



Youth Camp "Christian [Crimea: Travelling Together](#) organized by [Nikola Ugrasliya Gethrao](#) was successfully held August, 16-30, 2018. Edu

[Русская версия: Просветительский лагерь для молодежи "Христианский Крым: Путешествие вместе»](#)

This time, the venue of the camp was the [Crimean peninsula](#) , or rather the [boarding house "Sea Fortress"](#) in the Golden Beach area of the village "Primorskoye", near the [city of Theodosia](#)

. The owners of the "Sea Fortress" gave an extremely hospitable and hearty welcome to the cheerful company of young people. The owners' family happened to have five children (!); elder kids and their grandparents did their best to make us feel at ease and took great interest in our agenda. The camp has become a unique event full of pilgrimages, excursions and captivating encounters.

Here are just a few of the Orthodox shrines of Crimea that we managed to visit: [Inkerman St. Klement Cave Monastery](#)

, [St. Great Martyr George the Victorious Monastery](#)

at the magnificent

[Cape Fiolent](#)

, [Bakhchisarai Holy Dormition Cave Monastery](#)

; they are among others mentioned further.

On the very first day, we had classes devoted to the study of Holy Scripture where we got acquainted with the methods of working with sacred texts very helpful in reading and comprehending them in depth. Sergey Rogunov, the teacher of the subject "Basics and Methods of Catechism" at the Nikolo-Ugreshskaya seminary, conducted this engaging classes. We also participated in communicative games aimed at rallying and learning each other's hobbies.

English classes taught by the seminary teacher Vladislav Talalaev were especially memorable. We didn't put off or cancel them despite the tense schedule of pilgrimages and sightseeing tours. It turned out to be the first en-route lessons that the guys experienced on the running bus. The classes were aimed at studying theological vocabulary and enlarging word stock with the help of etymology and original Latin roots in the English language. Taking into account a pretty high command of English of an average member of the previous camps in Crimea, we hope the next year camp will be joined by the English-speaking friends from Greece and other foreign countries. One of the most celebrated American friends of Russia, Mark Twain, had already visited Crimea, in the 19th century, as it is described further in this narration.

August, 17, Friday. Educational Camp on City [Tour in Kerch](#) .

The ancient city offered a warm and cordial reception to our travelers. We attended Divine Liturgy celebrated at the most ancient church in Crimea and possibly in Europe - [Cathedral of St. John the Baptist](#)

. Our big thanks to the cleric of the Cathedral, Archimandrite Roman, who kindly showed our group around the church and told us about its history. Then, the young people, sparing no effort, ascended the

[Mount](#)

[Mithridat](#)

in the city center.

Same day, the youth team proceeded to the excursion into the [Kerch Fortress](#) , built in the 19th century to protect the southern borders of the Russian Empire. The excursion proved unforgettable. It was dedicated to different time periods of Fort Totleben, as it is also called. We were shown fortifications involved in military battles of several wars.

The next stop-over was the [Katerlezsk St. George's nunnery](#) where our pilgrims drank a cup of herbal tea and had a spiritual word with the local nuns. Near the monastery, young pilgrims sang a troparion to Great Martyr
St. George , th
e Victorious
, on the site of the miraculous appearance of St. George. It happened at a stone still bearing the imprints of human feet and horse hoofs. According to the legend Saint George appeared at this very spot
. We express our sincere gratitude to the
Missionary Department of the Theodosia Diocese
for the tour of this day.

What's more, two graduates of the Nikolo-Ugreshskaya seminary, one of them with his wife a choir regent, were invited to spend their summer vacation and set up an interim choir in the church of Life-Giving Trinity of the Theodosia Diocese, in the sea-village Beregovoye in the vicinity of our youth camp. The church's superior priest, Father Dmitry Lapenkov, gave his dear guests warm care and proper itinerary. The choir gave several concerts in an orphanage, local concert hall and library. As both parties admitted, such liaisons will sure be continued.

August, 18, Saturday.

Trip to Theodosia to visit historical and cultural reserve of the Genoese fortress and [ancient city of Kafa](#) turned out to be the most memorable. The guys were invited to participate in the volunteer ground maintenance in the ancient part of Theodosia, together with the representatives of the city authorities and public figures. Saturday cleaning of the territory was held for the sake of tidying the premises of the [Church of the Great Martyr Dimitry of Solun](#)
. By courtesy and good will of the city government, our team had a chance to see the unique frescoes of [Theophanes the Greek](#)

, rather preserved in spite of dating back around 700 years. Young pilgrims appreciated the priest Dimitry's story about the treasures of Orthodoxy and ancient frescoes. On top of that, assistant bishop Oleg Pavlov, the former orthodox seminary graduate, conducted extremely informative tour of the

[Old Theodosia](#)

Special thanks to the head of the Theodosia administration and public executive figures who offered support not only with the itinerary program, but also provided for the midnight transfer from Simferopol airport. Such favourable attitude promises an educational youth camp to be an annual event.

August, 19, Sunday. Arctic-Antarctic "virtual voyage".

The camp is kindly visited by Grigory Akulich, the former captain of the legendary [Icebreaker "Captain Khlebnikov"](#)

, currently the director of the Safety of Sea Traffic of the "Crimean Sea Ports" state company. His fascinating flashbacks and photos about ins and outs of diesel and nuclear icebreakers, the endless [Arctic and Antarctic Mars-like landscape](#), as well as white bears, killer whales and emperor penguins held our attention for three hours. In spite of hot weather, the viewers were plunged into the atmosphere of the endless severe desert of the Arctic nature thanks to realistic photos and gripping story. The prolonged and pleasant mood of the meeting was accounted for quality engineering education of some team members. Grigory Akulich was assisted by his charming wife Irene during the session.

August, 20-21, Mon - Tues. Two-day walking tour of [Cave-Town Mangup-Kale](#) .

One had to show "non-urban" endurance and team spirit to get to the very top and observe the stone temples, carved in the rock passages, the dilapidated graves of the ancient folks who once inhabited these places.

Cave-Town on Mangup-Kale (Kale means "fortress" in Turkish) had first been the capital city of the principality of Theodoro ([Crimean Gothia](#)), later the Turkish fortress. The town is located on the summit of an isolated hill, frighteningly high above the level of underlying valleys. The [Mangup Holy Annunciation Cave Monastery](#) , hanging over the valleys, also made an unforgettable impression. It is located in the natural depression of the rock. Two cave temple-complexes have about 20 caves dug by hermit monks in the 6th century.

One of the most memorable visits was the one to [St. Vladimir Cathedral](#) in [Chersonesos Taurica](#) , in the city of Sevastopol. According to the legend, it was here that Prince Vladimir himself was baptized.

On the way back, the group made a stop in the capital of Crimea Simferopol. The pilgrims visited the [Holy Trinity Cathedral](#) and venerated the relics of [St. Luke Voyno-Yasenetsky](#) .

It was rather educational to get acquainted with the [Museum of Underwater Archeology](#) at the [Stamboli Dacha](#) in Theodosia. In an informal lecture given by the deputy of Crimean Black Sea Center of the Underwater Studies [Viktor Vakhoneev](#) , the camp organizers made tentative arrangements for the next year visits.

After the majority of the team had left, a few sightseers continued to tour the southern coast of Crimea. They managed to visit the [city of Sudak](#) , [Massandra Palace](#) , [Livadia Palace](#) and [Mount Ai-Petri](#), all of them near the famous gem of the [southern coast Yalta](#) . The city of Yalta has been always visited by guests from overseas. One of the first visitors was the patriarch of the American literature, [famous author and humorist Mark Twain](#), who was extremely impressed by a warm welcome of the Russian Tsar Alexander II. Later in his

book "Innocents Abroad"

, Mr. Twain shared that travel experience in detail. The main point he made in his ADDRESS to Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, was that "America owes much to Russia: is indebted to her in many ways" for the support in the Civil War.

In Yalta, the group was kindly accommodated by our friend, a member of Yalta public council, who provided assistance in putting our project together. Also, the remaining travelers were invited to a symphony concert of the Crimean Philharmonic in memory of [Vladimir Visotsky](#).

Thus, our group managed to speculatively go through the centuries of the history of Christian life and human activity of the Crimean peninsula, became stronger in faith, got tanned under the Crimean sun, made friends, wrote poems and established a united team.

The camp organizers and all the participants express their heartfelt gratitude to the camp's sponsors who offered financial support for the project. Their help filled the events in Crimea and, earlier in [Abkhazia](#), with rich trips to Holy places and historic sites; and more importantly enabled low-paid young people, employed solely at a church choir in a far-off Russian town, to join this Christian educational camp.

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