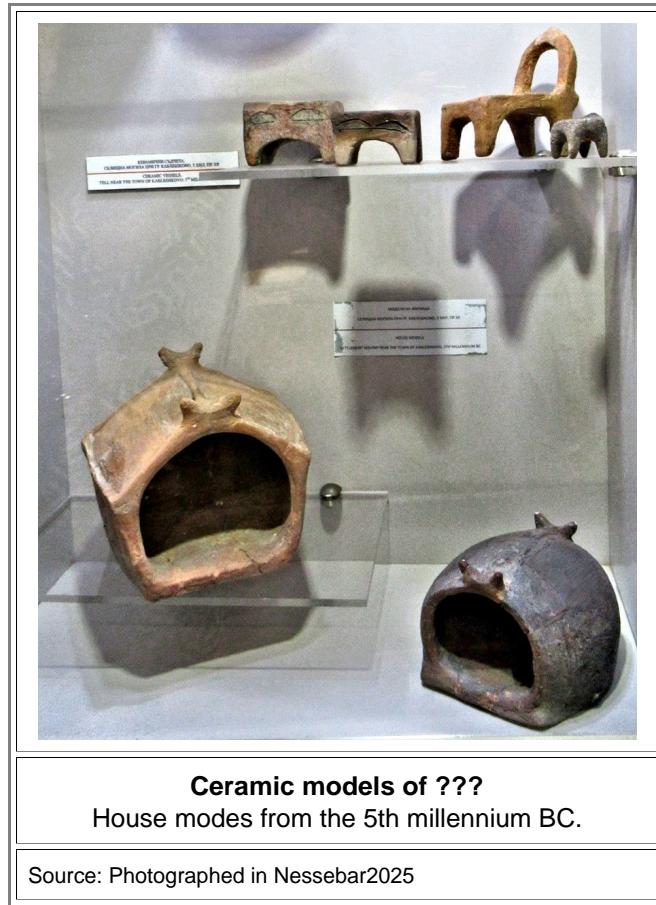
- Nessebar is a small "museum" town on the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria. It features a number of picturesque churches, some Roman ruins, and a small archaeological museum that contains amazing objects. Right at the entrance you find this pot just standing there.



Large pot just standing there looking rather perfect and new.

Source: Photographed in Nessebar2025

- This pot is about **7000 year old** and comes from Kozareva Mogila; a settlement and necropolis in the West Black Sea region



They also had newer stuff like lots of gold jewelry form the Mesammbrian necropolis (4th - 3rd century BC)



Extremely finely made gold necklace

Source: Photographed in Nessebar 2025

Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad; Serbia

Novi Sad in Serbia features the "Museum of Vojvodina" that contains many objects of interest here. Don't miss it when you are in the area.

Here we have an old acquaintance from the Belgrade museum shown above. Here we have probably the original, note the patches from restoration.



Figurine Deronje, Donja Branjevina .
The description is not overly illuminating, though

Source: Photographed in Novi Sad 2025

- Figurine of the Starcevo Deronje culture; says the museum The Starcevo culture is an archaeological culture of Southeastern Europe, dating to the Neolithic period between c. 6200 and 4500 BCE. It is one of the oldest; see the article.



Double-headed figure from Gomolava-Hrtkovci, Serbia.

Vinca-Plocnik Culture, Late Mesolithic (5th mill. BC)
Archaeologists still debate what it means

Source: Photographed in Novi Sad 2025



This beauty is also from the Vinca culture

Source: Photographed in Novi Sad 2025

The pride and joy of the museum, however, are Roams helmet described as follows: "Late Roman helmet (Berkasovo/1), Berkasovo type, early 4th century. Found in 1955 near the village of Berkasovo (Šid, Vojvodina, Serbia)"



The pride and joy of the museum.

Source: Photographed in Novi Sad 2025

- Could that be for real? The very knowledgeable guide who had given us a lot of information about the Danube culture etc. declined comment when asked how much restoration was needed. "It is the museum policy not to talk about this" he declared.

Rousse; Regional Historical Museum

It's not only the Regional History Museum that is a must to see, it is the whole town! The town center and downtown Rousse is quite beautiful and a joy to behold (after it has been restored to almost its original beauty). The museum contains a lot of Danube culture artifacts plus quite a few other goodies relating to early metal. . Here are a few examples:



Plenty of objects like these are in the museum.

Below the descriptions given

Anthropomorphous figure, pottery, Rousse tell 4550 –
4200 BC

Anthropomorphous figure, bone, Kosharna tell 4450
–3000 BC

Disc with sign, pottery, Koprivest neolithic
settlement, 5300 – 5000 BC.

Source: Photographed in Rousse 2025

- The object on the lower right is some kind of seal stamp. Does it hint at an early kind of script?



Copper and stone tools from around 4500 BC

Source: Photographed in Rousse 2025



**Most, if not all the stuff, is from the Rousse tell;
4500 - 4200 BC**

Source: Photographed in Rousse 2025

▶ Plenty of small things, some quite remarkable.



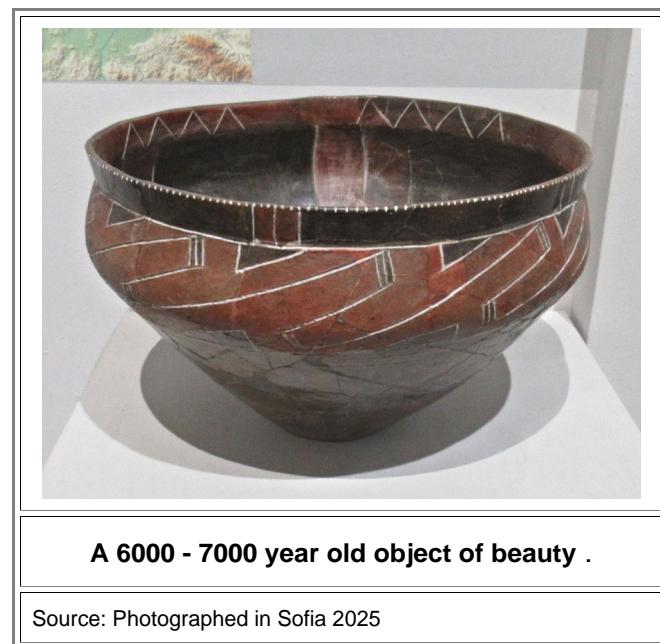
Help!!!
Anthropomorphic figure, pottery, Rousse tell 4550 – 4200 BC.

Museum of National History in Sofia (Bulgaria)

- The museum contains artifacts from all over to, well, document the national history. It's quite interesting but I won't go into this. With regard to the Danube culture, the things they have ties right in with the plenitude of objects found in the Archaeological Museum in Sofia (see below).



- The female figure may relate to fertility and not to what you thought.
The ceramics are very impressive, witness this very beautiful and perfectly preserved 6000 - 7000 year old pot.



- You also find the metal objects from around 5000 BC



Copper tools 5th millennium BC .

Source: Photographed in Sofia 2025

Besides objects relating to the Danube culture, you will also encounter good stuff relating the “sword” topic. They even had scythe swords, often used then by rebellious peasants (90 % or so of the population!) but rarely preserved.



Scythe swords

Described as "Heads of war scythes"; 15th - 16 th century

Source: Photographed in Sofia 2025

Here is something I have never seen before: A wooden cannon! This object alone tells you something about Bulgarian history.



A wooden cannon!
Desperation and ingenuity symbolized in one object

Source: Photographed in Sofia 2025

National Archaeological Museum in Sofia; Bulgaria

💡 The Archaeological Museum in Sofia is a treasure trove and an absolute must if you ever get there. It has a big room full of "old" stuff, i.e. mostly Danube culture and plenty of breath taking figurines



"Anthropomorphic Figurines"! .

Source: Photographed in Sofia 2025

● As far as the museum is concerned, all this stuff are "anthropomorphic figurines. OK – just around 7000 years old!

Here are some more:



On we go:

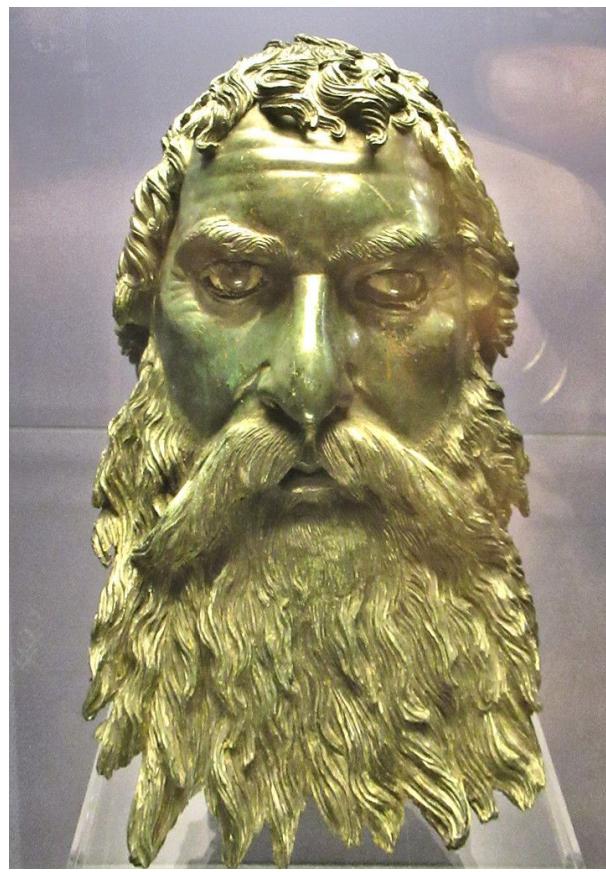


There are also plenty of early copper tools:



The museum also features a “treasure room” and a “sword room”, of which I only give you an impression. These gold masks are hardly 40000 years old. The swords are remarkable but not of particular interest from the viewpoint of metallurgy.





Important guy 4th century BC)
Rather impressive .

Source: Photographed in Sofia 2025

Natural History Museum in Varna / Bulgaria

- The Natural History Museum in Varna / Bulgaria contains the big sensation: The grave of some important guy who lived around 4500 BC and took a large treasure into the grave with him. Among stone and copper things he also displays the very first gold found so far in the possession of humans. I have already covered him [here](#) and [here](#).
- You can tell that it was a guy because he sported a golden penis cover. In the picture below taken in 2025 the obviously somewhat prudish Bulgarians placed it at the side of the skeleton. In the older picture shown [here](#) it is in the anatomically correct position.



The famous "Varna culture" grave from 4500 BC accidental discovered in 1972 .

Source: Photographed in Varna 2025

There is plenty more, of course, including metal things:



Metal things and rather short explanation .

Source: Photographed in Varna 2025

What today is Bulgaria used to be Thracia, sort of. The museum thus has some artifacts from this time, like this dagger:



Thracian dagger
More to that [here](#).

Source: Photographed in Varna 2025

- There is plenty more - but enough for now.

Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna

- Vienna, the capital of Austria, is not usually seen as a Balkan city. However, Austria in its heydays ran most of the Balkan and did what all colonialists did: Take what you like and bring it home. Small wonder that you find good things from somewhere else in Vienna museums now.
- The “Kunsthistorisches Museum” in Vienna is an imposing building with an imposing inner decorating. Here is the entrance hall / staircase, with real art (meaning naked women) on the ceiling.



Entrance hall of the Kunsthistorische Museum

Source: Photographed in Vienna 2025

- You definitely should go there, it is full of good stuff (including art and dinosaurs). Its display is a bit old fashioned but fortunately this means things are well lit. Here is a picture from a room containing Hallstatt and other old things:



Exhibition room

Source: Photographed in Vienna 2025

Besides artifacts from the Danube culture, I was looking for Hallstatt swords and things and for general iron / steel items of interest.

They sure had a major Danube culture relic. The Figurine from Karanovo shown in the [Danube culture module](#).



Lady from Pazardzhik
About 6500 years old..

Source: Photographed in Vienna 2025

The description call her the Lady from Pazardzhik / Bulgaria and dates her to around 4500V BC; i.e. the time of the climax of the Varna culture. The museum also has a much older naked lady on display: The Venus from Willendorf, [shown here](#).