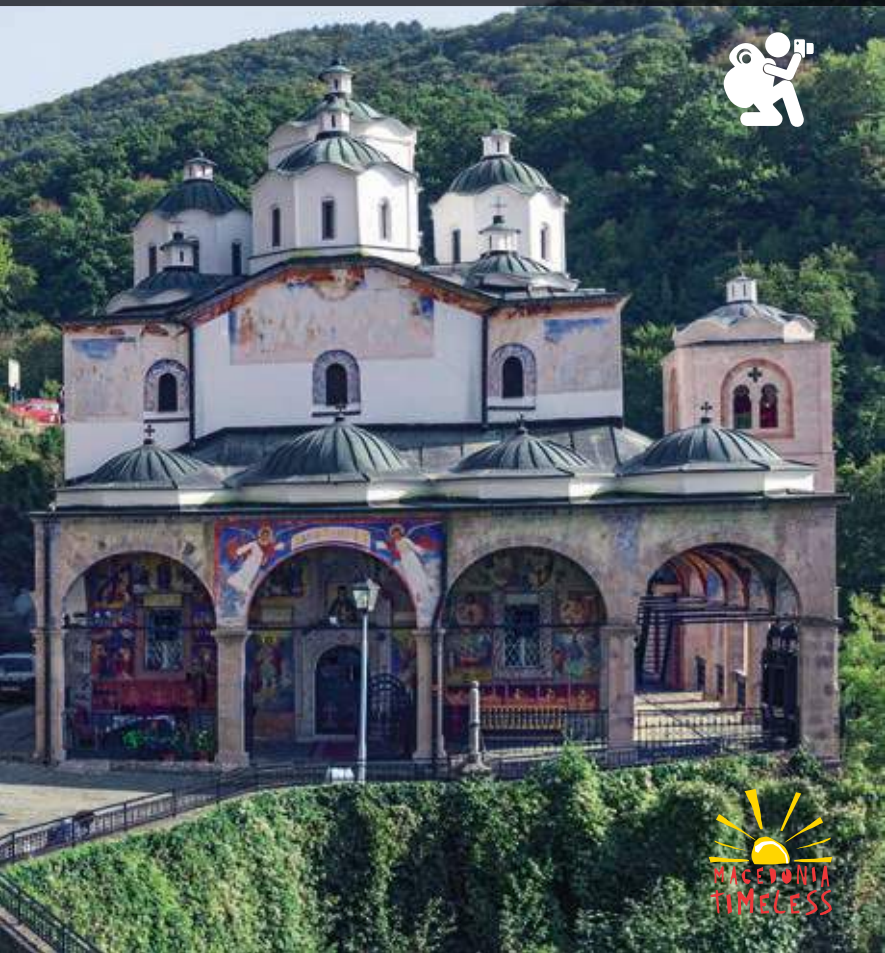


A GUIDE TO THE MONASTERIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



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MACEDOONIA
TIMELESS

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vand some even international significance.

This vividly illustrated guide aims to provide you with every information you might require to visit and discover any monastery complex in the country. Apart from the tourism related information regarding the historical background of these monasteries, this guide includes description, accommodation possibilities and food, cartographically presented colour maps of the monasteries and their surroundings, contact information, places of significance in their surrounding, recommended tours and other important information. It includes all relevant information for visitors, regardless of the purpose of their visit, whether it would be for religious obedience or purely for tourism.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who participated and assisted the preparation

of this guide, primarily to all monks for giving their support and required information, as well as the employees from the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the University 'Goce Delcev' Stip, the researchers collecting all relevant literature and electronic sources, priests from the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric, the photographers, the map draftsmen, the designers of the guide and all remaining who willingly gave a sincere contribution for this edition.

Being the first edition, it might unintentionally lack some important moments from the monastery tourism in the Republic of Macedonia. We are most certainly open for suggestions, for which we would be extremely grateful and take all into consideration for printing a second edition of this guide.

From the authors



forbidding or restricting photography, prior notice of organized tour groups, blessing for spending the night, etc.

Prices given in this guide are valid for the moment but they can be subjected to changes. Most monasteries do not provide the option for credit card payment so be prepared to pay cash. The prices vary from the visitors' personal wish up to 100 euro in a hotel complex within the monastery.

Most monasteries are situated outside urban area, in a beautiful nature, often with no available public transport; therefore you would need a personal vehicle or a taxi.

The rooms in the monasteries are typically clean, comfortable and plainly furnished. Do not expect

modern appliances or devices, such as a phone, radio, TV set or a computer. If you use a sound producing device, use headphones. Food for visitors is offered in most monasteries, as well as the opportunity to prepare your own personally.

This guide will assist you to choose which monastery to visit or stay at and it will provide you with the opportunity to make a close contact with the Macedonian nature, history, culture, art, religion, architecture and local traditions. We do hope that this guide will lead its readers to the holy places throughout Macedonia where they can experience the hospitality in the monasteries and their way of living, find spiritual peace and be closer to God.





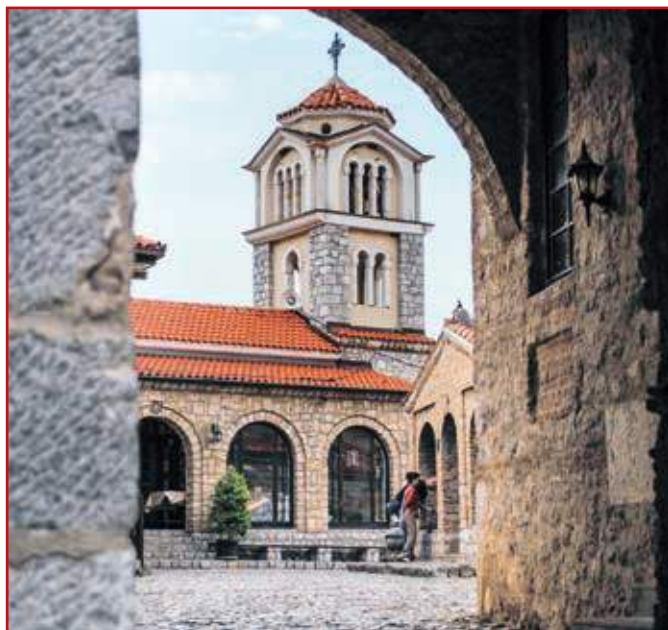


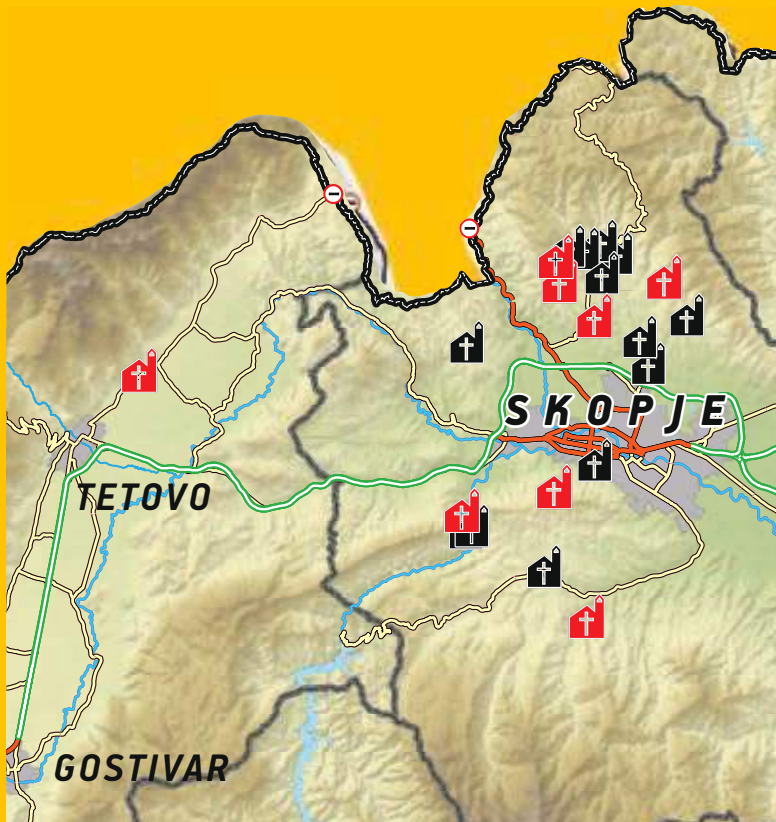
REGIONAL DIVISION OF MONASTERIES IN MACEDONIA



The monastic complexes have been divided by their locations in the regions where they are located. The Republic of Macedonia has eight

statistical regions: Skopje, Polog, Southwestern, Pelagonia, Vardar, Southeastern, Eastern and North-eastern.





02 >>>

MONASTERIES IN THE SKOPJE REGION

This guide begins with an overview of the most important monasteries in the Skopje region. From the natural and cultural-historic herit-

age from the Skopje mountainous region we have selected the following places that have particular touristic potential: the archaeological



site Skupi, the Kale fortress, the Aqueduct, the Old Bazaar in the city of Skopje, many churches and monasteries, as well as some nature sanctuaries and natural monuments, out of which the ones with greatest potential would be Matka, lake Treska, Jasen, the Katlanovo thermal bath, the mountains Vodno and Skopska

Grna Gora (Black Mount of Skopje), the rivers Vardar and Treska, etc. Regardless of your purpose and motivation of visit in the Skopje region, where you would inevitable have the chance to try the traditional food, we would recommend the following monasteries to be on your list while visiting this region.

St. Elijah Monastery

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LOCATION:

Northwest from Skopje, in the base of the mountain Skopska Grna Gora and the valley of Banjska river, the St. Elijah– Gornimonastery is located. The distance for the centre of Skopje to the monastery is 19 km, and from the village Banjani is 2.5

km. The monastery is at an altitude of 630 m. The average temperature is 10.4°C while during the summer is 18.9°C.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church–Ohrid Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

From the village Banjani there is a narrow road leading to the monastery also connecting the other surrounding settlements directly to the monastery gates. There is no possibility for a tour bus to access the monastery.



MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery is located on a relatively small area and it includes the following buildings: the church St. Elijah, one monastic lodging, benches in a beautifully arranged yard, small pool, a small build oven in the back yard in its eastern part. The locals believe that the water in the monastery has healing power for any illness related to eyes.

The monastery lodging has three storeys and it is situated right next the left, western entrance gate of the complex. On the ground floor the premises used only by the monastery are located, while the next two have 17 double rooms i.e. this lodging can accommodate 34 peo-

ple at a time. The first storey has 9 and the second 8 rooms. The second storey also has a big reception room. The lodging has a water supply from the monastery catchment, so both storeys have toilets. Despite the fact that these rooms are decently furnished, they remain unavailable for the wider population since, as in most monasteries in the diocese of Skopje, they are usually rented annually for 10.000denars. This amount can vary.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

There are no written documents and historic sources or data which indicate the precise dating of the church St. Elijah. It is a small, single-nave church attached in the northern part to a rock, hence known in the past as a cave church.

There was an Orthodox Seminary established in this monastery in 1967, an educational theological centre which trained teaching staff for the needs of the church. The regular teaching process of this Seminary commenced in 1967 with 68 students in five classes. The following year the school was moved in the village Dracevo and is still there.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Elijah was a Jewish prophet who lived in IX century BC in the area of today's Israel and Palestine. References for his work appear in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, the Talmud, and the Quran which points to the fact that he was appreciated by many religions. It is believed by people that St Elijah was a key holder, who locks and unlocks the heaven stopping and letting the rain.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 2 August. During this celebration the monastery is visited by hundreds of people, all served with food and drinks prepared there.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

This beautiful place was one of the location sites where several scenes of the movie 'Before the Rain' by the famous Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski were shot. This movie won the Golden Lion award for best movie at the Venice Film Festival in 1994.

According to a legend, not far from the monastery, there is a hiding place for the Yugoslavia's president Josip Broz Tito. This hiding place

opens to small wooden cottage where this legendary shelter is located from behind. Inside this shelter everything is white, the walls are darkened, and it has many hallways and tunnels. There is an electrical installation and a water font with channels in the

middle. There are rooms with flooring and installations for fresh air in some of the hallways as well as lines for telephone and telegraph. The hiding place is open for visits but it is dark and unsafe without an appropriate touristic infrastructure.



Recommended visits and tours

Visit to the mountain **Skopska Grna Gora**.

Visit to **the river Banjska**.

Visit to the **church St. George** in Banjani, where you would have the chance to see the frescoes showing Alexander the Great, standing beside the kings Darius, Porus and Cyrus. Beneath their feet there are mythological creatures symbolizing the kingdom of Babylon and Persia while the lion stands to symbolize the Macedonian kingdom. The iconostasis was painted by Dicho Zograf, one of the most renowned frescoes painters in the Balkans from the XIX century.

Visit to the **monastery Holy Mother of God** in Banjani. In the church yard there is a tree that resembles a pregnant woman, and the legend says that it has helped many women to conceive.

St. Nicetas Monastery



LOCATION:

Fifteen kilometres north from Skopje, in the base of Skopska Grna Gora, on the rising ground between the villages of Banjani, Gornjani and Chucher the monastery of St. Nikita is situated. It is located at an altitude of 565 m. The average temperature is 10.7°C while during the summer is 19.2°C.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

From the village Banjani there is road, slightly narrower from the main road for less than a kilometre. It leads to a parking place right above the monastery. The village





Banjani is easy to access by regular bus line no. 71 with the Public Transportation Company from Skopje in every one and a half hour.(<http://www.jsp.com.mk/>).

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery complex is entered through a hardwood gate including the following buildings: the church St. Nicetas, one old lodging with a campanile, the so called ‘bell tower’ on the very right of the entrance, a lodging with a porch on the left, the bishop’s residence along with some smaller buildings; a monastery fountain in the middle of the yard and some benches in a beautifully arranged yard with many trees.

The monastery lodging i.e. the new one has been redecorated

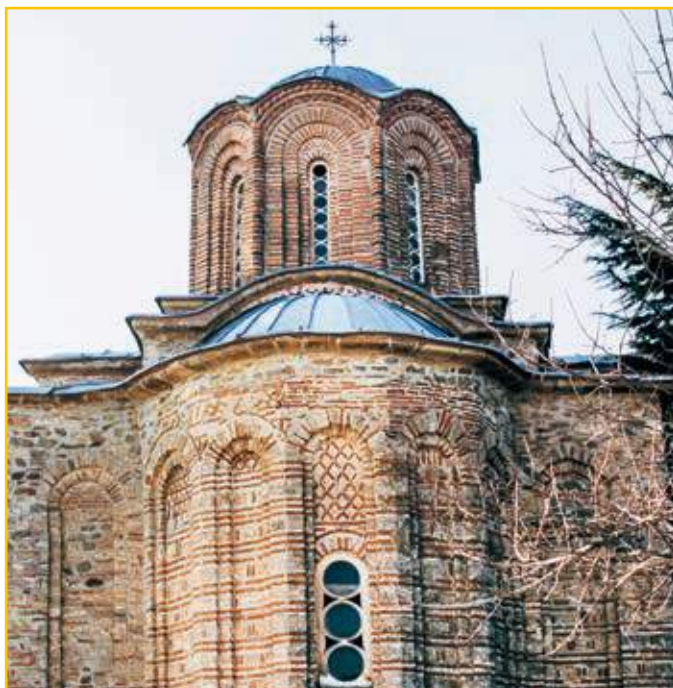


in 1928 but it is not in a very well preserved condition. It only has one storey i.e. a ground floor and a basement with 9 double rooms to accom-

modate 18 visitors at a time. There is a dining room in the basement and a kitchen attached to the lodging with a fire place, big stove and a big kitchen working area, mostly used for the celebrations for the important religious holidays.

The so called 'bell tower' has two floors with three double rooms

also not well preserved. The rooms are on the second floor with the bell located at the end of this floor, while the first floor remains unused. In the bishop's residency, also consisting of ground and first floor, there is a dining room, a reception room and two sleeping rooms, a bath and a storage room.



The rooms in the lodgings are not available for the wider population since, as in most other monasteries in the diocese of Skopje, they are usually rented annually for 10.000 denars. This amount can vary.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

Regarding the history of this monastery there are two decrees, one well preserved by the Emperor of Byzantine Michael II, the son and conqueror of Andronicus II. In the decree it stands that it was given upon the request of king Milutin as a prove that both Emperors – Andronicus II and his son Milutin confirm the given decree from king Milutin. Afterwards, the king Milutin issued the second decree which is not preserved.

The frescos in this church are of great significance. The icon painting of this church is dated between the periods from 1307 to 1320. The latest findings confirm that the frescos date from 1320. The authors of the frescos are the famous zografts Michael and Euty chius who have worked in many other churches throughout Macedonia, such as Holy

Mother of God Peribleptos Church in Ohrid, Church of St. George, Staro Nagorichane etc. St. Nicetas, the saint patron of the monastery is significantly present in the icons.

There was a difficult period for this monastery while this region was under the Ottoman Empire. Namely, many frescoes were damaged, but later restored. There is a sign on the south door in the naos which says: 'This holy heavenly temple of the Great Martyr Nicetas was redecorated ..in the year 1484'. (written in Old Church Slavonic language)

Towards the end of XVI and the beginning of the XVII century a chapel was built attached to the southern part of the church dedicated to the patron Saint John the Precursor. In the XIX century the old frescoes in the vault were copied on the dome. In the XIX century other lodgings and buildings were built to serve the needs of the monks there. Some of these are preserved and others were lately redecorated.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Nicetas was a Gothic soldier, born a Goth and a student of bishop Theophilus and a participant in



the First Ecumenical Council. When the duke of the Goths Athanaric opposed the spread of Christianity, St. Nicetas opposed him for what he was captured, tortured and condemned to the stake in 372. When St. Nicetas was burned, his body was not destroyed by the fire, emitting magical light.



SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 28 September. During this celebration the monastery is visited by hundreds of people, all

served with food, drinks and a traditional cake prepared there. On this day, there is church fair organized in the yard of the monastery selling various goods and souvenirs.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

It should be noted that in the church in this monastery, there is a stone known as the holy stone. It is said that, standing on this stone, the believer connects to God and their troubles more easily, their pain and desire for their prayers to be heard

and resolved, healed and fulfilled with the help of the holy remains along with the strong will. There is a ritual there in confessing their troubles. Firstly, one should enter the church and lit a candle. Then the sexton removes the carpet to reveal the stone. The person then steps on the stone facing the altar. Then the person needs to cross themselves, walk in a circle bowing down towards the altar. This is to be repeated three times. When the last circle is walked the person needs to say the Lord's prayer. At the end the person speaks their trouble or wish.



Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

Visit to the mountain **Skopska Grna Gora**.

Visit to **the Banjska river**.

Visit to the **church St. George** in Banjani, where you would have the chance to see the frescoes showing Alexander the Great, standing beside the kings Darius, Porus and Cyrus. Beneath their feet there are mythological creatures symbolizing the kingdom of Babylon and Persia while the lion stands to symbolize the Macedonian kingdom. The iconostasis was painted by Dicho Zograf, one of the most renowned frescoes painters in the Balkans from the XIX century.

Visit to the **monastery Holy Mother of God** in Banjani. In the church yard there is a tree that resembles a pregnant woman, and the legend says that it has helped many women to conceive.

A visit to the archaeological site **Davina Kula**.

St. Elijah – Chardak Monastery



LOCATION:

Around fifteen kilometres north from Skopje, somewhere in between the villages Mirkovci, Brazda and Gluvo, the monastery church St. Elijah is located. The monastery belongs in the area of the village

Mirkovci, which is part of the municipality Chucher Sandevo.

CONTACT:

+389 78 338 458

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can be reached from many sides. If the ring road towards Tetovo and Ohrid is used, then there is an exit on the right that should be taken. From the Skopje city centre, driving through the settlement Butel, there is a road to be followed until you leave the city and continues with paving stone road that leads directly to the monastery.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery St. Elijah is one of fifteen monasteries within the area of 10 kilometres and the only one with monks still living there. It used to be a female monastery. In the yard, right in front of the lodging there is a graveyard of few nuns and father Sophrony. This father died in 1890 after completing the church St.

Elijah where you can have the chance to see its own offspring found inside the church. One of the nuns, sister Minadora built the lodging where the monks stay now. Non-religious people cannot stay in this lodging. The old lodging, dating from XIX century is where the restaurant Chardak can



be found. The monastery complex is surrounded with high fence, the yard is spacious and well arranged with flowers, benches and a fountain that often gathers pigeons.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

It is known that the construction of this monastery began before World War II on a foundation of an old one. That one included three churches, the old St. Elijah, the new St. Elijah and The Holy Mother of God – Immaculate or known as Balaklija with the locals, believed to be dating back to XI century.



SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 2 August Ilinden (Saint Elijah's Day). During this celebration the monastery is visited by a large number of people, all served with food and drinks prepared there. On this day, a church fair is organized in the yard of the monastery where all guests and believers celebrate this holiday.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

It should be noted that in the near surrounding of the monastery, in the village Brazda, the first ar-

archaeological park in Macedonia 'Archeo Park Brazda' is situated. This park is well arranged with a walking path, parks and information boards. The main object of interest in the park is a tomb, which according to its function is undoubtedly one of

a ruler (VII-IV century BC). Namely, this fact is supported by its size and the building quality performed by the best builders. For more information visit this website <http://arheoparkbrazda.mk/>.



Recommended
visits and
tours near this
monastery

Visit to the mountain **Skopska Grna Gora**.

Visit to the **monastery St. Nicetas**.

Visit to the **national restaurant Chardak** in the very surrounding of the monastery.

St. Demetrius – Marko's Monastery



LOCATION:

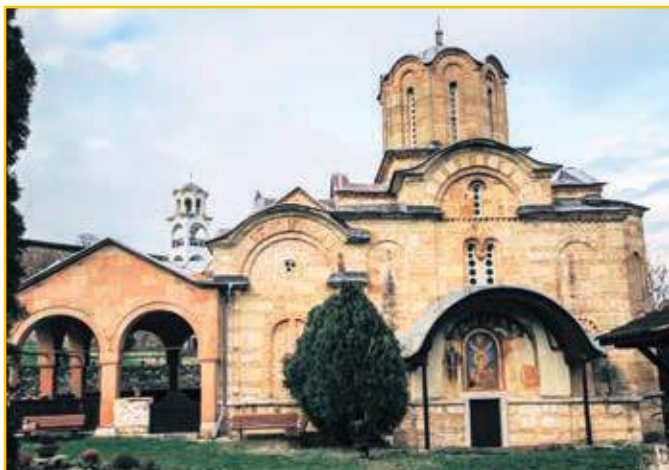
The monastery St. Demetrius or the so called Marko's monastery is located south of the village Markova Sushica, along the course of the river Markova, on its left bank, 20 km from Skopje. It is part of the municipality of Studenicani.

CONTACT:

+389 75 334 041 sister Ilijana

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can most easily be reached through the Skopje's settlement Dracevo, then going right towards Batinci, passing through the village Varvara and reaching the village Markova Sushica, where the monastery is located. Public trans-

port is conveniently available to the monastery with the bus no. 68 from the Public transportation Company which circulates every hour.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

There is a high old wooden gate to get inside the monastery. Immediately on the right you can find the monastery lodgings and other subsidiary premises. Along the side of the lodgings there is also an oven, cauldrons for baking rakiya (the traditional Macedonian brandy), a well with cold water, and a very old mill to stand as a memory from the time when the wheat was grinded in such manner. The monastery complex consists of a well-kept monastery church St. Demetrius from the XIV century and an open hall, an impressive bell tower, well arranged

yard with a park and a small pool, two monastery dining rooms which were icon painted in XIV century in the interiors and outside, a kitchen famous for its particular sourdough and whole grain bread, lodgings with beautifully arranged terraces with a capacity of 40 visitors, a chapel (smaller church dedicated to St. Mark the Evangelist), a monastery museum, icon gallery, souvenir shop, a mill in the monastery yard, toilets, etc. The monastery is still active today with a female monk's sisterhood.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The best kept document in the Marko's monastery (the name of the monastery is after Krali Marko) is the sign in the church, above the southern entrance which provides information about the redecoration of the church and its founders. The sign has the following content: 'This holy heavenly temple of the Great Martyr Demetrius, victorious and wonder-worker, with the help and blessing of good and faithful king Volkashin, queen Elena with their beloved sons and daughters, the good and faithful king Marko, Andrea, Ivanish and Dimitrya, in the year 1484'. (written in Old Church Slavonic language)

The church is built of stone and bricks creating impressive patterns, especially above the apsis of the



alter, in ten decoratively made niches. The very first iconostasis of the church is completely preserved. It consists of stone pillars with ornamented capitals.

This monastery used to be economically well off with property and cattle. This enabled profound cultural-historic wealth for the monastery: old frescoes, old manuscripts and books, a number of religious objects and relics. Throughout its history, a great number of icons, manuscripts and objects with artistic value have been taken away from the monastery. It hadn't been



spared from disasters either, ruins and fires. From all of its belongings, only a small part has been returned in the monastery's museum. The remaining objects can be found in libraries and museums in Belgrade, Sofia, Vienna and Moscow.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Demetrius of Salonica was a Christian martyr that lived in Thesalloniki in the period between 270-306. The Emperor Maximilian appointed him a commander in Thessaloniki in order to persecute and exterminate the Christians in Thessalonica. However, St. Demetrius did not only disobey him, but publicly preached the Lord Jesus Christ

in the city of Thessalonica, which finally got him killed. This saint's miracles are without number and he is considered to be the protector of Thessalonica.



SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 8 November – Mitrovden, a Christian holiday dedicated to the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius (Mitrovden). This date is taken as the end of the summer and the beginning of the winter period of the year.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The enlightener Kiril Pejčichovich was the hegumen of Marko's Monastery in the beginning of the XIX century, from 1801 to 1818.

In Marko's Monastery Kiril Pejčichovich compiled one of his best known works 'Ogledalo' ('Mirror') and also founded a school there.

Marko's monastery is known for its interesting frescoes - The cry of Racheal, the woman that symbolizes the wailing of the mothers of Bethlehem for their sons murdered by King Herod who gave orders to kill all the children in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, so, consequently, in order to be sure the Jesus is killed, around 14000 male children were killed.





Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

Visit and a picnic along the river **Markova reka**.

Visit to the **church St. Nicholas** in Markova Susica dating back from XII century.

Visit to **Markovo Kale** – feudal fortress near the monastery.

A possibility to pick your own wild thyme, St. John's wort, yarrow and many other herbs near the monastery.

Visit to the **local archaeological site Gradishte (Tauresium)** in the village Taor, the birthplace of Byzantine Emperor Justinian I.

Dormition of the Holy Mother of God Monastery - Matka



LOCATION:

About sixteen kilometres south-west from Skopje, in the village Dolna Matka, the monastery church Holy Mother of God is located. This monastery complex is found in the Matka Canyon, on the left bank of the river Treska and belongs to the

municipality Saraj. The monastery is at an altitude of 300 m. The average temperature is 12°C while during the summer is 20.5°C.

CONTACT:

+389 70 967 875, sister Dorotea

Available explanations to the visitors in English.





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric



DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can be reached from many sides. If the ring road from Tetovo towards Skopje is used, there is an exit on the right that should be taken. From the Skopje city centre there is a road driving

through the settlement Saraj. The monastery can be reached with a regular bus line no. 60 with the Public Transportation Company from Skopje in every one and a half hour, leaving from the transportation centre.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery complex is comprised of the following buildings: the church the Holy Mother of God, one lodging with a campanile, a small house, a kitchen, a dining room, the bishop's residence, a monastery fountain with cold drinking water. The church yard is well arranged with a park and old trees. The monastery lodging has two storeys i.e. a ground floor and a first floor basement and it is said that the present construction is 200 years old. It has been redecorated and has 20

rooms, where the visitors can use one of these as a dormitory to accommodate 6 visitors with a toilet. Accommodation is free. There is a shop for souvenirs, glasses, beads, etc. Liturgical garments are made in the monastery's studio. <http://uspenie-matka.org.mk/>.

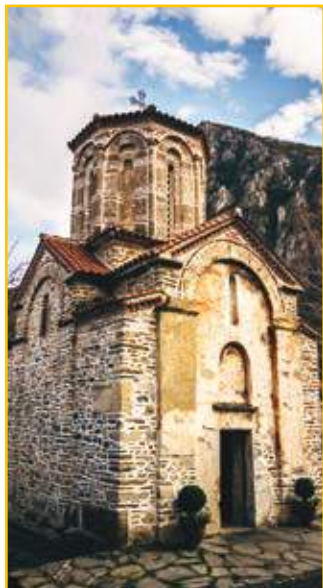
THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The canyon Matka known as Little Mount Athos by its great number of churches, monasteries, monastic skete communities and caves that have survived through centuries in this almost impassible picturesque

canyon. The monastery church the Holy Mother of God was built around 1337 by Bojko, son of the noble woman Danica, the master of Matka. During the severe battles under the Otoman Empire reign in Macedonia, the authentic church suffered some roof and frescoes damage. Much later, in 1497 someone named Milica found the church in poor condition and without a roof. She took charge of the church and invested a great effort into replacing the roof, added new frescoes and built a portico. These data stand in an inscription above the entrance door inside the church. Based on this inscription,



it is evident that the church itself dates back to XIV century while the roof, the portico and the frescoes inside, from the end of the XV century. The Matka monastery has its own hand written old book. The cardinal part of this manuscript was written in the 60's of the XVI century but was constantly upgraded. This monastery is still active and there is a female monastic community.



SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

The Holy Mother of God or St. Mary, the mother of Jesus and Joseph's wife. Mary is also known as Virgin Mary, The Holy Mother, Our Lady (Madonna), Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church this saint is the most respectful one, while in the Islam she is one of the three perfect women. According to the New Testament she was a Galilean woman of Nazareth and the mother of Jesus who married Joseph and was conceived with Jesus in a miraculous way when the archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, foretelling her birth of Jesus to be the King of kings.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration, known among the believers as the Dormition of the Mother of God (a holiday which commemorates the falling asleep or death of Mary) on 28 August, when this monastery is visited by hundreds of people in a very festive monastic feast with traditional dish of beans and an entertaining cultural program. The celebration starts the day before the

evening liturgy and spiritual awakening speeches. After the liturgy, it has now become a tradition to organize blood donation actions in the monastery yard.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Interesting data for the monastery and its surroundings: Matka Canyon is home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Out of the total number of 1000 plants, 20% are endemic or relic species. Among

Tertiary relics, the most significant are the kosanini violet (*Viola kosaninii*) and nataly's ramonda (*Ramonda nathaliae*). Typical for nataly's ramonda is that if the plant dies it can revive again only by watering. There are only two more such flowers in Europe that have this ability of anabiosis.

In the Canyon there are 119 species of daily and 140 species of nightly butterflies recorded. It is also important to mention that there are 77 species of Balkan endemic small butterflies found here, while 18 other species are new to the science. The canyon has a speleological park consisting of three caves: Vrelo (an underwater cave about 200 meters deep), Ubava and Krshtana.

500 meters from the lake and very close to the monastery, the Treska river offers the opportunity of white-water kayaking. The white water kayaking venue is among the best known in the world. A World Championship on wild water kayaking was held here in 1975 in the category slalom. An international manifestation called Ilinden kayak cup has been taking place here as well since 1969.



**Recommended visits and
tours near this monastery**

A possibility of alpinism on the mountains **Suva Gora** and **Vodno**.

A visit to **St. Andrew's monastery** from the XIV century, built by King Vukshin's son Andrew.

A visit to the **St. Nicholas Shishevski** monastery and the churches **St. Spas (Holy Salvation)** and **Holy Sunday church**.

Renting a kayak and a boat **crui**se on the lake Matka.

A visit to the **man-made lake Treska**.

St. Panteleimon Monastery



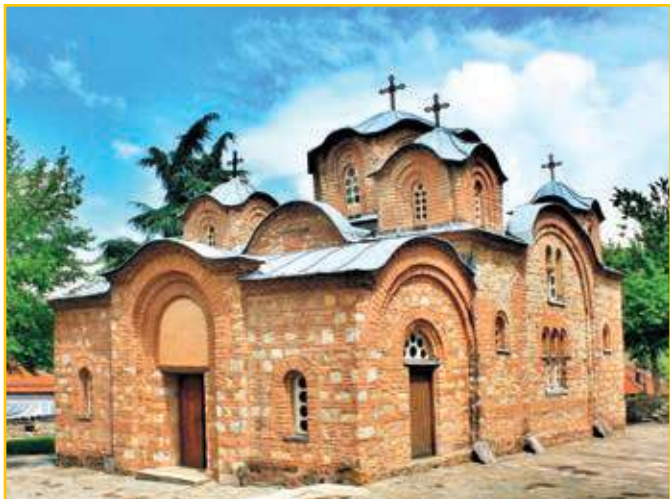
LOCATION:

This monastery church St. Panteleimon is located only 8 kilometers from the centre of Skopje, in the northern slopes of the mountain Vodno, close to the village Gorno Nerezi. This monastery is part of the

municipality of Karpos. The monastery is at an altitude of 602 m. The average temperature is 10.5°C while during the summer is 19°C.

CONTACT:

+389 2 3081 255





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

This monastery can be reached from two sides. One is en route to the mountain Vodno, the other through the road leading to the village Gorno Nerezi. Both roads are in good condition leading to the big parking place in front of the monastery, also available for big tourist busses.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Right through the big parking place in front of the monastery complex there is a small entrance gate leading to the monastery yard where

the church dedicated to St. Panteleimon, the lodgings and a restaurant are located. The monastery lodgings have accommodation capacity of 5 double rooms. The rooms are well decorated with a separate bathroom and cost 50 euro with included breakfast.

The monastery complex is enclosed with a fence and the yard is vast and well arranged with parks, flowers, greenery and waste bins.

The monastery includes a restaurant with a spectacular view of the city, well visited for drinks or lunch especially during the weekends. Many young couples decide to be wedded here, also for the opportunity to have their wedding party here too.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The walls of this monument of culture have well preserved frescoes that represent famous examples of the Komnen family. The church was constructed in 1164 as written on the marble plate by the entrance door. It was that year when Aleksey collected the best Byzantine builders and icon painters to order the construction of a church that would not be monumental and luxurious, but one that will be simple, delicate and with harmonious beauty, built with local stones in combination with baked bricks. Shortly after, such church with moderate size, in an exquisite design of a cross on a square area with five domes, one eight-sided central dome and four small four-sided domes, was constructed.

The frescoes painting in this church were done in three different periods. The oldest frescoes date back to the XII century, the second period was after the great earthquake in 1955 and the last, which covers the dome, dates back to the second half of the XIX century.

What is unique for the frescoes of this church is the applied realism and psychological colouring of

the characters. The image of Mary in the Lamentation of Christ fresco lacks the expected suppression, like almost illustrating the words used to mourn over her son's body. These frescoes are considered to represent



the beginning of the development of renaissance art, 140 years before Giotto, the first Italian renaissance painter.



SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

The Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon is counted among the most

renowned healers with the help of God. He was a physician who shared all his wealth with the underprivileged and spent his life healing the Christians. He was tortured and killed in 305 during the reign of Emperor Maximian and the great persecution of Christians. Panteleimon was born in 275 in Nikomedia - Asia Minor. He is considered the patron saint of physicians.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 9 August. During this celebration the monastery is visited





by hundreds of people, all served with food and drinks prepared there.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The complex Macedonian village, which can be of interest to visit, is just above the monastery. This complex includes 12 authentic houses in the typical architecture of various regions of the country. Each house is built of stone and is typical for the region of origin with different terraces. The first floors of the houses are a kind of museum to show craft workshops, pottery, blacksmith, weaving mill, typical for the origin layout of the house. The

upper floors have bedrooms, where you can spend the night. Apart from the houses, the complex also has a museum with items from the Macedonian culture, costumes as well as some archaeological contents. In addition to this, there are also other typical contents that capture the authenticity of the settings of origin: a village fountain built in the middle of the village, sheepfold and inns which will serve traditional Macedonian specialties.

The monastery being located in the mountain Vodno also provides opportunities for strolls, off-road cycling, paragliding, etc. The highest point of the mountain is Krstovar

peak, on 1066 meters, where the Millennium Cross, a 66-metre high cross, is situated on the top of the Vodno Mountain, constructed to serve as a memorial of 2,000 years of Christianity. There is a cableway

with the same name that runs directly from middle Vodno to the Millennium Cross and back, from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m. (working hours can vary depending on the season); price ticket 100 den.



Recommended
visits and
tours near this
monastery

Visit to the **St. Elijah church** in Gorno Nerezi.

A visit to the **restaurant St. Panteleimon** in the monastery yard.

St. Nicholas Monastery - Ljubanci



LOCATION:

St. Nicholas church is a monastery church in the village Ljubanci, around 20 kilometres from Skopje. This monastery complex is located in the base of the mountain Skopska Grna Gora and is part of the municipality of Butel.

CONTACT:

+389 71 739 743, Sister Epraksiya

Available explanations to the visitors in Romanian.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Skopje, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

This monastery can be reached from various routes; via the villages Podozje, Ljuboten and Radishani. The shortest route to the village





Ljubanci is through the village Radis-hani driving through a well preserved road. The road then from the village Ljubanci to the monastery is narrow, steep with sharp curves driving through oak woods. There is a regular bus line no. 47 with the Public Transportation Company to the monastery in every one and a half from the transportation centre.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery complex is comprised of the following buildings: the church St. Nicholas, one lodging, a campanile, a kitchen, a dining room, a monastery fountain with cold drinking water. There is a shop for souvenirs, glasses, beads, literature etc. The church yard is well arranged

with a park and greenery. The monastery lodging has two storeys i.e. a ground floor and a first floor, with a new lodging that is being redecorated presently and is soon to be available for visitors and believers for spending the night, since there is no such option at the moment here.

The monastery church is small with a square base and built of delicate stone blocks from limestone laid down in straight horizontal layers. The iconostasis has a significant place in the interior of the church with throne icons made by the Dicho Zograf.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

According to the legend, this monastery St. Nicholas in the vil-

lage Ljubanci was built in the middle of the XIX century after the dream that one of the village residents Boyko Raev had, named today as the founder of the church. The construction lasted from 1849 to 1858, built from his own personal contributions and those of the villagers from Ljubanci since this village has traditionally been dedicated to this saint.



It is located in an area with good climate so during the World War II this monastery also served as a hospital and recuperation centre for those ill of tuberculosis. This was a male monastery until 1960 but it was converted to female from 1998.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Nicholas or St. Nicholas of Myra Wonder-worker, archbishop of Myra, was born in 270 in Patara in Asia Minor. He was quite well-off but left his wealth to those in need and became a monk. People considered him a saint and he was reached for help by the ill, the needy and underprivileged. He is known to have helped all in need while his face is said to have emitted light. He died in 343 of old age. St Nicholas the Wonder-worker is known to have assisted with lost ships, and consequently, he has become the patron saint of sailors, fishermen, seafarers. This saint is the patron saint of the city of Amsterdam, the Russian federation and Greece.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The celebration of this saint in the Republic of Macedonia is on 19 December but also on 22 May known here as St. Nicholas celebration in summer. This monastery celebrates the saint's feast day every year on 22 May when the monastery is visited by hundreds of believers, all served with food and drinks prepared there and a big celebration is organized.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The village Ljubanci, found in the surroundings of Skopje has a unique tradition of celebrating the religious holiday Prochka (day of Forgiveness) and there is also a traditional carnival called Ljubanci carnival. It always takes place on Sundays, on the Day of Forgiveness, at 11 o'clock starting with the sign of the sound of drums and zurlas (a traditional double-reed woodwind instrument). There are various masks and costumes, individual or group ones, that can be seen in this village on the celebration of this holiday, all being created by the participants themselves on various themes and ideas. Through a variety of colours, figures and masks, on

a range of motives and themes, one can see the eternal battle - dualism and antagonism between good and evil, realism and sarcasm, humour and tradition.



Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

A possibility for walks on the mountain **Skopska Grna Gora**, picking herbs and chestnuts

A visit to the **church St. Nicholas** from the XIV century in the village Ljuboten.

A visit to the monastery **Ss. Michael and Gabriel** in the village Kucevishte from the XIV century.

Visit to the **Holy Mother of God** monastery in the village Pobozje..

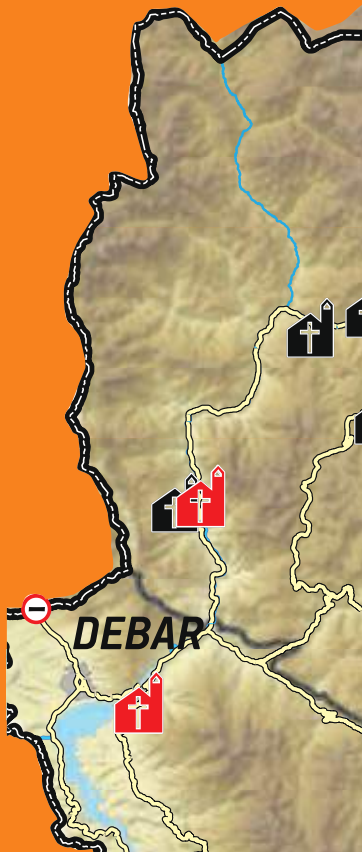
Attending or participating in the traditional **tournament in small-sided football** which has been taking place here since 1974.

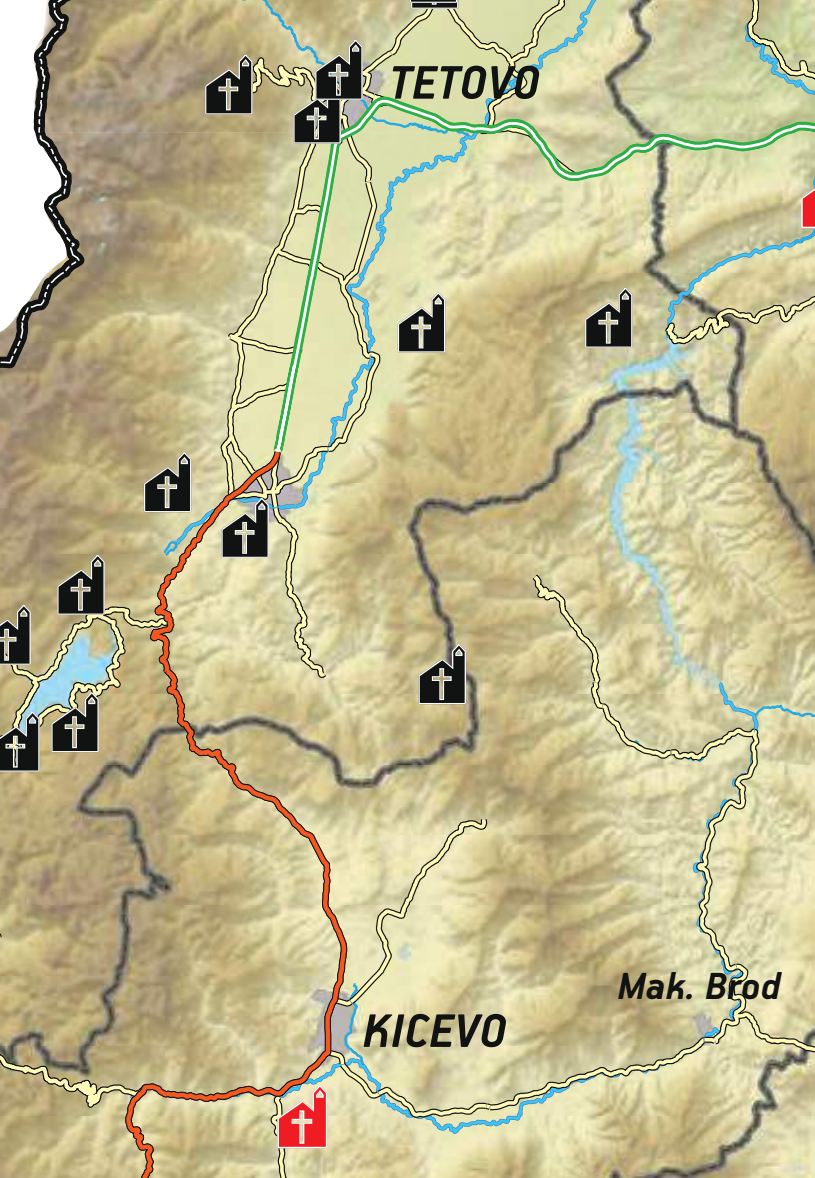
Attending or participating in the traditional **art colony**.

03 >>

MONASTERIES IN THE POLOG REGION

This guide started with the Skopje region, now continuing with an overview of the most significant monasteries in the Polog region. From the natural and cultural-his-toric heritage of the Polog mountainous region, the following places have particular touristic potential: the Polog Valley, the national park Mavrovo, the massive of Bistra mountain, the valley of river Radika, etc. Regardless of your purpose and motivation of visit, whether you decide to stay in the monasteries and have your wake-up call from their bell towers, you would inevitable have the chance to try the traditional food. We would recommend the following monasteries to be on your list while visiting this region.





Leshok Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery Leshok is located in about ten kilometers from the town Tetovo, in the settlement called gorno Leshocko maalo of the village Leshok. This monastery complex is located on the south-eastern foot of the mountain Shar Planina, lying at 610 metres above sea level. The average annual temperature is 10.2°C and average summer tem-

perature is 18.6°C. The micro climate here is favourable for air spa rehabilitation centre which is the reason for locating a Hospital of Pulmonary and Respiratory Diseases in this area, near to the monastery.

CONTACT:

+389 70 510 650,
archimandrite Theodosia.





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Tetovo and Gostivar, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

This monastery can be reached by several routes. One of the recommended is en route to Tetovo, driving towards the village Jezince and the border with Kosovo. Another is en route from Skopje to Tetovo and then take a right turn at the village Zelino. The monastery can be reached through a road in a good condition that passes through the village Leshok, also reachable for tour busses that can take you to the actual surroundings of the monastery. From Tetovo this monastery can be reached with a private van with regular lines of 40 denars, whereas a taxi would charge 200 denars.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Entering the monastery through the wide gates one can immediately enjoy the spectacular view of the entire monastery complex which is comprised of the following buildings: churches of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and the Holy Mother of God Church, which is the first building constructed in this complex but unfortunately located slightly hidden. Apart from the churches this monastery also includes lodgings, summer dining room, restaurant, the tomb of Kiril Peychinovich, a monastery fountain and a stage for various manifestations. The monastery is found among spectacular valleys and old trees, which makes a magnificent sight.

The monastery lodgings have two storeys; the upper floor includes rooms open to the public for spending the night. It has 13 rooms with a capacity to house 40 visitors. One night costs 300 denars. The lodging has three baths, a dining room and a kitchen. In the lodging, there is a memorial room – museum, dedicated to Kiril Peychinovich.



The restaurant Leshok is located within the complex. It has a capacity for 450 seats and all kinds of celebrations are organized here. The special dish of this restaurant is casserole Leshok Monastery, and of course various grill and baked

dishes, tavche gravche (baked bean dish), sharska burger, banica (a pie), etc. The monastery bakes their own rakiya (brandy) with a monastery brand on the bottles that can be bought at the price of 600 denars. There is an offer of double baked wine brandy, grape brandy and plum brandy.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The monastery of Leshok is an Orthodox Christian monastery complex and the largest religious centre in the area of Tetovo. The monastery was founded in 1321 by the Bishop of Polog Anthony. The monastery

became completely active after the arrival of Kiril Peychinovich from the Holy Mountain while in 1818 the monastery lodgings were redeccorated and the monastery library was founded. At that point, the monastery of Leshok became a literary and educational centre. The monastery has been destroyed twice throughout its existence. First, in 1690 by the Turks when it was completely destroyed and again in 2001 during the conflict by the Albanians when the church St. Athanasius was destroyed with explosives. It was redeccorated in 2006.



The old monastery church of the Holy Mother of God is located in

south-eastern part in the monastery yard and it is one of the oldest and best preserved churches in Polog. The church is built 80 cm below surface. The floor is made of stone blocks with a vaulted ceiling. The church resembles a fresco's gallery.



SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

Athanasius of Alexandria also known as St. Athanasius the Great is a Christian saint, Bishop of Alexandria in the period between 328 to 373. He was born in Alexandria in 296. Even as a young child he had an inclination to religion and spiritual-

ity. He participated in the First Council of Nicaea which was organized to settle a number of religious matters of dispute, such as the time of celebration of Easter, acts against Meletius from Lycopolis and acts against Arius, where he was appointed leader against Arianism. Athanasius drafted the Nicene Creed which was adopted by this First Council of Nicaea. His episcopate lasted forty years even though he was not at the position of archbishop this entire period.

During his lifetime he was sent to exile several times by Roman emperors. He died in 373.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration, known among the believers as the Dormition of the Mother of God (a holiday which commemorates the falling asleep or death of Mary) on 28 August, when this monastery is visited by hundreds of people where monastic food and drinks are served.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The famous Tetovo folk music festival is traditionally held in the yard of the monastery. The summer stage within the monastery, in the afternoon before the great Christian holiday the Dormition of the Mother

of God, hosts the best Macedonian folk singers.

The monastery of Leshok is the host of the traditional international meeting of literary translators, chosen as a location precisely here since this was the place where Kiril Peychinovich lived and worked as a writer and translator.

Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

A possibility for walks on the mountain **Shar Planina**, a visit to a sheepfold, off-road cycling.

A visit to the **Popova Shapka**, a winter-recreation centre with skiing slopes of 35 km., ski lifts and tourism infrastructure. There are skiing slopes available for many skiing disciplines. There are many sunny days in the year and snow from November until May. (<http://www.popova-sapka.mk/>).

A visit to the **Waterfalls Belovishte** in the village Belovishte.

A visit to the holy water spring and **the Holy Sunday church** in the village Varvara, suitable for a picnic.

A visit to the town **Tetovo**.

Well-arranged **sports courts** in the village Leshok and a possibility for playing handball.

A visit to the **smallest ethnological museum in the world** in the village Djepchishte. The museum is located in the villa of Simeon Zlatev – Mone. In a very small area of 7,2 m², more than 1150 items are disposed, which according to the owner of the museum date back from 8000 B.C. until the 20th century. No tickets are required to enter this museum and it is open every day during the summer period but otherwise only on weekends.

St. John the Baptist Monastery – Bigorski



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LOCATION:

St. John Bigorski monastery is located in a picturesque valley of the gorgeous river Radika, built within rocks of limestone of the slopes of Bistra mountain in the western part of Macedonia, in the vicinity of the village Rostushe. This monastery complex is at an altitude of 740 metres. The average annual tempera-

ture is 10.6°C and average summer temperature is 18.2°C.

CONTACT:

+389 42 478 675

Website:

<http://www.bigorski.org.mk/>

Available explanations to the visitors in English, Greek and Italian.





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Debar and Kicevo,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric



DIRECTIONS:

This monastery can be reached through various routes. There is a magistrate road in its proximity, whereas the Mavrovo tourist area

is in 24 kilometres and the distance to the town Debar is 20 kilometres. From this road to the monastery, there is a road 1.5 kilometres long that leads to a big parking place in front of the monastery suitable for cars or tour busses. There are also regular bus lines from Debar that can take you to the proximity of the monastery and taxis too.

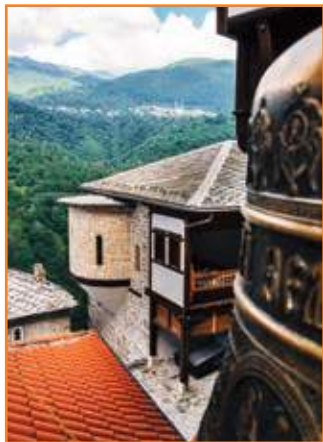
MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery entrance is through the main monastery gates made of massive wood with metal tie rods which immediately offers a magnificent view of the monastery complex comprised of the following buildings: a monastery church, the Sejmen Tower, where the guards (sejmens) stayed to protect the property from the attacks of the kachaks,

a complex of lodgings, new lodgings for visitors, ossuary, a library, an icon gallery with over 70 icons, a kitchen, a dining room and a monastery fountain with cold drinking water. There is a shop for souvenirs, glasses, beads, literature, sour cherry and peppermint liqueur, St John's wort oil, honey, goat's milk, white cheese etc. The church yard is well arranged. The monastery lodgings have 17 rooms with a capacity of 100 beds. All visitors and travellers are offered coffee and locum. Macedonians can spend the night for free, while foreigners are charged 10 euro. The monastery's kitchen and dining rooms can freely be used by the guests but there is a skilful trained cook, a monk, who prepares the food for the needs of the monastery. The monastery specialty is fish stew.

The monastery church is built in Byzantium architectural style which evokes tranquillity both from the outside and inside. The iconostasis of this church is its best decoration as something unique in the Orthodox Christianity, a masterpiece of the Miyak wood-carvers, whose unmatched techniques have not been surpassed until today. They are Petre Filipovski – Garkata

from the village Gari with his group and Makarij Frchkovski from the village Galichnik. They completed this masterpiece in a surprisingly short period, from 1830 to 1835. The iconostasis is divided in six horizontal bands.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

This monastery was built in XI century, in 1020 on the grounds of an old holy church that was destroyed. In XVI century the Turks destroyed and demolished the monastery, but it was restored in 1743 by the monk Ilarion, who also constructed a number of cells for monks.

In the beginning of the XIX century, the archimandrite Arsenius, supported with a number of donations,



further expanded the monastery. This monastery boomed and gained importance in the last two centuries when the big monastery lodgings were built, Bishop's chambers too, a dining room with 200 seats, a monastery oven, three fish ponds in the

monastery's valleys along the river Radika, etc. From the XVII century until the first few decades of the XX century this monastery had their own livestock, sheep, goats, cattle and a herd of horses, as well as agricultural production in the villages along the river, in Debar, even in Elbasan (Albania) where olives were harvested. The monastery complex was destroyed by a fire in 2009 but it is completely reconstructed.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St John the Baptist is an important saint and martyr from Christianity, a preacher who invited people to repentance and the one who baptised in the river Jordan, where he baptised Jesus Christ too.



SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The day of birth of St John the Baptist, the patron saint of this monastery on 7 July and the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist on 11 September are celebrated here with particular significance.

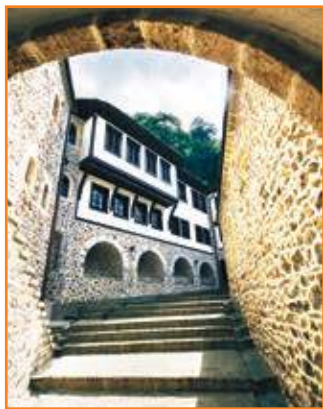
A great number of people visit the monastery complex on 11 September and the night before when the believers spend the night praying in the monastery church and in the monastery lodgings. During the celebrations of these two holidays the monks from the monastery prepare lunch in the monastery dining room for the visitors and believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Apart from the iconostasis, this monastery is also famous for the icon St John the Baptist which is believed to be blessed with miraculous healing power. On this icon, John the Baptist is depicted as a saint having three hands. The third hand symbolizes his power for treating the childless parents.

The monastery of Saint John Bigorski houses the largest collection of relics of great Christian saints

in the country. For instance, the silver coffin made by Dicho Zograf keeps around 10 very important relics – a piece of the Holy Cross where Jesus was crucified, part of the relics of St. John the Baptist, St. James, brother of the Lord, Saint Eustace Placidus, St. Marina, St. Panteleimon and Ss. Julia and Saint Kirik.



Apart from these relics, there are also separate coffins keeping the relics of Saint Charalambos, St Nicetas, Saint Tryphon, St. Klement of Ohrid, St. Nicholas, Saint Stephen Protomartyr, *Saint Clement of Rome*, *St. Agatangel of Bitola*, *Saint Nectarios of Aegina*, *Saint John of Shanghai*, *Saint Seraphim of Sarov*, *Saint John the Russian*, etc.



Recommended visits and tours near this
monastery

A possibility for walks on the mountain **Mavrovo** and **Mavrovo lake**, and the ski-centre <http://www.skimavrovo.com/>.

A visit to the Duf Falls in the vicinity of the village Rostushe. The trail to the waterfalls is well-arranged and marked. The height of the waterfall is about 25 m., with benches to rest in its vicinity and a 'classroom' in the nature. On the waterfall itself there is a possibility of sliding down, properly equipped with ropes.

A visit to the **lake Lokuv** in the vicinity of the village Rostushe. It lies at an altitude of 1565 meters, with benches for rest, a sheepfold, a fountain with natural cold drinking water.

A visit to the villages **Galichnik**, **Gari**, **Tresonche**, **Lazaropole**.
A visit to the traditional manifestation **Galichnik wedding** and **The Sheep and Goat Breeders' Day**.

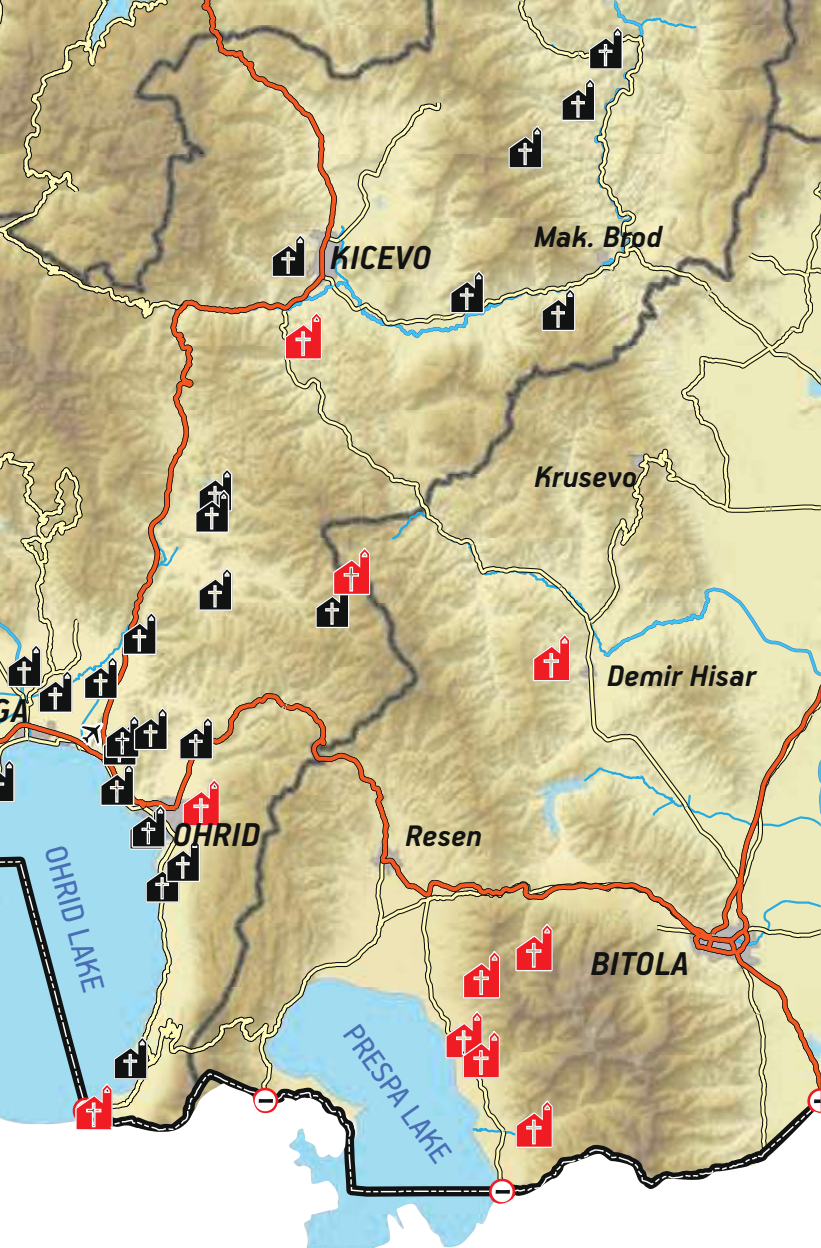
A visit to **Elen Bridge** (Deer Leap bridge) on Garska River, built in the middle of XVII century made of stone with a single arch.

04 >>

MONASTERIES IN THE SOUTH-WEST REGION

After the region Polog this guide will further on focus on the most important monasteries in the Southwest region. From the natural and cultural-historic heritage of the Southwest mountainous region, the following places have particular touristic potential: Ohrid and Ohrid lake, Porechie, the national park Galichica, Debar Spa, etc. Regardless of your purpose and motivation of visit, whether you decide to stay in the monasteries and have your wake-up call from their bell towers, you would inevitable have the chance to try the traditional food. We recommend the following monasteries to be on your list while visiting the Southwest region.





St. George the Victorious Monastery - Rajcica



LOCATION:

The monastery complex St. George the Victorious is located on the coast of the Debar Lake, in the village Rajcica, only few kilometres from Debar. It has an outstanding location, hence the name of the village (Raj- heaven) which genuinely

resembles heaven, something divine and inimitable.

CONTACT:

+389 46 834 916

Available explanations to the visitors in English, Greek and Italian.





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Debar and Kicevo,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric



DIRECTIONS:

The monastery is accessible from the regional road passing through the canyon of the river Radika, from Mavrovi Anovi to Debar, on the left side. It is only two kilometres from the town Debar. There is also a state road in the

vicinity of the monastery which connects to the Mavrovo tourist area in 45 kilometres and to the town Struga in 40 kilometres. The monastery is accessible with a car or a regular bus line from Debar or a taxi.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery complex is comprised of the following buildings: monastery church, lodgings, well arranged yard, kitchen, dining room with a capacity of 120 seats and a monastery fountain with holy water. The monastery has a shop with an offer of souvenirs, beads, literature, etc. The yard is well arranged with flowers, wintergreen trees, palm trees, and greenery. The uninterrupted peace and silence replenish the setting that allows complete tranquillity and a chance to experience spirituality in this holy place.

The lifestyle led in this female monastery follows the style of the Holy Mount Athos, completely followed and accepted by the female monks living here. The monastery produces their own vegetables, bee-



hives, produce mitres and icons, produce homemade peppermint and sour cherry liqueur, honey brandy, apple cider vinegar, St. John's Wort essential oil, incense and a monastery liqueur - a brand of the monastery Rajcica, made of herbs produced in the monastery.

In the lodgings there is only one guest room that can house 10 women. There is also a house with two guest rooms which can accommodate 15 people with a toilet, where both men and women are allowed to stay in. Spending the night in this monastery is free of charge.

The iconostasis in the church St. George was made by wood-carvers of Epirus and Dicho Zograf.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

It is believed that this monastery was established early in the XVI century, as the appendage of the St. John Bigorski Monastery. However, the exact year when the monastery church and quarters were built is 1835, the time when the archimandrite Arsenius of Galichnik was in charge of the Bigorski monastery. The wood carving and the icon painting of the church was done in the period between 1840 and 1852. There was a brotherhood in this monastery up until 1945, which was banned by the authorities and the monastery was converted to a horse stable. The entire monastery complex was completely demolished in 1999, but with an initiative of the archimandrite of the Bigorski monastery Partenius (together with the brotherhood), this monastery was

reconstructed, along with a female monk community.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. George was born in Cappadocia in 275. St. George became a military officer with the rank of Tribune, in the guard of Emperor Diocletian. When Diocletian issued an edict that every Christian should be arrested, George objected, and loudly claimed himself to be a Christian and declared his worship of Jesus. The Emperor imprisoned and tortured him and finally executed him in 303. A number of miracles are related to this saint, most of which related to his assistance to other people and the various torture sessions which he managed to uphold with the courage of his faith.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 6 May, the big Christian holiday Gurgovden (Saint George's Day). The monastery is visited by hundreds of people and the monastery prepares festive lunch for the guests and believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

This monastery houses relics and parts of the remains of the hand of St George which are embedded in a hand especially designed in Thessaloniki. The hand is made of silver with a small part made of gold and in the front part it is decorated with zircons and rubins, guarded in a special box.



It should be noted that this monastery produces hand-made mitres (a crown, part of the ceremonial attire of Orthodox bishops) which are worn by bishops from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but also by bishops in Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Romania, Albania, Montenegro, as well as in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The mitras are inevitable part and a supreme headdress of the archbishop's attire worn during important cere-



monies. In the hands of these nuns the beauty of the crowns for the spiritual fathers – the bishops come into reality, a feature that this monastery will be marked with in the history of the Orthodox world. After this monastery got its approval and blessing to make mitres, these nuns

have produced over 500 unique mitres, not only for the Macedonian bishops but have also gained the trust and respect from bishops from the Balkans, Russia, USA, Asia from The Ecumenical Patriarchate, even to Africa. These unique pieces of art go far beyond craftsman skills. Each detail of the mitre signifies something particular, such as the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that stand on the four sides. They are a standard part of each mitre. On the top of the mitre there is the cross, while the front part has the Byzantine double-headed eagle which symbolizes religious power and regalia since at that time the establishment of the church was organized in a way where the Archbishop and the Emperor equally ruled with the state.

The colours on the mitre bear certain significance as well. Red colour is worn on a martyr day, on the day of the Holy Mother of God blue, green is the colour of the Holy Spirit hence worn also on Pentecost etc. The mitres are embroidered with golden thread and then decorated with zircons, crystals and pearls.

Each year the monastery is visited by 30 children, taking part

of a catechism camp. The students from the Centre for Orthodox Christian catechism from Bitola study

catechism in a specific manner in a direct contact with the monastery sisterhood.



Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

A possibility for walks and visit to **Debar Lake**.

A visit to the town **Debar** and its traditional architecture from XIX century.

A visit to the **Memorial house of the family of Kemal Ataturk** in the village Kodjadjik.

A visit to Vevcani and the famous **Vevcani carnival**.

A visit to the **monastery Holy Mother of God** in the village Kalishte, Struga.

Attendance to the international manifestation **The Struga Poetry Evenings** in Struga, which as an international event began in 1966

The Holy Mother of God Immaculate Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God is located around twenty kilometres south of Kicevo, in the vicinity of the village Dolenci. This monastery complex is located on the slopes of the mountain Vrboj, on an area part of

the Drugovo municipality. The monastery is found at an altitude of 920 meters with an average temperature of 9.3°C while during the summer it is 16.7°C.

CONTACT:

+389 45 800 050





DIOCESE:

Diocese of Debar and Kicevo,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

The monastery has a few accessible routes. One is en route Kicevo - Ohrid, in the vicinity of the village Drugovo, where on the first intersection you should turn left in the direction toward Demir Hisar and Bitola. After two kilometres, there is a road sign indicating to turn left and the road then leads to the monastery. The road is narrow but in a good condition of about 1.5 kilometres, driving through oak woods and a tunnel made of the branches of the trees leading directly to the monastery.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The entrance to the monastery

complex is through a big wooden two wing gate. The complex consists of the following buildings: the church Holy Mother of God in the middle, a complex of lodgings, separate dining room with a capacity of 200 seats where the interior is made of massive wood, additional facilities and a quite appealing monastery fountain with cold drinking water made of stone layers. The monastery yard is well arranged with greenery and trees. The lodgings offer an accommodation capacity of 19 rooms for 70 people. Staying in is free but should be arranged in advance with the blessing of the abbess.

The monastery church is one of the largest in the country. The southern part of the church is attached to a small church dedicated to St. Nicholas, known as the winter church.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The monastery dedicated to the Holy Mother of God was built in 1316, located close to the monastery fountain known by the healing power of the water and visited by many people even today. The fountain survived through the centuries to quench the spiritual thirst of the believers but the church was completely demolished in 1558 by the Ottomans, in the period when a great number of churches and monasteries in the area around Kicevo were destroyed. In 1564 another church was built which was burned in 1843. In the time of the Ottoman Empire this monastery kept records of the surrounding churches and monas-

teries. This monastery has its own seal dating back to 1763. There was a school in this monastery educating priests and teachers for the areas of Kicevo, Debar, Ohrid and Tetovo.

The present church dates back to 1850. The new church was decorated by the Miyak wood carvers from the Dicho Zograf group doing an outstanding work with the golden frescoes and the Bishop's throne. The icon paintings in the church are breathtaking. There is a small part in the church which is not icon painted and it is used by the Christians who are not baptised and by Muslims too.

This monastery is known for being open to all believers, Christians and Muslims. The interior of the church is carefully made to offer a chance to pray to all believers, regardless of their faith.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

Dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, the feast day of this monastery is Mala Bogorodica, (Birthday of the Virgin Mary) on the 21 September, when this monastery is visited by a great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The most important frescoes of the church Holy Mother of God is the miraculous icon. The part of the icon around the arms and the aureole of the Holy Mother are fitted with silver which, for many centuries now, have served the believers as a type of a mailbox for sending messages to the 'other', divine side. Namely, in the parts under the arm and the aureole i.e. the parts fitted with silver, the believers wrote and left their prayers and wishes to the Holy Mother there. Some believers leave money while the texts left on the icon vary from old Arabic texts to modern with telephone numbers. This was discovered

during a conservation process of the icon by the national conservation centre.



Next to the monastery church, there is a spring believed to have healing power of its miraculous water which is often visited by large numbers of believers regardless of their religious devotion, seeking salvation for their illnesses and praying for their wishes.

Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

A visit to the **Monastery of Knezino** in the vicinity of Knezino, west from Kicevo. There are two fountains in the church yard, which are supposed to have water with healing powers.

A visit to the **Cave Peshna** situated 6 km from Makedonski Brod. It is proclaimed as a natural monument, where the opening of the entrance is 30m high.

A visit to the **Holy Mother of God monastery** in the village Gorni Manastirec – Makedonski Brod.

A visit to the **fish pond in the village Babino** and the largest private library counting 15000 books.

A visit to the **St. Elijah monastery** and the touristic area Ilinska Mountain in the vicinity of Golemo Ilino.

Saint Paraskevi of Rome Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery church St. Paraskevi of Rome is located four kilometres northeast from Ohrid, in the bottom of Ilinska mountain, on the valley of the hill Olmec. The monastery is found on the territory of village Velgoshti, the municipality of Ohrid, at an altitude of 721 m.

CONTACT:

+389 46 288 739

DIocese:

Diocese of Debar and Kicevo, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can be reached from the town Ohrid using a road in





good condition. The village Velgoshti is considered as a suburban settlement of Ohrid, therefore there is regular bus transportation. A taxi from the centre of Ohrid is also a possibility that would cost around 150 denars.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery can be reached through a well arranged trail with greenery, situated in an idyllic setting with a small waterfall and arranged square with benches in its immediate surroundings. Located on a hill, it offers a spectacular view over the town Ohrid and the Ohrid Lake. This monastery complex has the following buildings: the church St. Paraskevi, lodgings, kitchen, dining room, restaurant and a well arranged monastery yard. The lodging

has seven rooms to accommodate seven people with shared bathroom. It has an equipped kitchen which additionally offers the guests the possibility to prepare their own food. Traditional dough dishes of this region are the traditional pie - gomleze and pitulici (fried lumps of dough). The monastery has a private winery and a cherry orchard hence the production of their own cherry brandy.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The monastery church is a single nave church made of broken stone and lime mortar. Above the apsidal window there is a sign indicating the date when this monastery church was built, in 1890 in the time of the archimandrite Naum Ilinchev, with the blessing of the Sultan Abdul Hamid. In the monastery yard there is a fountain with natural water from

the mountain with painted image of St. Paraskevi on a stone, indicating the construction date of 1769. The church was expanded in 1922.

Inside the church there is the iconostasis made in 1966 and a number of frescoes dating from the XIX century. The icon painting of this church was done by the zograf Dragan Risteski from Ohrid in 1993. The lodgings were redecorated and expanded few times in different periods from 1970 to 1997.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

Saint Paraskevi of Rome is venerated in the Orthodox Christianity as Christian martyr who lived in the II century. Filled with the spirit of Christ and Christian ideals, she sold all her worldly goods and dispersed her wealth among the poor, entering a monastic order and became a nun dedicating her life to the teachings of Christianity. She was tortured and killed in 140. During her lifetime and after her death a number of miracles relate to her name as a result of her acts. Orthodox Christians can still testify her miracles even today.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The feast day of this monastery is on the 8 August, when this monastery is visited by a great number of believers.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Parts of the relics of St. Paraskevi of Rome are kept in a specially constructed box inside the monastery.

The first squadron of the area around Ohrid was formed in this monastery in 1901.

Zivko Chingo is an outstanding Macedonian storyteller, writer and playwright, born in Velgoshti. Since 1988 Velgoshti hosts a manifestation in his honour called 'Days

of Zivko Chingo'. The literary award to young writers, on this manifestation 'Zivko Chingo' for best story is given to young writers, on this manifestation.



Recommended visits and tours
near this monastery

A visit to the churches **St. Nicholas, St. Klement, The Holy Sunday** and the cave church **Holy Mother of God** in the village Velgoshti.

A possibility to attend or take part in the traditional **tournament in small-sided football** in the village Velgoshti.

A stroll, with **signed mountain trails** in the village Velgoshti surrounding.

A visit and sightseeing tour of **Ohrid**, a town which is on the list of Natural and Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

A possibility for swimming on the beaches of **Ohrid Lake**.

Saint Naum Monastery



LOCATION:

On the southern part of the Ohrid lake, near the Macedonian-Albanian border, and in the western foot of the mountain Galicica lies the monastery of Saint Naum. The monastery belongs to the municipality of Ohrid and is located 714 meters above sea level. The average annu-

al temperature is 11 °C and average summer temperature is 18.2 °C.

CONTACT:

+389 46 283 081

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Debar and Kicevo, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can be reached from Ohrid on a road in good condition, 28 kilometres long. There is a regular bus service with mini vans during the summer period, as well as marine transportation from Ohrid. The monastery is located five

kilometres from the border with Albania. From the village of Ljubanista to Otesevo and the Prespa lake, through the Galicica National Park, there is a 35km-long road which connects the two lakes.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

There is a nicely arranged path with greenery, by the shore that leads to the monastery. Along the path, there are several restaurants and souvenir shops. The monastery yard in front of the main gates is also beautifully landscaped with benches, flowers and fountains. From the monastery, which is located on a cliff, offers a rare view of the Ohrid Lake. The monastery complex is impressive in its appearance and attributes. Entering through lavish monastery gates, the complex con-

sists of the following buildings: the church of Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the centre, a complex of lodgings, hotel, restaurant, souvenir shop and well landscaped yard of the monastery. The lodging which has been transformed into a hotel with conference hall, has 28 rooms and a capacity to accommodate 80 guests. The nightly rate is between 30-100 euros. One of the lodgings is transformed into a restaurant with traditional cuisine with a capacity of 150 seats. The entrance ticket to the church of the Ss. Archangels is

50 denars for domestic tourists, 100 denars for foreign tourists and 30 denars for students.

The monastery is adorned by beautiful peacocks or birds of paradise, which are considered a symbol of Christianity and found in a great number in the complex.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The original church was built by Saint Naum in 900 where he was buried in 910. The base of St. Naum monastery is in a shape of triconchos (leaf clover). The present church





was built on the remains of the original church, dating from the period between XVI and XVII century, which was upgraded and expanded in several stages. In the second half of the XVIII century the dome was built above the narthex of the church, and the last significant renewal was made at the end of the XVIII century, namely in 1799, when the tomb was built in St. Naum's church. The decorations of the walls, except for some fragments of the frescoes from the XVI - XVII century, was performed by

the painter Trpo from Korcha (Albania) between year 1800 and 1806. In the tomb chapel above Naum's tomb is the composition of Dormition of Naum. The Slavonic educators Cyril and Methodius and their disciples Clement, Gorazd, Sava and Angelariy are depicted among the figures painted above Naum's deathbed.

The wood-carved iconostasis in the central part of the church is of an exceptional artistic value. It was completed in 1711, at the same



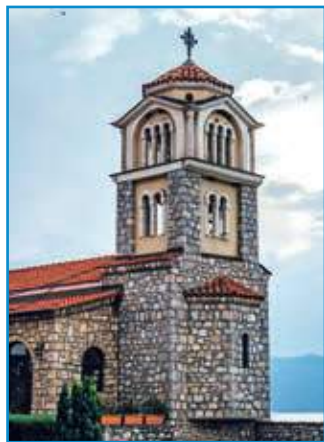
time when the icons were painted, by the zograf Konstantin Hieromonk, as noted in the lower part of the throne icon of Jesus Christ.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

Saint Naum of Ohrid the Miracle Maker (830-910 year) was a medieval scholar, writer, teacher, and one of the founders of the Slavic literacy and education. He was an asso-



ciate of Saint Clement of Ohrid and disciple of the brothers Ss. Cyril and Methodius. Numerous wonders related to his name, during his lifetime and after his death are the reason why he is still revered by Orthodox



believers.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 3 July. During the celebration the monastery is visited by a great number of believers and there is a monastery fair.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Numerous passers-by come to

the monastery of St. Naum to visit the grave of the saint. It is a refuge for the sick, especially for those with mental illness. And today, if you puts an ear to his grave, you can hear his heart beating.

Recommended visits and tours near this monastery

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Mary Zahumska- Zaum** near the village of Trpejca.

Possibility to attend to the traditional **Ohrid marathon** that starts from St. Naum to Ohrid. Swimming Marathon is being held since 1962.

Possibility for **cruise ship** to Ohrid.

Sightseeing of the **town of Ohrid**, listed as a world cultural heritage by UNESCO.

Possibility of **swimming in Ohrid Lake** on the arranged Ljubanista beach near the monastery.

Paragliding from the National Park Galicica to the beach of Ljubanista.

Visit to the **Museum on water - Gulf of bones**. This prehistoric pile-dwelling settlement is on the peninsula of the auto camp Gradiste, at a depth of 3 to 5 meters. The closest pile found, out of total 6000 discovered, is 12 meters deep in the lake, which is presumably a pile of the bridge that connected the settlement. It is assumed that the settlement stretched across nearly 8,500 square platform, and it had maybe 60-odd dwellings. Many remains of tools, items of pottery, wood, stone and parts of animals, such as, for example, horns of deer and others, were discovered here on the site.

Visit to the **Church of St. Clement** and **St. Panteleimon** in Plaoshnik in the old part of Ohrid.

Visit to the **National Park Galicica**.

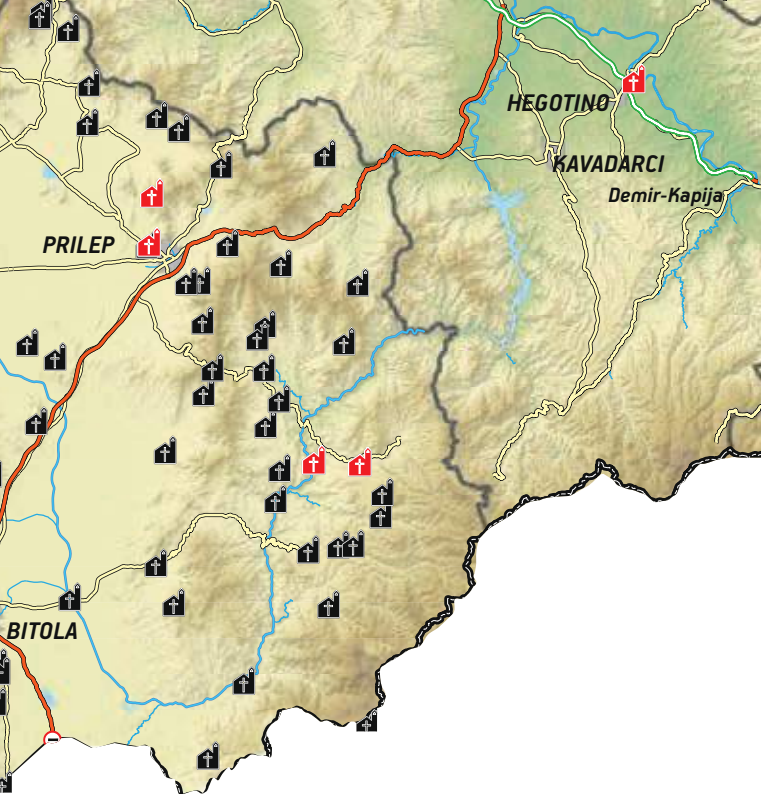


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MONASTERIES IN PELAGONIA REGION

After the Southwest region we shall continue with an overview of important monasteries in the Pel-

agonia region. From the natural and cultural-historic heritage of the Pelagonia region, the following places



have particular touristic potential: Prespa Lake, Pelagonia valley, ancient town of Heraclea, Pelister National Park, Mariovo region, Krusevo etc. Regardless of your purpose and motivation of visit, whether you decide to stay in the monasteries and

have your wake-up call from their bell towers, you would inevitable have the chance to try the traditional food. We recommend the following monasteries to be on your list while visiting the Pelagonia region:

Saint Archangel Michael – Varosh Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery of St. Archangel Michael is located above the settlement Varosh in the town of Prilep, rooted in rocks of Markovi Kuli. The monastery is at an altitude of 756 m. The average annual temperature is 10.9°C and average summer tem-

perature is 18.8°C.

CONTACT:

+389 48 412 290

DIOCESE:

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

There is narrow paved path, approximately one kilometre long, in the Varosh settlement in Prilep that leads to the monastery. There is no proper parking space in front of the monastery.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

This monastery, built in a rock, provides a wonderful view of Prilep and Pelagonia. Entering through the massive wooden gates, the complex is comprised of the following buildings: the church of St. Archangel Michael, the old lodging, a souvenir shop, monastery fountain and a new bell tower. There is also another interesting object - a natural water reservoir surrounded by the massive rocks. There are fragments of ancient times in the well-arranged

monastery courtyard. The lodgings at the monastery are on two floors, but this monastery does not allow guests and visitors to spend night here. The monastery's dining room has a capacity of 200 guests.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The legend about the origin of the monastery begins in the X century, when an unknown disciple of St. Clement settled in one of the rocks where he led a solitary life. His name still remains unknown, but the place where the monastery is situated being called 'The Saint' confirms this legend. The ancient marble columns found on this site confirm that this church was built on an old cult place. There is old carved inscription in Cyrillic on one of them dating back to 996, which is the second oldest Cyrillic inscription, found in the Republic of Macedonia.

This church was repeatedly demolished and rebuilt in the period between the XI and XIII centuries. There is a trace from that period on the northern wall of the church, where there are still parts of frescoes from the XII century. Under the church's ground there still some frescoes from that period that form a tunnel. The great vicar John rebuilt the church at the end of the XIII century, and dedicated it to St. Michael, shown in the fresco on the west side of the church where John

is depicted as a patron holding the model of the church. The church was later rebuilt by the rulers in Prilep, Volkashin and King Marko that can be seen on the two frescos at the entrance depicting these two rulers.



Apart for the western part, this church today has all features of the last renovation, performed in 1861. Archeologically this is a single-nave church. There are remains of frescoes quite rich in detail but with a notable preference given to monastic characters.

The lodgings are built on both sides of the monastery in the XIX century by Prilep guild and represent a fine example of an old urban architecture. In 1998, the monastic life was restored in this monastery with a five-member sisterhood present today.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Archangel Michael is the Prince of Angels and commander of the army of heaven. He is one of the seven archangels, guardian of church and victorious over Lucifer and Satan. Consequently, in the works of art, he is always presented in Roman armour raising his sword or spear as he confronts a demon or a dragon.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery has its saint day celebration on 21 November. During

the celebration the monastery is visited by a great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

In the monastery of Archangel Michael, remains of relics of several saints are kept in boxes, specially made for this purpose. These are the miraculous and healing relics of Saints Cosmas and Damian and St. Stiliyan.

There is a spring with healing water in the yard of the monastery, dedicated to the Holy Mother of God.



Recommended visits
and tours near the
monastery

Sightseeing of the **town of Prilep**.

A visit to the beer festival called **Beer Fest** in Prilep <http://www.pivofestival.mk/>.

Visit to the **Museum of tobacco** in Prilep, it is the only museum of its kind in the Balkans and one of the major tobacco museums in Europe.

Visit the **archaeological site Stibera** near the village of Cepigovo.

Holy Transfiguration Monastery - Zrze



LOCATION

The Holy Transfiguration Monastery is located in the village Zrze, 34 km north-west of Prilep, at almost 1000 m above the sea level, at the foot of the Dautica mountain massive. The monastery belongs to the Municipality of Dolneni.

CONTACT

manastirzrze@yahoo.com

Available explanations to the visitors in English.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS

Driving en route Prilep - Makedonski Brod, there is an exit for the village of Ropotovo, passing through the villages of Peshtalevo, Sekirci and Kostinci continues to the village of Zrze. The monastery is reached on foot because vehicles are left at 200 meters from the Monastery on a proper parking lot.



MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery, which was built in a rock, provides a wonderful view of Pelagonia. Entering through the large doors of the entrance tower, the complex consists of the following buildings: Holy Transfiguration church, lodging, souvenir shop, monastery fountain, janitor and other ancillary buildings, fish pond and bell tower. In the exceptional yard of the monastery, arranged with greenery and old trees, there are fragments of antiquity, benches and waste bins. The lodgings in the monastery do not provide accommodation of visitors, and in the newly reconstructed lodgings workshops for wood carving and icon painting are held. The Church of St. Peter and Paul is located in the monastery



complex where an unusual fresco can be seen showing a boy in an old Macedonian shepherd costume. The fresco is associated with the legend of the shepherd boy who opposed the Arnauts and saved the monastery from looting but was eventually killed at the end.

The monastery being built on travertine rock, monks formed a monastic settlement of hermitages by carving and settling into a vertical incision of the travertine rock, on the northern, eastern and southern sites of the monastery complex. In the rocks there are 11 units with 30 objects that include hermitages, pits, workshops, cells for hesychastic practice, etc. In the northern side of the monastery, an early Christian basilica from V century, several graves, road, etc. were dugged out and revealed.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The remains of the old demolished buildings indicate that this area was much largely built in the past and contained a number of other residential and economic buildings. The whole area was protected with high



and massive walls and defence towers, as seen by the preserved remains.

The Zrze monastery was most likely built circa XIV century by a monk named German, during the reign of Tsar Dusan. An inscription placed on the outside wall of the south entrance of the church provides information about the history of the monastery since its creation to the years of penetration of the Turkish army in this region.



The Holy Transfiguration is a single-nave church, arched by a semi-circular arch and a semi-circu-

lar inner apse. When the narthex was in the process of building, in the second half of the XIV century, there was an entrance from the southern and western side but it was immured. The narthex was fresco painted at that time too. The frescoes in the naos belong to the XVI century period.

This church was spared from Turkish looting and devastation. As a result, a significant part of the property of the church disappeared forever. Today the monastery is active with a monastic brotherhood.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

Jesus was a Jewish prophet and rabbi from Nazareth, who lived in the I century. After his death he became a central figure in Christianity and an important character in other religions. Christians consider him to be the Messiah and Son of God, i.e. the second person (hypostasis) of the Holy Trinity. He is also called God's Word, who in order to save the humans from their sins "transfigured" and became a man - Jesus Christ. He was a teacher and healer, baptized by John the Baptist and crucified in Jerusalem under the order of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate with the accusation of libel against the

Roman Empire. Jesus resurrected after his crucifixion.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY AND AN EXPLANATION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION:



In order not to weaken the faith of the Apostles with His imminent suffering, and not to be denounced by his disciples, Christ the Lord wanted to show and prove to them His divine glory. Transfiguration of Our Lord - Jesus Christ is the act itself when He, the Wisdom, proved the truth of this. So He took Peter, Jacob and John with him at night to the Mount Tabor and there he transfigured in front of them. And His face shone like the sun, and his clothing turned white as snow, and

beside him appeared the Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah. The event occurred 40 days before the crucifixion of the Saviour.

Monastery celebration on the occasion of the Transfiguration is on 19 August. During the celebration, the monastery is visited by a large number of believers and according to the monastic saga and centuries-old traditions, the brotherhood for every guest at the monastery prepares lean beans, fish, grapes and wheat.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

In the monastery Zrze, part of the relics of several saints, such as the miraculous and healing relics of saints Panteleimon and Procopius are kept in boxes specially made for this purpose.



Between XIV and XV century, the two most famous icons from the monastery were created - the Zrze icon of Christ the Saviour and Life giver from 1394 by the painters Metropolitan John and the miraculous icon of the Virgin Pelagonitisa from 1422, made by monk Macarius.

It should be noted that the position of these icons is in reverse of the position of the icons of Jesus and Virgin Mary in other Christian churches and monasteries. In this monastery, the icon of the Virgin Mary is on the right, and the icon of Jesus is on the left side. Namely, the icons were placed according

to the canons of the Orthodox faith three times in a row by the monks, but all three times they changed their places overnight. The third time the abbot asked the icon why the place is changed and the lips of Virgin Mary moved, and she said: "I do not want to turn my back on my son, that's why I change the canonical place."



Recommended visits
and tours near the
monastery

Visit to the **spring Panteleimon** near the monastery.

Visit to **St. Nicholas Church** in the village of Zrze, located on the property of the monastery.

Possibility of **hiking** on Mount Dautica and visit to three mountain lodges Cheples, Papradiste and Strovija.

Visit to **Treskavec monastery** near Prilep.

Visit the **Monastery of St. Elijah** in the village of Strovja. The monastery has a lodging and 18 rooms for accommodation.

Sightseeing of the **town of Prilep**.

The Assumption of Holy Mother of God - Treskavec Monastery



LOCATION

Monastery of the Assumption of Holy Mother of God - Treskavec is located 10 kilometres from the town of Prilep, at 1280 meters above sea level, among the rocks under Zlatovrv. The Treskavec area, where the monastery is located, in bad weather and storms is often stricken by lightning, hence the name Treskavec.

CONTACT

treskavec@gmail.com

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS

There is a paved path 7.5 kilometres-long to the monastery,





which separates from the main road that connects Prilep and Makedonski Brod, where after a few kilometres there is a signpost that suggests turning to the right. The monastery can be reached by car, and 100 meters from the monastery, there is a wide parking space.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery offers a spectacular view of Pelagonia. Upon entering through the monastery gates, one can see the church in the central part, surrounded by the monastery lodgings. Enclosed with walls, erected over old remains, the monastery complex consists of the dining room, library and other auxiliary facilities. The lodgings in the monastery do not provide possibility of accommo-

modation for visitors, because they are in a process of reconstruction after the great fire that raged in the monastery in 2013. Despite this fact, the monastery is visited by many tourists who spend the night under the open sky in front of the monastery.





ty of the present church. The monastery's dining room from the XIV century is particularly impressive, with the preserved stone seats and long tables with carved special space for the legs in the stone. It is evident that enormous efforts and money had been invested in cultivating the immense stone blocks, weighing not less than two tons. In the dining room there are frescoes from XVII century and XIX century, under which there are remains of frescoes from XIV century.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The church dedicated to the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God is a single nave church, with a domed narthex divided with pilasters in sev-

The marble decorations that are built from a much older early Christian church greatly contribute to the beau-



eral ends. The frescoes in the Church of the Assumption of Holy Mother of God dates back to different periods. The oldest are those on the walls in the area between the two towers, from 1334 - 1343 year. Frescoes originating from the mid XIV century were from the former facade of the extension of the chapel. Frescoes and facades of exonarthex had been immediately painted afterwards. In the central part of the northwest dome there is a depiction of Jesus Christ as King of Heaven, a throne with the gospel in it, on the left side of him – Virgin Mary as a queen and King David on the right side of him. Around them is the holy army of heaven courtyard of cherubims, seraphims, archangels and angels, and between the windows there are eight holy warriors depicted who, unlike the usual manner in which St. George or St. Demetrios are always dressed as soldiers, this time they are presented as noblemen in beautiful robes of the time, again as part of the heavenly court. On the west wall in the upper zone there is a marble statue of a Roman soldier in Heaton. Christians, while building the church, didn't think of it as something special, and used it as a construction material.

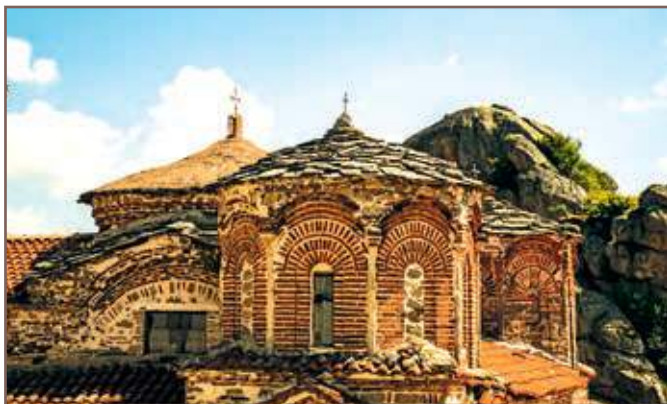
At the end of the XVI century the monastery was a scriptorium, and in the XVIII and XIX century the monastery was also a school. In the XIX century around the monastery church, lodgings were built with donations from Prilep craftsmen - guildsmen.



Treskavec monastery in its history had suffered from devastating fires three times in which lodgings were burnt. The first one was in 1867, the second in 1990 and the third in 2013, which completely burned the monastery lodgings.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

The monastery has its saint day celebration, known as the Great Mother of God or Assumption of Holy



Mother of God (dedicated to the death of Mary), is celebrated every year on August 28, when the monastery is visited by large number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

There has been a sanctuary in the Treskavec area since ancient times, and today it is one of the largest monastic and spiritual sanctuaries. From Roman times (II/III century) there are two inscriptions on marble pedestals dedicated to Apollo Eteudanos (The Thunder Fighter) and Artemis. Here the name of the shrine, Kolobaisa is also mentioned. The site was served by dedicated people and servants – there

are numerous graves dug south of the peak (Hellenistic and Roman times). Believers - pilgrims attended Kolobaisa from different countries. In late antiquity, on the site of the ancient temple, a Christian church was built.





**Recommended
visits and
tours near the
monastery**

Visit to the **Holy Transfiguration Monastery** in the village of Zrze.

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Archangel Michael** in Prilep.

Sightseeing of the town of Prilep.

St. John the Baptist - Slepche Monastery



LOCATION

Monastery of St. John the Baptist is located 6 kilometres from the town of Demir Hisar, 750 meters above sea level. Located in the eastern slopes of Ilinica, a branch of the Bigla Mountain, surrounded by oak forests and pristine nature, just above the village of Slepche.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached by a paved road, which separates from the main road that connects





Demir Hisar and Kicevo, where just after a few kilometres there is a signpost, and one should turn left towards the village of Slepche. The monastery may be reached by car.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

Upon entering through the monastery gates, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: the monastery church, lodgings, dining room, stands in front of the church with products from the monastery exposed for sale, the monastery fountain, bell tower and ancillary buildings.

On the east and west side of the monastery church there are old lodgings that have recently been fully renovated and restored in its original authentic look and shape. The lodgings at the monas-

tery provide accommodation for 12 guests in three rooms with a shared bathroom. Accommodation is not charged, visitors leave a donation for the monastery on their own.

The monastery keeps bulls, cows, goats and sheep that produce milk, meat, cheese and cottage



cheese. Vegetables and fruits are also grown for sugar-free preserves and jam, apple cider vinegar, as well as beehives and honey products. Besides, the monastery has registered litters of dog breed Sharplaninec. The sisters at the monastery knit, embroider and sew, and their production can be purchased at the site.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

There is no precise data on the exact time when the church was built, as well as the on the time when the monastery was founded. Some sources mention that the monastery was built in 1010, i.e. before the famous battle of Belasica between Tsar Samuil and Basil II

in 1014 which ended with the tragic blinding of Samuil's soldiers. The blinded army, after the battle, remained in the area of today's village of Slepche (slep – blind), which is how, according to this historic event, got its name. Science assumes that the monastery existed before the XIV century, based on the fact that in the year 1393/34, it was a place where a triode of Church-Slavonic language was rewritten. But the first time the monastery is specifically mentioned is in 1543, in a letter of protopope Luke.

The monastery was a seat of scriptorium where liturgical books in Church-Slavonic language were rewritten. The monastery was a refuge for many revolutionaries from the



time of Turkish rule and the Second World War. During the Turkish rule, the monastery was a cultural and educational centre for education of priests and teachers. History also remembers the monastery as a centre in which there was an art carving school, as well as a hospital for patients with nerve diseases, which can be read from the inscription on the monastery fountain.

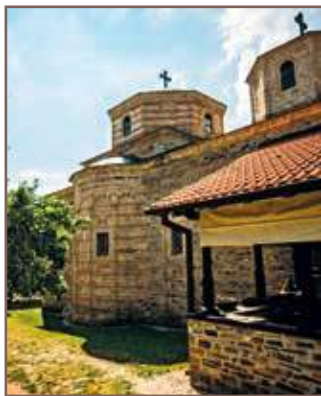
Today's monastery church was built in 1862, on the foundation of former big old church with frescoes.



SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT

Saint John the Baptist is an important saint and martyr in Christianity, preacher from the I century,

who invited people to repent and performed baptism in the River Jordan, where he baptized Jesus Christ.



SAINT'S FEAST DAY

Monastery celebrates the day of the birth of St. John the Baptist every year on July 7, when the monastery is visited by large number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

In the XVI century a letter book was written in the monastery, which is a guide and model for proper writing of letters depending on who it is sent to i.e. whether it is sent to a friend, prince, emperor, merchant

and more. The letter book which is written in the monastery is now kept at the National Library in Moscow, containing 17 templates for writing letters to church and secular parties, including the letter to the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

The monastery had a tumultuous history as witnessed by secret tunnels, hiding place in the cellar, narrow waded stairs, corridors and rooms that are hiding in the old burned building next to the monastery whose walls are thicker than one and a half meter and whose domes cannot be seen from outside.



**Recommended visits and tours near
the monastery**

Visit to the **monastery of St. Athanasius** in the village of Zurce, convent cloister of the monastery in Slepce.

Visit to the **monastery of St. Nicholas Topolichki** in Sloeshtica..

Possibility of recreation and fishing in **Strugovo Lake**.

Sightseeing of the town of **Demir Hisar**.

Visit to the **Smilevo Congress Memorial Museum, Memorial Park and the home of Dame Gruev** in the village of Smilevo.

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Virgin Mary** in the village of Dobromirovo.

Sightseeing of the town of **Krusevo**.



St. Nicholas - Mاريوvo Monastery



LOCATION

Monastery of St. Nicholas is located 40 kilometres from the town of Prilep, located in an area with beautiful scenery and fragrances of flowers, close to the picturesque canyons and generous flow of the Crna River. The monastery is located in the village of Manastir at 690 meters above sea level.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 78 280 936, Father Nikola.
Available explanations to the visitors in English and Greek.





DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached from the regional road connecting Prilep and Vitolishte by an exit, which is the main connection to Prilep's part of Mariovo. There is a road sign indicating to turn right towards the village of Manastir that separates as a prong that is 4 km long. The monastery can be reached by car.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery complex consists of the following buildings: the monastery church, an old lodging, dining room, monastery fountain and auxiliary facilities. The new lodging in the monastery is under construction and not yet able to accommodate guests. There is a souvenir shop planned to be a part of the object.

The monastery provides vegetables, breeds cows - the region



has ideal conditions for production of honey, therefore it breeds bees for honey and honey products. St. Nicholas Church, located in the monastery, was built in 1095, but got its present appearance in 1266.

According to the architecture, the church is a three-nave basilica with superb frescoes, such as the "Madonna with Angels" and "St. Nicholas". This type of painting is very rare and is present only in the churches of St. George in Kurbinovo and St. Sophia in Ohrid.



spiritual temple, and the church was dedicated to St. Nicholas of Myra. Few sources are preserved regarding the past of the monastery, mainly few records and inscriptions in the monastery church, archaeological and architectural studies and analysis of the frescoes.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

Partly preserved inscription on the frescoes indicates that the monastery dates from the end of XI century. In 1095 protostrator Alexey, a close relative of the Byzantine Emperor Alexey Comnenus built this

The frescoes in the monastery originate from the second half of the XIII century, during the first renewal by Father Superior Acacius, as evidenced by a church-donor composition. It abounds with classical monastic themes.



–in winter, and in May/June –in summer, when the monastery is visited by large number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Starting from 2012, each year on the last weekend in May, the village Manastir is a host to a major festival Mariovo "Off Road Experience" which includes two bicycle tours, hiking, mountain running, and musical entertainment with bands and DJs. During this manifestation a camp with tents is set in the village of Manastir, where the main stage is built and then the St. Nicholas monastery, upon completion of the great bicycle tour, provides lunch for the participants.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

The monastery feast day, in honour of Saint Nicholas, is celebrated every year on December 19







Recommended visits and
tours near the monastery

Sightseeing and visit to **Stone bridge** over Gradeshka River, near the village of Zovik. It is considered one of the most beautiful architectural structures in the Mar-iovo region..

Visit to the **Monastery of Holy Sunday** in the village of Beshishte.

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Elijah** in the village of Mel-nica.

Sightseeing of the town of **Prilep**

St. Elijah – Mariovo Monastery



LOCATION

St. Elias monastery is located 46 kilometres from the town of Prilep, in a very picturesque scenery of Mariovo, close to the village of Melnica, which today is unpopulated. The monastery is part of the Municipality of Prilep and is located 750 meters above sea level.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 70 471 327





DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached by the regional road connecting Prilep and Vitolishte which is the main connection to Prilep's part of Mariovo. Located near the road, along the river Buturica and the road leading to the villages of Vitoliste, Polchishte and Beshishte. The monastery can be reached by car or bus.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery is built in a region that has a natural beauty, clean air and drinkable spring water. The monastery complex consists of the following buildings: monastery church, a lodging, beautifully landscaped yard with greenery, flowers, trees and benches, dining room, kitchen, monastery fountain

and auxiliary facilities. The monastery lodging has a capacity of three rooms providing accommodation for 25 guests. Overnight in the monastery costs 150 denars. The monastery has male and female toilets, which are located outside the monastery complex. The monastery grows vegetables in small crops.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

In 1870 the foundations of the monastery dedicated to St. Elijah were laid and its construction was completed two years later in 1872. Once the construction of the church was completed, the Miyak painters from the village of Tresonce were invited, led by Avram— son of the fa-



mous Dicho Zograf.

For great appreciation to Stale Cheshelkov who was the initiator of the construction of the monastery, the local population proclaimed him patron of the church and lifelong abbot of the monastery. At the request

of the local population, the painters made a portrait of Stale on the wall of the church.

The monastery church of St. Elijah was fresco painted in 1881, nearly a decade after its construc-



tion.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

Monastery celebrates its day on August 2 - Ilinden. During the feast the monastery is visited by a great number of people and the monastery prepares food and drink for the guests.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The Monastery of St. Elijah traditionally hosts "Mariovo-Meglen cultural encounters" with the rich cultural and artistic program, since

1984. Patron of the event is the Municipality of Prilep, and the goal is bringing together people from both regions of Mariovo and Meglen in Greece, preserving tradition and folklore, meetings between people who emigrated, as well as achieving exchanges in broader terms.



Recommended visits
and tours near the
monastery

Visit to the **Memorial house** of famous Macedonian writer Stale Popov.

Visit to the **Church of St. Panteleimon** in the village of Polchishte.

Visit to the **Church of St. Athanasius** in the village of Vitolishte.

Opportunity to purchase **Mariovo cheese** from the village of Vitolishte..

Sightseeing of the town of **Prilep**.

St. Anne - Malovishte Monastery



LOCATION

Monastery of St. Anne complex is located at 1400 meters above sea level, about 2 kilometres from the village of Malovishte in dense beech forest within the National Park Pelister. It is part of the municipality of Bitola.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 47 288 141

DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached by regional road connecting Resen and Bitola. From the regional road make a turn towards the village Malovishte, to which leads a narrow road. From the village Malovishte to the monastery it takes about 30 minutes on foot, there are marked hiking trails, and one can rent hors-





es for transportation in the village. The road to the monastery leads through beautiful scenery.



MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery is situated amidst dense beech forest and is

therefore considered a real air spa. The monastery complex consists of the following buildings: large and spacious lodgings in the shape of the Cyrillic letter G (Г), kitchen, dining room, large monastery yard, monastery fountain and auxiliary facilities. The church of St. Anne is located 100 meters from the lodgings, and there is a bench for rest placed in front of it. The monastery lodgings have a capacity of 20 rooms providing accommodation for 70 guests. A night in the monastery is not charged, guests leave money upon their will.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

There are few written records about the monastery and the church of St. Anna. There are sources that testify to its existence even from the middle of the XVIII century. The

present church, however, was built in 1936, while the lodgings, on several occasions, were built in the XX century.



a famous family of Aaron. The cult of the saint spreaded in the VI century, when the first church that bore her name was built in Constantinople. She is considered patron saint of Quebec and Brittany peninsulas, as well as of women in labour and miners, marriage, motherhood, family, pregnant women, virgins and widows.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

The monastery celebrates the Assumption of St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on August 7. On this occasion the monastery is visited by great a number of people, when the monastery prepares food and drinks for them.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

There is a belief related to the monastery of St. Anna saying that

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

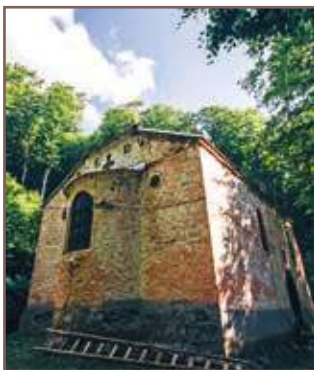
St. Anne is the mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Jesus Christ. She was a descendant of





the monastery has a mysterious power to help women conceive. Couples who have had trouble forming a family, on the night between 6 and 7 August need to sleep over at the church of St. Anna, and she will hear and meet their prayers and will soothe and delight their souls.

Near the monastery there is healing water that springs from the root of a beech tree.



Recommended visits
and tours near the
monastery

Visit to the **Church of St. Paraskevi** in the village of Maloviste.

Visit to the **Church of St. Saviour** in the village of Maloviste.

Sightseeing of the **village of Maloviste** and its traditional architecture.

Possibility of **hiking** on several marked hiking trails that connects the village of Maloviste and the villages of Prespa region.

St. Paraskevi - Chapari Monastery



LOCATION

St. Paraskevi Monastery complex is located at 1,100 meters above sea level, about 15 kilometres from the town of Bitola, in dense forest near the village Chapari.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 76 407 662.

Available explanations to the visitors in English and Greek.

DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached via the regional road which connects Resen and Bitola. From the regional road, one should turn towards





the village Chapari, to which there is a 4-kilometer-long road leading to it. From the village of Chapari to the monastery there is a 2-kilometer-long path, and the monastery provides broad and convenient parking for cars.



MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery is situated in an area with beautiful scenery. Entering through the gates of the monastery, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: in the middle of the monastery is the church of St.

Paraskevi which on the east, south and west side is surrounded by monastery lodgings whose porches are connected in one whole. The lodgings have a kitchen, dining room, library and ancillary facilities. The monastery courtyard is landscaped with greenery and trees, with a monastery fountain.





The monastery lodgings have a capacity of seven rooms providing accommodation for 60 guests. The lodgings are equipped with toilets and shower cabinets. Overnight stay in the monastery is not charged, guests leave money upon their will.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

There are few written records on the monastery and the church of St. Paraskevi. There are sources indicating that the monastery was built in the XVI century, and the current monastery church in the XIX century. Until 1724 the monastery was quite neglected, when, as written, was rebuilt by the priest Dionysius. At the end of the last century, the monas-

tery was hit by a fire that burned the roof, iconostasis, icons, and most of the inventory. With the help and donations by the believers, the roof and ceiling were reconstructed, and a new iconostasis was set. Funds from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia have been awarded for conservation of the frescoes.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

Monastery celebrates its feast day on August 8. During the celebration the monastery is visited by a great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The most common form of resistance against the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia is "ajdutstvo". The oldest record on women-ajduti in Macedonia is the one from 1636 about Kira the ajdut who was from the village of Chapari.

Traditionally in the village Chapari a masked carnival "Vasilcars" is held. During the organization of this event, a lot of people parade through the village to show their creative masks.

In the village Chapari there is a monument and graves of eight Bulgarian officers and about 200 soldiers who died in the First World War.



Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Elijah** in the village of Rotino.

Visit to the **Church of St. George** in the village of Chapari.

Sightseeing of the **village of Chapari**.

Visit to the **Bukovo monastery** in the village of Bukovo.

Visit to the **five archaeological sites** near the village.

Sightseeing of **Bitola**.

Possibility of **hiking** on several marked hiking trails that connect the village of Chapari with villages of Prespa region.

Possibility of **herb-picking** - St John's wort, wild thyme, yarrow, mountain tea near the monastery.

Walk along the **Chapari Monastery River** with small waterfalls, cascades and ponds

St. Paraskevi - Brajcino Monastery



LOCATION

St. Paraskevi monastery complex is located half a kilometre away from the village of Brajcino, 1100 meters above sea level on the slopes of Baba Mountain. The monastery is 6 km away from the Prespa Lake,

and 32 kilometres from the town of Resen. It is part of the municipality of Resen.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





CONTACT

+389 75 649 038

DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached via the regional road that connects Resen and the village of Dolno Dupeni. There is a turn on this regional road towards the village Ljubojno, the road then passes

through Ljubojno and ends in the village of Brajicino. From the village of Brajicino to the monastery, there is a hiking trail half a kilometre long (15 minutes on foot), that leads to the monastery situated on a meadow plateau. The village of Brajicino has a wide and convenient parking for cars and buses.



MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery lies on a meadow, in a beautiful scenery. The monastery complex consists of the following buildings: in the middle of the monastery is the church of St. Paraskevi which, on the south and west sides, is surrounded by the monastery lodgings whose porches are connected in a whole, thus forming the Cyrillic letter G (Г). The monastery courtyard is landscaped with greenery and trees, with a monastery fountain.

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The lodgings are of a recent date, but built in a traditional style. The lodgings were built in 1910 on the remains of the burnt lodgings of the XIX century. Today they are redeco-

rated, along with the facade, terraces, stairs, a kitchen, two dining rooms, living room for guests, the bishop's room, three sleeping rooms with new beds and clean linen. The three guest rooms in the dormitories have capacity and provide accommodation for 20 guests. One room is with 5, the second room is with 6 and the third room is with 9 beds. Overnight stay using the kitchen costs 400, and without using the kitchen 360 denars.

St. Paraskevi church is a single-nave church, small in size with three-sided apse. The frescoes in the church were made in two phases, the first in the XVI and the second in the XVIII century.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The historical data on the monastery and the church of St. Paraskevi are very scarce and dating from the last century. On the west entrance of the naos, from the inside, there is an inscription which is contemporary with the erection and painting of the church in XVIII century. However, part of the text, which probably mentioned the year the church was built or painted was destroyed. The current architectural



state and the frescoes of the church of St. Paraskevi point out to the fact that the church, at a certain unknown period of time, was neglected, and monastic life disbanded.

The church St. Paraskevi was small-sized with a semi-circular apse on the outside. The church is built of stone and mud. On the outside it is plastered and whitewashed. Towards the church, on the west side, a narthex was built at the time of renewal of the church. It is an open roof construction. The interior of the church and its west facade are decorated with frescoes, and the church has remains of iconostasis. In a niche, on the west entrance to the narthex, the face of St. Paraskevi is depicted.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

Monastery celebrates its feast day on 8 August. During the celebration the monastery is visited by a great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

In the monastery there is a fountain with holy water which is located next to the church. Interesting fact about this fountain is that its spring throughout the year is drained, and it only trickles on 7 August, on the eve of the holiday and on 8 August, when the monastery is celebrated, it dries out again. It is visited by women who have no children, believing that the water will help them conceive.



Recommended visits and tours
near the monastery

Visit to the **5 churches** located in the village of Brajcino.

Walk, sightseeing and possibility of accommodation and eating traditional specialties in the villages of Brajcino and Ljubojno.

Visit to the **Ethno museum** in the village of Pomochani which has rich ethnological collection <http://www.etnomuzej.com/>.

Walk and sightseeing of **Resen**.

Possibility of **hiking** on several marked hiking trails that connect the village of Brajcino with the villages under Pelister.

Possibility of **swimming in Prespa Lake**. Nearby is the beach of the village of Dolno Dupeni.

Visit to the archaeological site **Markova Noga**, which is the southernmost point of the Republic of Macedonia.



The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Slivnica Monastery



LOCATION

The monastery complex Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is located three kilometres from the village of Slivnica, 1,200 meters above sea

level on the slopes of Baba Mountain. The monastery is 4 km away from the Prespa Lake, and 19 kilometres from the town of Resen. It is part of the municipality of Resen.





DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 47 480 125



DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached by the regional road that connects Resen and the village of Dolno Dupeni. Then take the turn towards the village of Slivnica, from where a 3-kilometer winding and steep road leads to the monastery complex.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The monastery lies on the slopes of the mountain, surrounded by beautiful scenery, with a magnificent view of Prespa lake at sight. Entering through the gates of the monastery, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: in the middle of the monastery is the church of the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary, the monastery lodgings, kitchen, dining room and auxiliary facilities. The monastery yard is landscaped with



greenery and trees, with a monastery fountain and porch.

The lodgings are dating back to XVII century and were burned twice. Renovated in 1998 in traditional style. 13 rooms in the lodgings provide accommodation for 90 guests, with male and female toilets available. Overnight stay in the lodgings is not charged, the visitors may leave a voluntary donation.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The monastery dates back to the XVII century, it was built in 1607. According to the description, it was built in three phases, from 1607, 1612 and mainly in 1645. The frescoes in the temple are dated from this period, as well as the wooden iconostasis with

the throne icons, the royal gate and the large cross. In the past, the monastery was surrounded by buildings from all sides. It had two large and two smaller gates. In the upper parts of the building there were rooms for accommodation of guests and library, but the library was burned. There was also a school in the monastery in which children from the surrounding villages of Prespa worked and studied, taught by the priests. The monastery was rich, it had developed economy, oven, wine barrels and more.

The monastery church is dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The frescoes in the altar and the naos of the temple were made by a group of wood-carvers, especially the impressive work of



two masters. The presence of the first master is highlighted in the performances on the altar and the dome, the figures in the first zone of the naos and the characters in a more figurative compositions from the second zone. The second painter

may be identified by the stiffness of figures and poorer colourful palette.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

The monastery celebrates its feast day, popularly known as Little Mary and Nativity of Blessed Vir-





gin Mary (dedicated to the birth of Mary), every year on 21 September when the monastery is visited by a great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The locals believe that supernatural force protects the monastery. During the First World War, a bomb fell through the ceiling directly into the altar of the church, but it failed to explode. The hole of the bomb is still kept in the church as a memorial.





Recommended visits and
tours near the monastery

Visit to the **6 churches** located in the village of Slivnica.

Sightseeing of the **village of Slivnica**.

Sightseeing of **Resen**.

Possibility of **hiking** on several marked hiking trails that connect the monastery with the villages under Pelister.

Possibility of **swimming** in **Prespa Lake**. Nearby is the beach of the village of Pretor.

Possibility to cruise to the **Island of Golem Grad**.



St. George - Kurbinovo Monastery



LOCATION

St. George monastery complex is located three kilometres from the village of Kurbinovo, on the slopes of Baba Mountain. The monastery is 4 km away from the Prespa Lake, and 14 kilometres from the town of Resen. It is part of the municipality of Resen.

DIOCESE

Prespa and Pelagonia Diocese,
Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid
Archbishopric

CONTACT

+389 71 288 819





DIRECTIONS

The monastery can be reached by the regional road that connects Resen with the village of Dolno Dupeni. At the village of Asamati there is an exit from the regional road, leading to the village of Kurbinovo. From there a winding, 3-kilometer long road leads to the church with a convenient parking space.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

The church is located on the slopes of the mountain, its landscaped yard has benches, a fountain of cold water and deep shade of old oak trees. The village of Kurbinovo was once located near the monastery that was regarded as village church, with graves around it until 1920, when the village was moved where it is located today. There were also lodg-

ings in the church, thus it is known as a monastery, but today there are no remains of the old lodgings.

The church is single-nave building with a semi-circular apse. The building is 17 meters long and 7 meters wide. It is the biggest single-nave church in the Republic of Macedonia. It has two entrances. It was built of stone and bricks.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The church was built on the foundations of an old temple from the IX century. It was raised in 1191 (XII century), as the inscription above the altar implies, during the reign of Isaac II Angelos. The church is characterized by a specific way of making a facade, visible today only in the lower parts of western and southern wall. After the walls were built, plastering and painting of fa-

acades followed, for the purpose of achieving richer appearance. The church found its place in the treasury of world values with the preserved frescoes. The frescoes from the XII century are preserved almost entirely, except for the blighted part of the presentations in the first zone of the northern wall and part of the southern, as well as the upper part of the third zone.

Fresco painting is featured by the sense of reality of inner experience of the characters in dramatic scenes, such as the sufferings of Christ. In the Kurbinovo church these scenes and experiences are the dominant element. The painting of the church began on 25 April,

1191. The frescoes are among the most beautiful, most original and fully preserved frescoes from that period that survived.



Conceptually the frescoes are deployed in three zones: the first zone is with painted individual de-





pictions of saints in growth, the second one is with cycle of major holidays, and the third one is with prophets.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY

The monastery feast day is celebrated on 6 May, which is the great Christian holiday of St. George.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

A segment of the fresco of the Holy Archangel Gabriel known as the "Angel of Kurbinovo" from this church is the background of the Macedonian banknote of 50 denars.

Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Visit to the churches of **St. Athanasius** and **St. Virgin Mary** located in the village Kurbinovo.

Sightseeing of the **village of Kurbinovo**.

Sightseeing of **Resen**.

Possibility of **hiking** on several marked hiking trails that connect the monastery with the villages under Pelister.

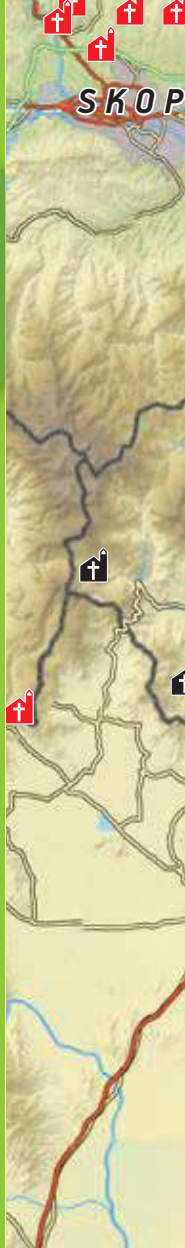
Possibility of **swimming in Prespa Lake**. Nearby is the beach of the village of Pretor.

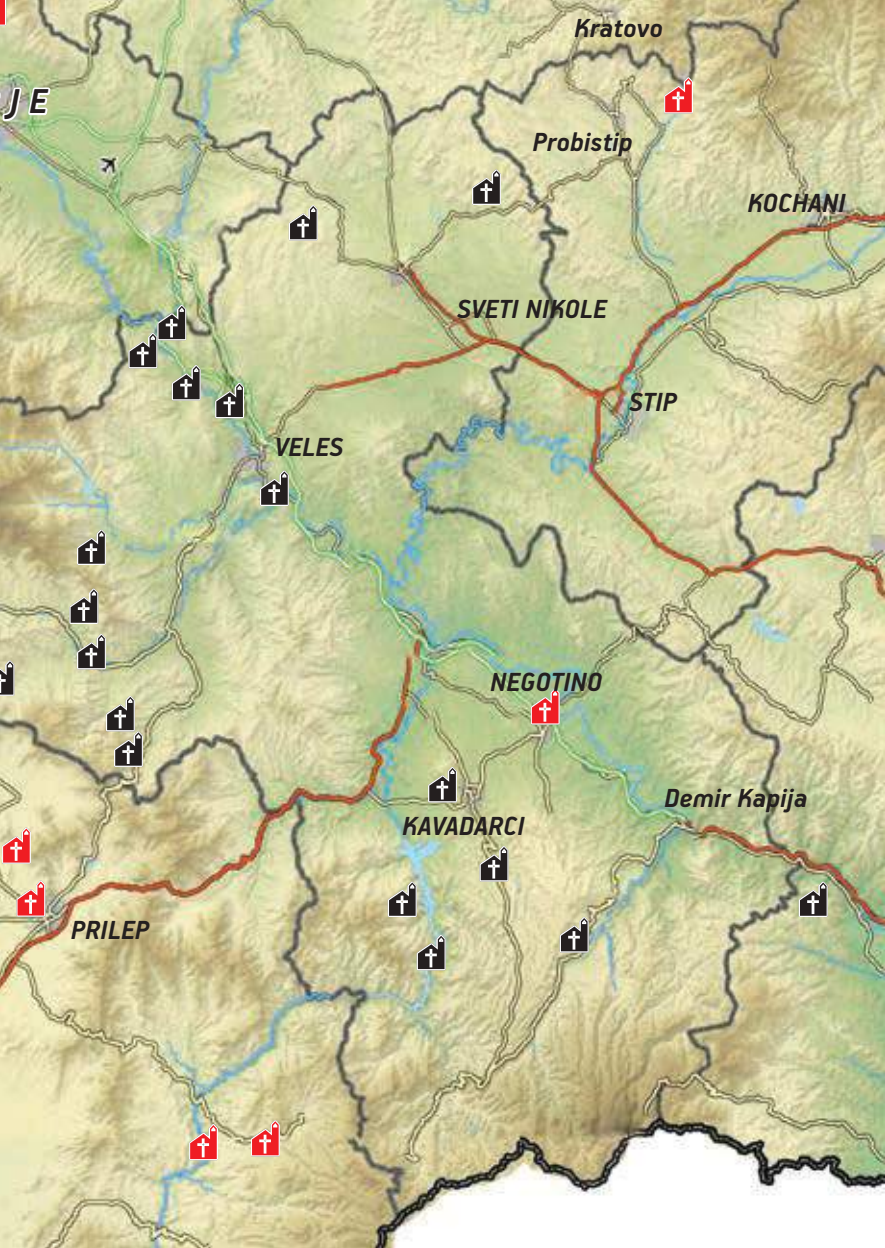
Visit to the **Slivnica** monastery – a marked hiking trail leads to the monastery

06 >>

MONASTERIES IN THE VARDAR REGION

After the Pelagonia region, we continue with an overview of important monasteries in the Vardar region. Among the natural, cultural and historical heritage in the Vardar region, Tikves Lake, Demir Kapija canyon, ancient town of Stobi, the Vardar River, Kozuv Mountain, town of Veles and others stand out with their touristic potential. Whether you stay in the monasteries and wake up from the monastery bells, taste traditional food or the purpose of your stay is motivated by different needs and you visit the monasteries for a short period, we recommend, out of the many monasteries located in the Vardar region, a visit to the following.





Kratovo

JE

Probistip

KOCHANI

SVETI NIKOLE

STIP

VELES

NEGOTINO

Demir Kapija

KAVADARCI

PRILEP

St. George - Negotino Monastery



LOCATION:

St. George monastery complex is located near Negotino on the right side of the river Vardar. The monastery is near the international highway E-75 which goes south to

Greece and north to Serbia. It is part of the municipality of Negotino.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Povardarie, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





CONTACT:

+389 43 360 091

Available explanations to the visitors in English.



DIRECTIONS:

The monastery is accessible from the international highway

E-75, near the Negotino intersection. There are road signs indicating the direction of movement, and the monastery is located a half a kilometre away and has a convenient parking for cars and buses. Opposite the monastery is the Povardarie Winery.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

The monastery complex consists of the following buildings: a church, a monastery fountain, a complex of lodgings, monastery springs, dining room, kitchen, conference room, souvenir shop, gallery of wine - wine cellar, bell tower and ancillary buildings. The lodgings have redecorated and not renovated rooms. The redecorated rooms in the lodgings are new and fully equipped to accommodate guests, with toilets, showers and a

modern interior. There are 11 triple rooms, 12 double rooms and one room is designed to accommodate 6 guests. The total capacity of accommodation in these rooms is 63 visitors. Overnight stay is charged 400 for domestic and 600 denars for foreign guests. There are three not renovated rooms in the lodgings each with a capacity to accommodate 30 guests. Overnight stay in these rooms is charged 200 denars.



THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

St. George Church was built between 1860-1866 as indicated on the inscription on a stone slab. Mas-

ter builder was Anton Kotanov from Tresonce, the frescoes were painted by brothers painters from Krusevo and the throne icon was a work of a painter from Veles. During the period of 1968-1970, the church suffered demolition of its three domes, which were made of wattle, bricks and mud, and in their place, new concrete domes were built, but the frescoes were destroyed. Current domes are painted with new frescoes with different compositions, and there is also a new bell tower.

The monastery lodgings were built a bit later than the church, more specifically they were built during the construction of the Skopje-Thessaloniki railroad, and they were built by a Polish engineer. He built the lodging and its original aim and purpose was to accommodate the workers who worked on the railway. When in 1873 the railway was put into operation, and the lodgings have completed their original function and purpose, they were donated to the monastery. Old lodgings that were built of weak building material were fully recovered when during 1978-80 the old lodgings were replaced by new ones built from solid material.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery feast day is celebrated on 6 May, the great Christian holiday of St. George. Apart from this holiday, the monastery celebrates 21 September, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During both holiday the monastery is visited by great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The monastery is related to a story about the courage of an old lady Mitra. She was a 90-year-old woman who lived in the monastery. After the Second World War the Germans wanted to leave the town,

but the partisans mined the railway line near the monastery. Germans found out about it and captured 20 young partisans in the monastery. They agreed to set the captives on fire. When Mitra heard this she took advantage of the moment when the Germans were at the railroad and she set the partisans free by saying: "Run chickens into the woods." When the Germans came and found out about the deed of Mitra, they wrapped her in reed and burned her to death. Now there is a memorial of Mitra in the monastery yard.

The reason this monastery is appealing to the visitors is its healing power, particularly the healing power of the 25 springs around it.

Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Visit to the **Church of St. Athanasius** located in Negotino.

Sightseeing of **Kavadarci**.

Visit to the **Museum of wine** in Demir Kapija <http://museumdk.mk/>.

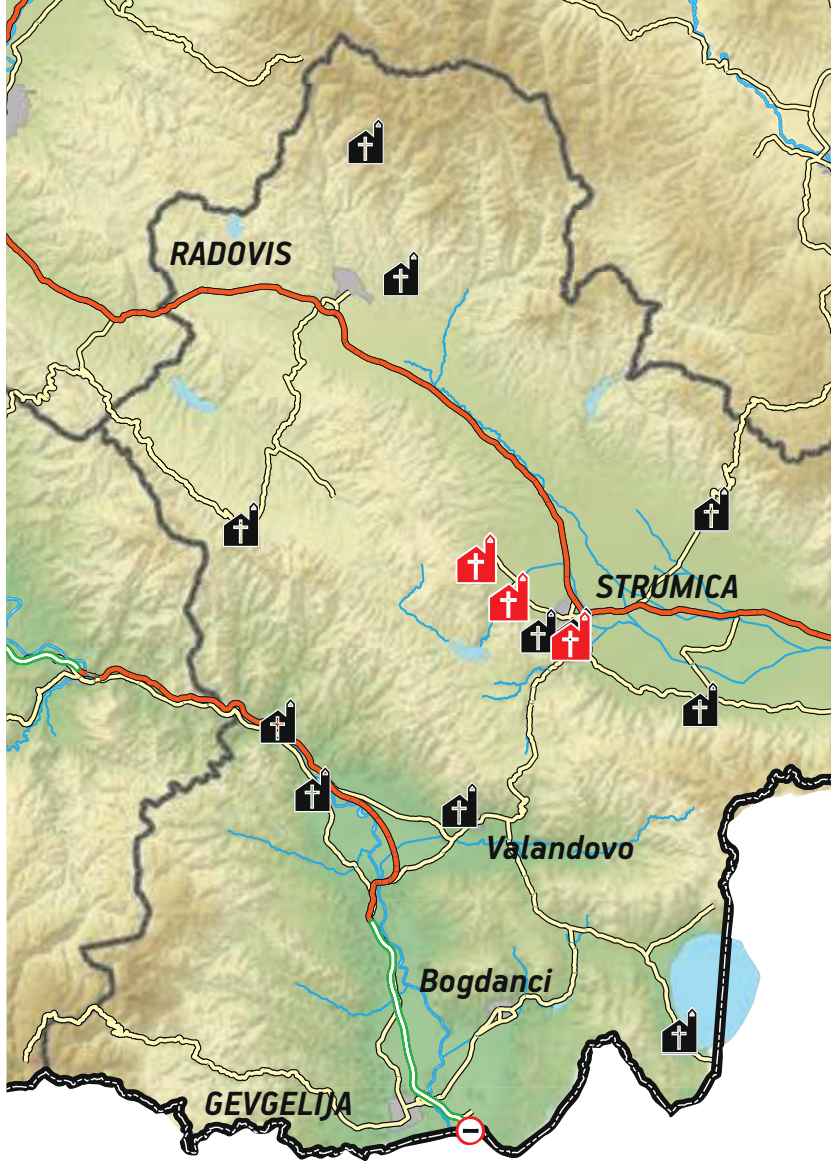
Visit to the winery and restaurant

Visit to the **Polog monastery** which can be reached by boat on Tikves Lake.

Visiting to the **Moklish monastery** in the village of Vatasa.

Visit to the **archaeological site Stobi** <http://www.stobi.mk/>.

Visit to the **monastery of St. George** in Valandovo.



RADOVIS

STRUMICA

Valandovo

Bogdanci

GEVGELIJA





07 >>

MONASTERIES IN THE SOUTH-EAST REGION

After Vardar region, we continue with an overview of important monasteries in the South-East region. Among the natural, cultural and historical heritage in the South-East region, Dojran lake, spa Bansko, spa Negorci, Strumica Carnival, Belasica Mountain and others, stand out with their touristic potential. Whether you stay in the monasteries and wake up from the monastery bells, taste traditional food or purpose of your stay is motivated by different needs and you visit the monasteries for a short period, we recommend, out of the many monasteries located in the South-East region, a visit to the following.

The Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery complex is located in the town of Strumica and its municipality that is in the southeast end of the Republic of Macedonia

just below the triangle of inter-state borders with Greece in south and Bulgaria in east. The town is situated 256 meters above sea level, with a population over 35,000.





DIOCESE:

Strumica Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT:

+389 34 324 493

Available explanations to the visitors in English.



DIRECTIONS:

The monastery is accessible from several international and regional routes through Valandovo,

Berovo, Radovish and Petrich in Bulgaria. The monastery is located in the eastern part of Strumica, 10 minutes away from downtown. The town is connected by regular bus inter-city lines, as well as a taxi service.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Entering the monastery gates, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: the new church is on the left while on the right is the archaeological site of the complex of churches which is enclosed with a fence, has stairs, it is marked and protected. In addition to the monastery, there is a yard with greenery and trees, benches, a fountain, the monastery complex of lodgings, and space for peacocks and turtles. At the entrance of the complex, there is a souvenir shop

and in the church itself there is an open beautiful gallery of icons. The lodgings have a toilet and shower in all rooms, a dining room and auxiliary facilities. The rooms in the lodgings are fully equipped, with a comfortable interior for accommodation of guests.

For domestic visitors the price



per night is 400 denars in the summer and 500 denars in the winter period. There is also a kitchen with dining room within the complex, where at the price of 100 MKD the guest may be provided with a meal (lunch or dinner). For foreign guests the cost of overnight stay is 12 euros, while overnight with meal costs 15 euros.

The accommodation capacity of the monastery is 81 guests in 26 rooms. There are 1 single room, 19 rooms are with three beds, 5 rooms are with four beds, and 1 suite. The monastery has its own parking space, free Wi-Fi, Internet for all guests and is suitable for organization of seminars, etc.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The late antique necropolis within the monastery complex is the oldest building in which the Holy Martyrs were buried. There is also an early Christian three-nave basilica built in the V century, the floor of which is decorated with polychrome mosaic depicting a cross. It was built on top of the grave of the Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs. Probably in the VI century, a cruciform church martirum was built on the ruins of the basilica, but the temple was destroyed during the invasion by the Avars and Slavs.

On top of this church, there was another cross-shaped church built in IX-X century. In the central area of this church there is domed tomb measuring 2x0.82x1.61m, and its western turbot is depicting com-



mon portrait of the martyrs, while the north and south walls are with painted crosses. These are also one of the oldest frescoes in the Republic of Macedonia.

During Ottoman period, the temple was destroyed, and in 1921, the centuries-old cult of the Holy Martyrs was restored by building a small chapel. Today's appearance of the church originates from 1974, when its construction was completed as a cupola and a single-nave church, and in a wooden iconostasis was set in 1976. Painting of frescoes in the monastery took place gradually and the temple today is still in process of fresco painting.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

Holy Fifteen Martyrs of Tiberiopolis are a group of Christian saints and martyrs of the IV century. They lost their lives in the name of Christianity at the time of the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate. They were executed in Strumica, which at that time was called Tiberiopolis.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery's feast day is celebrated on 11 December, and this date is the day of the patron of the town of Strumica. During the feast, the monastery is visited by great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Part of the monastery complex is the gallery of icons, located in the lower part of the church of the Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs. The gallery was founded in 2000 under the NI Institute and Museum - Strumica. The gallery contains 67 icons, Mourning cloak of Christ, religious books, lamps, bowls and candelabra. The most valuable icon in the collection is "Blessed Virgin Mary with Jesus Christ" from the XV cen-

tury, brought from the monastery of St. Mary Merciful (Eleusa) in Veljusa.



Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Strumica**, which hosts the famous **Strumica Carnival**.

Visit to **Strumica Kale** or **Carevi kuli** (Czar's Towers) - XI century fortress located above the town of Strumica.

Visit to **Monospitovo bog** near the village of Monospitovo.

Visit to the **Smolari waterfall** in the village Smolare on the Belasica Mountain.

Visit to the **Kolesino waterfall** in the village of Kolesino on the Belasica mountain.

Visit to the **spa "Car Samuil"** in the village Bansko.

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Archangel Michael** in Berovo and Berovo Lake.



The Most Holy Theotokos Eleusa - Veljusa Monastery



LOCATION:

The monastery complex dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos is located on the northern slopes of Elenica Mountain, in the village of

Veljusa, 8 kilometres west of Strumica, at an altitude of 400 meters. It is part of the municipality of Strumica.





DIOCESE:

Strumica Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT:

+389 34 322 284

Available explanations to the visitors in English and French.

DIRECTIONS:

The village of Veljusa in Strumica is connected via a convenient road in the length of 8 km. From the village to the monastery, a half kilometre long, winding, upward and narrow road leads to the parking lot in front of the monastery.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Entering through the monastery gates, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: a

church is on the left with a souvenir shop at its entrance with the lodgings on the right side. There is a wide and spacious monastery yard with greenery and trees providing a wonderful view of the Strumica valley. In addition there are ancillary buildings, toilets, and a bell tower with a clock. The monastery is a convent, without a possibility to accommodate visitors.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

According to the records we have, the church was built by a monk, later Manuel, bishop of Strumica in 1080, who came to Veljusa from Khalkedon monastery. The monastery is mentioned in the Charter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus from 1085, and either in 1091 or 1094, this monastery church was personally visited by the

Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus, who expressed strong admiration for its beauty.

Fresco painting of the church was performed in three periods as follows: at the altar, the area below



the dome of the naos and the walls, the conch, and the chapel in 1085, in the doorway in 1164 and the naos in the XIX century, with many local artistic overtones.

Fresco-ensemble in the church is with symbolic iconographic content and images taken from the Old and New Testament. With its archi-

tectural moulding, originally preserved to this day, it represents the highest achievements of Byzantine sacral architecture and art on Macedonian territory in the Middle Ages.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery celebrates the



day, popularly known as Little Virgin Mary or Nativity of Blessed Mother of God (dedicated to the birth of Mary), on 21 September, when the monastery is visited by great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The monastery has a very rare fresco, which is the fresco of Jesus in the dome, because Jesus is rarely presented as a child of 12 years.

Macedonian Cross, also known as Veljusa Cross, is a variation of the

Christian cross, mainly connected with Macedonia and is a symbol of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid. This symbol found only in the monastery of Veljusa is actually lavish two-piece tangle portraying ornate decoration in a

shape of a cross. Because the cross is a symbol of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, it is also depicted on the Coat of Arms of the Church, that is on frieze of the sheat, which is filled with 33 depictions of the cross.



Recommended visits
and tours near the
monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Strumica**, which hosts the famous **Strumica Carnival**.

Visit to the **grave of Struma** in the village of Banica.

Visit and recreation opportunities on **Lake Vodocha**.

Visit to the **Monastery of St. Leontius** in the village of Vodoca.

St. Leontius - Vodocha Monastery



LOCATION:

Saint Leontius monastery complex or popular complex called Vodochki crkvi (Vodocha churches) is located in the village of Vodoca, 5 kilometres west of Strumica. It is part of the municipality of Strumica.

DIOCESE:

Strumica Diocese, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT VISITS FOR GROUPS:

+389 34 322 284, Priest Gregory Jakimov.

Available explanations to the visitors in English.





DIRECTIONS:

A road in good condition leads from Strumica to the monastery. In front of the complex there is a bridge over Vodocha river, followed by convenient parking for cars. The monastery can also be reached by tour bus.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Upon entering the monastery gates, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: on the left side is an auxiliary building with a souvenir shop, on the right side is the archaeological site and the complex of churches, arranged with stairs, marked and secured. In addition, there is a wide and spacious monastery yard with greenery and trees, and information boards about the church in Macedonian

and English. There is no possibility of accommodating visitors in the monastery.

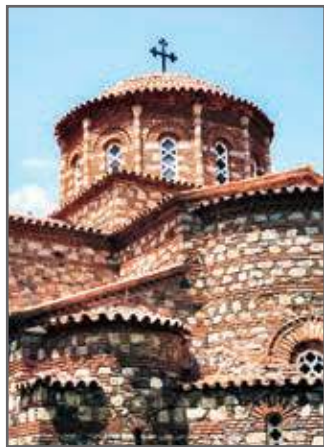
THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

According to archaeological research, the first foundations of the monastery are dating back to IV-V century. There was a church with small dimensions, but with rich and ornate interior. Between VI-VII century the first Vodocha church was demolished, but restored and rebuilt afterwards. At the beginning of XI century, a new monastery church was built and it was three-nave, domed episcopal basilica also known as Eastern. In Vodocha, at the time, there was an active Slavic literary school and a place where spiritual pilgrimage and enlightenment was spread. During that peri-

od, the Western Vodocha church was built, between 1018-1037, when the church was also painted with frescoes. The church is dedicated to the Presentation of the Blessed Mother of God Eleusa, although today it is dedicated to St. Leontius, it solemnly celebrates the day of the Entrance of the Mother of God into The Temple. From the western Vodocha church, there are parts of the frescoes that are saved: fragments of the cycle of Virgin Holidays, Annunciation and Presentation, cuddling the Virgin of Joachim and Anna. The history of the western Vodocha church lasted shortly, because there was re-reconstruction of the monastery. In the period between late XI and early XII century, the altar wall of the western church was destroyed and the eastern was built onto, thus both sides formed a new one, named as middle Vodocha church. The third layer of frescoes was painted during that period.

In the XIV century, the monastery suffered a catastrophic fire followed by a strong earthquake in XIX century. In 1958, the frescoes were removed from the walls in order to be preserved and today they can

be found in the National Museum in Skopje. From 1975 to 1982 conservation and restoration works were carried out on the church, but they were stopped due to archaeological excavations. The archaeological researches discovered over 1000 pieces of pottery, imperial and episcopal seals, jewellery and decorative stones dating from XIV - XIX century.



Two episcopal bathrooms were discovered also.

A feature of all Vodocha churches is the manner of masonry, framing the stone in horizontally placed pieces of brick. In the past, the mon-

astery complex operated with monastic lodgings, bishop's residence, and a large dining room with dimensions 19 meters long and 5 meters wide, which were transformed several times. The monastery also had property - fields, vineyards, mills at its disposal. In 1982, another lodging was built which since 1995 is a



place of restored monastic life, Byzantine iconography, church singing, translation activity and monastic handicraft.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

Saint Leontius of Strumica, born in Strumica, was a Christian saint from the XII century (1143-1180 AD). By the wish of Emperor Manuel Comnenus and many prelates he became elected Patriarch of Jerusalem.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The saint's feast day of the monastery is celebrated on 27 May.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

In the summer of 1014, following the orders of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II, 14,000 soldiers from Samuel's troops were blinded, leaving one eye to every 100th soldier to lead the others. Because of this cruel act, it is considered that the village where the monastery is called Vodocha (Vadi – pluck, oci – eyes).

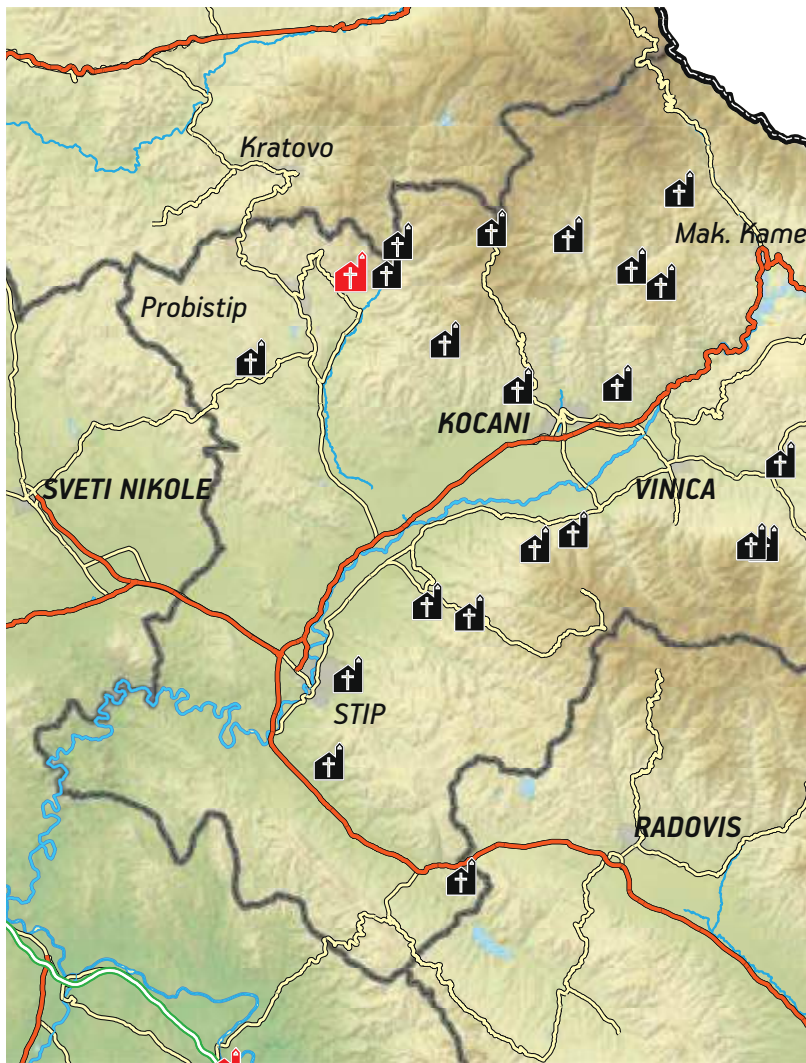
Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Strumica**, which hosts the famous **Strumica Carnival**.

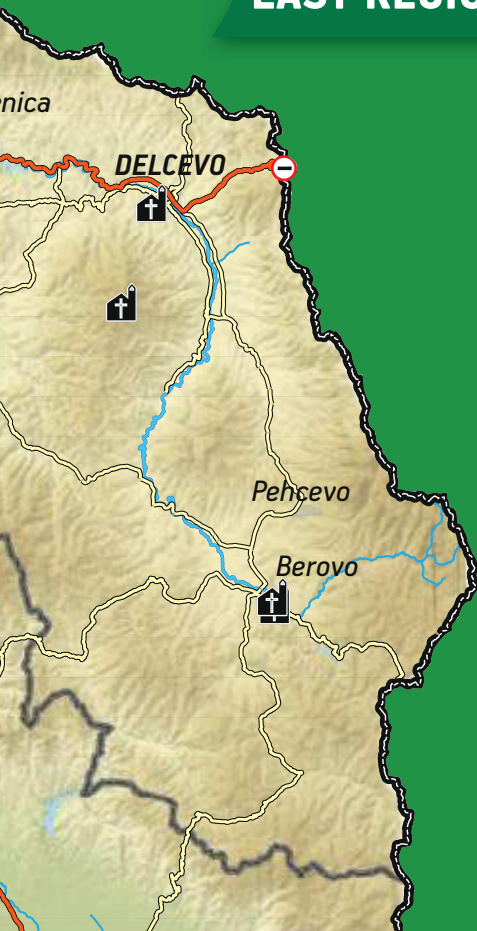
Visit to **Strumica Kale** or Carevi Kuli (Czar's Towers) - XI century fortress located above the town of Strumica.

Walk and recreation opportunities on **Lake Vodocha**.

Visit to the **Most Holy Theotokos Eleusa** in the village of Veljusa.



MONASTERIES IN THE EAST REGION



After South-East region, we continue with an overview of important monasteries in the East region. Among the natural, cultural and historical heritage in the East region, Berovo lake, the towns of Stip, Kocani, ancient city of Bargala, Plakovica Mountain, Ponikva, Golak and others, stand out with their touristic potential. Whether you stay in the monasteries and wake up from to the monastery bells, taste traditional food or the purpose of your stay is motivated by different needs and you visit the monasteries for a short period, we recommend, out of the many monasteries located in the East region, a visit to the following.

Monastery of St. Archangel Michael and St. Hermit Gabriel of Lesnovo



LOCATION:

The monastery complex of St. Archangel Michael and St. Hermit Gabriel of Lesnovo or more popularly called Lesnovo monastery lies on the Osogovo mountains, at an altitude of 890 meters, located in Lesnovo crater which has been declared a natural monument. The monastery

is located in the village of Lesnovo, 13 km from Probistip. It is part of the municipality of Probistip.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Bregalnica, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT:

+389 32 800 138





DIRECTIONS:

The monastery can be reached from two directions - through Kratovo or via the regional road Kocani - Stip. From Probistip, the monastery can be reached either through the village of Zletovo or through the village of Dreveno. In both cases, a road in good condition leads to the monastery, and if arriving by tour bus it is recommended to go through Zletovo. There is a spacious parking lot in front of the complex.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Entering through the monastery gates, the monastery complex consists of the following buildings: a fountain in front of the entrance, lodgings on the left side with ancillary building as a dining room and

kitchen, on the right side of the entrance there is a souvenir and hand-crafts shop and we suggest you buy monastery rakiya (brandy), and in the central part is the church dedicated to St. Archangel Michael. The complex is large with two entrances, and a bell tower and the monastery has its own funding economy and active monastic brotherhood. In addition, there is wide and spacious monastery yard with greenery, flowers and trees, the oldest tree being 650 years old mulberry, located on the left side of the entrance to the church. The monastery has its own style and at the entrance to the monastery the female visitors are given dresses. There is no possibility of accommodating visitors, but several houses nearby or the redecorated former school that may be used for accommodation. The school has

two separate rooms with a capacity of 12 guests and overnight stay costs 200 denars. The facility is brand new, with new furniture, new toilets with showers, mini kitchen with a dining room and a small ethno museum.

Near the monastery are the remains of over 20 sketes (small cells for praying in rocks), chapels and hermit caves confirming intensive monastic life in the past.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The church dedicated to St. Archangel Michael was built by venerable St. Gabriel of Lesnovo in XI century. Gabriel the hermit prayed for more than 30 years in complete solitude in the surrounding caves, which were created by extracting the grindstone, and some are a natural phenomenon. The relics of St. Gabriel of Lesnovo were taken from the caves to the church, where they still remain today. His spirit of a holy man after his death expanded and evolved through religious, spiritual, literary, music, art and folk tradition.

The monastery was restored in 1341 by Despot John Oliver. The was a literary school in the monastery which was called Scriptorium. It ex-

isted since the first half of XI century, but later there was a calligraphy (copying) school established in XIII century. Until the 40s of XIX century the monastery was a place with a large library, with a huge stock of books and manuscripts collected from ancient times and distant ends, but the books were taken during the war.

In the period from 1811 to 1814 a high iconostasis of walnut wood in deep carving was made and placed by the famous band of Miyak masters-carvers led by Petre Filipovski Garkata. The iconostasis is of two-storey iconostasis type and full with rich ornamentation, and on both sides of the royal doors are two panels through which scenes from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments interweave.

It is known that the naos in the church was painted by a group consisting of 4 masters. The painting began in 1341, and was completed during the period from 1346 to 1347. Especially visited fresco in the monastery, where the believers express their sufferings and prayers to God, is the fresco depicting Holy Mother of God with Jesus. It is considered to have miraculous powers.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery celebrates its saint's feast day popularly known as Little Virgin Mary or Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God (dedicated to the birth of Virgin Mary) every year on 21 september, when the monastery is visited by great number of believers.



INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

Among the miracles of St. Gabriel of Lesnovo is the legend about Murat Bey who came to Lesnovo with his

army. Sitting under the monastery mulberry, he wanted to write a decree for a destruction of the monastery, since because of its existence, the monks and the population refused to convert to Islam. While writing it, his right arm began to stiffen, to become numb and he began to lose his sight. Soon some messengers came to the monastery and told Murat Bey that members of his close family lost their sight, and one of his daughters became insane. Then he realized that it was a punishment from God and that he should not violate the site and destroy it. At that moment, not only did he tore up the firman but also made a donation of property to the monastery. Above the dome, under the cross, he placed a Crescent as a sign of protection of the monastery by the sultan himself.

Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Probitip**.

Visit to the town of **Kratovo** and the locality of **Kuklici**.

Visit to the **Monastery of Saint Spyridon** in the village of Zletovo.

Visit to **Lesnovo art colony** held in the village of Lesnovo.

Walk and recreation opportunities in **Osoгово mountains** and eco-trails near the village of Lesnovo. The village is known for producing millstone.

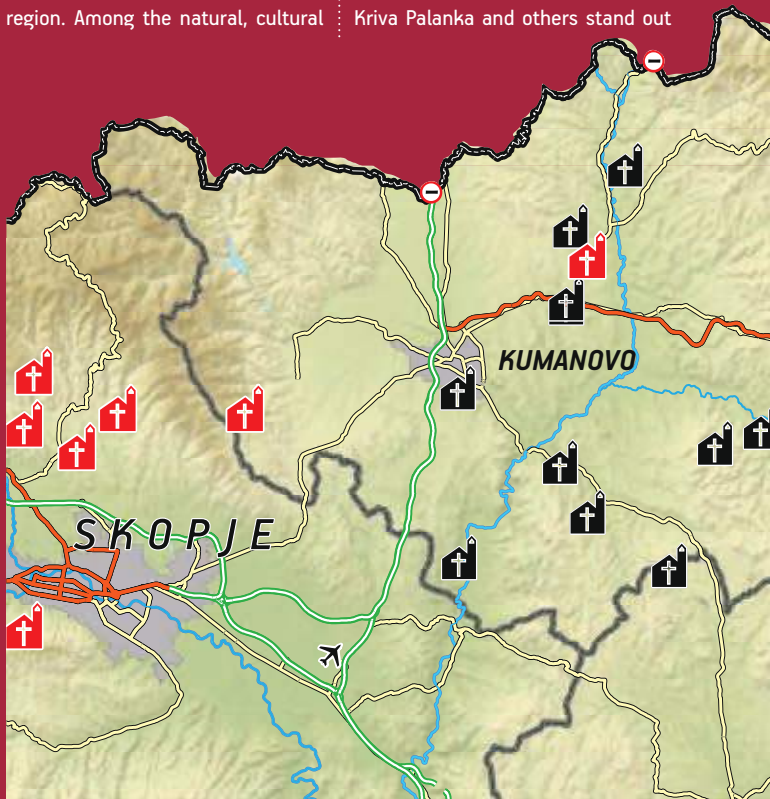
Visit to the **Monastery of St. Panteleimon** in the village of Pan-telej.

09 >>

MONASTERIES IN THE NORTH-EAST REGION

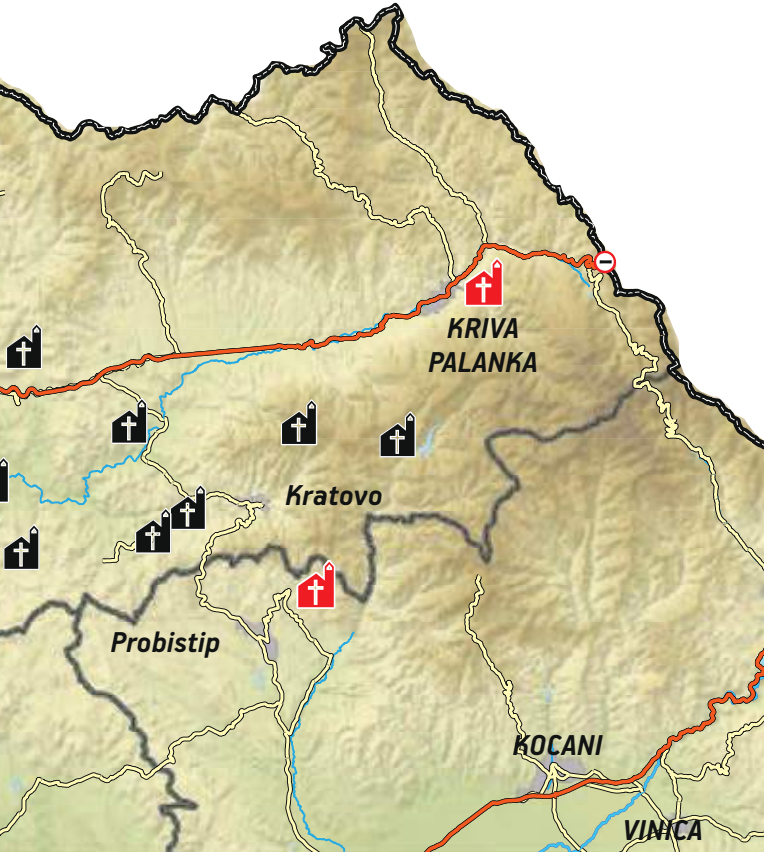
After the East region, we continue with an overview of important monasteries in the North-East region. Among the natural, cultural

and historical heritage in the North-East region, Kratovo, Kokino, Kuklici, ASNOM Memorial Center, Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka and others stand out



with their touristic potential. Whether you stay in the monasteries and wake up from the monastery bells, taste traditional food or the purpose of your stay is motivated by different

needs and you visit the monasteries for a short period, we recommend, out of the many monasteries located in the North-East region, a visit to the following:



St. Joachim of Osogovo Monastery



LOCATION:

At the farthest northeastern slopes of Osogovo Mountain, and at a distance of three kilometres from Kriva Palanka is the monastery complex of St. Joachim of Osogovo. The monastery is located at an altitude of 825 meters. It is part of the municipality of Kriva Palanka. The average annual temperature is 10.8°C and average summer temperature is 16.7°C.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Kumanovo and Osogovo, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric

CONTACT:

+389 31 375 063

Available explanations to the visitors in English and Russian.

DIRECTIONS:

The monastery has a convenient road connection since it is located

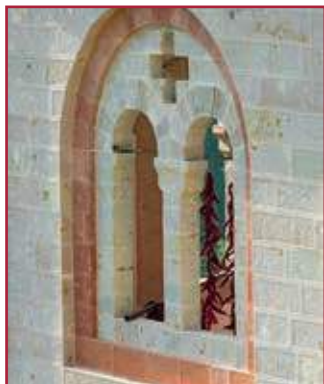




near the border with Bulgaria and the international road Skopje-Kriva Palanka-Kyustendil-Sofia with signs leading to the monastery. The monastery can be reached from Kriva Palanka by a road that leads right up to the monastery gates. However, access to large buses can be difficult.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

At the entrance to the monastery there are boards with informa-



tion for the visitors. The monastery complex of St. Joachim of Osogovo is a complex monastery whole which includes: Bell house with ossuary, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Church of St. Joachim of Osogovo, additional architectural ensembles, old lodging complex - buildings, old lodging, a lodging with high facade, the Bishop's lodging, the lodging Plochanica, baptistery, small refectory with a porch, a barn with

stables, kazanica (facility for making wine and brandy) with a lodging for servants, a bakery for bread, a barn for wheat, a barn for rice, an archive, a new lodging, a lodging for the upper gathering, an ethno-village restaurant, an art gallery, a monastery fountain, a souvenir shop and other additional facilities. The whole complex is so well incorporated in the space that practically the visitor is transferred from one room to another with no difficulty.

The monastery lodgings have a capacity of 60 rooms, which can accommodate 90 guests. Overnight stay in the new, better equipped lodging costs 500 denars, and in the old lodging overnight stay is 300 denars. The location of the monastery, the greenery and clean air, attract visitors who return to visit and enjoy its beauty again.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

It is believed that the monastery was founded in XII century, also known by the name Sarandapor, and is dedicated to the hermit St. Joachim of Osogovo who lived in these areas at the end of XI and the beginning of XII century. A fact about

its importance is that it has been visited by many church dignitaries, officials and travellers.

The oldest object in the monastery complex is the small church dedicated to the Blessed Mother of God, built in XI century, and later renovated several times.



The start of the construction of the church of St. Joachim of Osogovo was in 1847, and in 1851 it was completed and consecrated. The construction was entrusted to the protomaster Andrej Damjanov. According to its architectural disposition, the church is a monumental three-nave basilica, with two rows of three pillars, which divide the whole space into twelve barrel vaults with domes over them. The most impor-

tant part of the frescoes is on the west wall of the church - the work of Dimitriya Andonov Papradiski. The iconostasis in the church comes from 1932. The relics of St. Joachim of Osogovo, with their healing and curative powers, are placed in a sarcophagus inside the western part of the church.

SHORT COMMENTARY OF THE SAINT:

St. Joachim of Osogovo was a monk who lived as a hermit and ascetic in XI-XII centuries. The saint was characterized by strength, faith

and belief in God. Numerous miracles are associated with his cult, and





he is considered the patron of the town of Kriva Palanka.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

Every year on 28 August this monastery traditionally holds the feast of the Mother of God, an event visited by thousands of people.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

The monastery complex is home to a number of cultural events – Art Colony, Summer School of Architecture, as well as Folk Festival.

Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Kriva Palanka**.

Walk and recreation in **Osogovo mountains**.

Visit to the **mills** in the villages of Stanci, Drenak and Durachka Reka.

Visit to the **hermitage** of St. Joachim of Osogovo in the village of Gradec.



The Holy Great Martyr George - Staro Nagoricane Monastery



LOCATION:

St. George monastery complex, with only the church preserved today, is located in the village of Staro Nagoricane, Kozjak area, in the upper catchment area of the river Pcinja. The church is 15 km away from Kumanovo. It is part of the municipal-

ity of Staro Nagoricane. The average annual temperature is 11 °C and average summer temperature is 22 °C.

DIOCESE:

Diocese of Kumanovo and Osogovo, Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric





DIRECTIONS:

The church has a favourable traffic connections and it can be reached from two directions. The first is via the international route connecting Kumanovo with Kriva Palanka and Bulgaria, with a distance of three kilometres to reach the centre of the village Staro Nagoricane, where the church is located. The second one is also international, because of the nearby border (10 km away) with Serbia near the village Pelince. In both cases there is a road in good condition, suitable for both cars and tour buses.

MONASTERY DESCRIPTION AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES:

Today the monastery is not active, in the left part of the complex are the remains of monastery buildings which are being redecorated now, and in the central part is the

church in front of which are placed ladders to enter the church. The yard is large and nicely landscaped. There is no possibility for accommodation of guests in the monastery, but those interested can be accommodated in private accommodation or in the redecorated former school in the village.

THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY:

The church of St. George dates back to the XI century and as a first builder of the church is mentioned Romanos IV Diogenes who was Byzantine emperor. Only a part of the frescoes is preserved as well as walls of the facades of the stone blocks to the arches.

Today's church that captivates with its beauty has been restored by the Serbian king Stefan Milutin II in 1313, which can be seen in

the stone inscription placed on the western entrance of the church. It is a monumental, three-nave, five-dome basilica in the form of a cross with an elongated barrel vault to the east and west. Domes and vault areas are decorated with rich ceramoplastic decoration. When the church was rebuilt, the frescoes were also restored. The frescoes in the monastery are done by the famous medieval Thessalonica painters Mihajlo Astrapa and Eutychios, who painted the church from the foundation up to the roof in a period of five years.



The distinctiveness of the church is that it has preserved the

original altar wall i.e. the iconostasis which is made of stone pillars, ornate tiles and ornamented architrave. The sense of holiness is also captured in the yard of the monastery where there are still graves of church people and villagers.

An interesting fact is that in the south-western wall of the monastery is that the Bulgarian Tsar Mihail III Shishman was buried here, after the Battle of Velbazhd (modern Kyustendil) in 1330, by order of King Milutin.

SAINT'S FEAST DAY:

The monastery feast day is celebrated on 6 May, the Christian holiday of St. George. On this occasion, the monastery church is visited by great number of believers.

INTERESTING DATA FOR THE MONASTERY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

In the vicinity of the church there is a preserved hermitage where hermit St. Prochorus of Pcinja lived. Namely, near the village of Staro Nagoricane the Byzantine commander Romanos IV Diogenes was staying with his army and was a successful defender against the attack of the Pechenegs. Hunting a wounded deer,

he burst into the cave, where the ascetic Prochorus of Pcinja practiced hermitage. Prochorus rebuked him for the act and told him not to kill the deer. He also predicted that in the future Romanos would become a Byzantine emperor. Romanos IV Diogenes obeyed the monk, didn't kill the deer, went to Constantinople and in a short period of time became a Byzantine emperor. As a sign of gratitude for the clairvoyant hermit, Romanus IV built a beautiful three-nave basilica near his hermitage which is considered to be the first phase of the church of St. George.



Recommended visits and tours near the monastery

Sightseeing of the town of **Kumanovo**.

Visit to the **Monastery of Holy Mother of God** in the village of Matejche.

Visit to the **Monastery of the Presentation of the Holy Mother of God** known as the **Monastery of Karpino** in the village of Suv Orah.

Visit to the **Memorial ossuary Zebrnjak** that honors the fallen Serbian soldiers from the First Balkan War. Located in the village of Mlado Nagoricane.

Visit to the **Monastery of Holy Mother of God – Zebel** in the village of Nikuljane.

Visit to the **Memorial Centre of ASNOM** in the village of Pelince.

Sightseeing and opportunity to visit the **Megalithic observatory Kokino** in the village of Kokino.

Visit to the **Geothermal spa** in the village of Strnovac



Accommodation



Monastery



Convent



Liturgy



Cultural heritage object



Food



Souvenir shop

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