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# MONASTERIES IN BULGARIA

*multimedia*



Operative Program "Regional Development 2007-2013  
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## GENERAL INFORMATION

*Bulgaria is a country with very strong Christian traditions. Almost every village has a Christian church.*

*There were Christians in the Bulgarian lands even before the establishing of the Bulgarian state in the 7th century. However the majority of the citizens of the First Bulgarian Kingdom worshipped the pagan gods of the Slavs, Bulgars and Thracians. In the middle of the 9th century the Bulgarian throne was ascended by Prince Boris I, who realized the necessity of the adoption of Christianity and imposed it as the main and only religion in the country.*

*There were several reasons for this, but the main reason were the differences between different religious communities in the country and the perception of Bulgaria as a barbaric country, which kept it in isolation and was the reason for the other medieval countries hostility towards it.*



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*After the adoption of Orthodox Christianity in the country began a large-scale construction of temples, basilicas and monasteries. Over the next centuries Bulgaria became a country with strong Christian traditions, and during the five centuries of Ottoman dominion, the Christian religion and the monasteries were the forces that maintained the spirit of the Bulgarian people and their consciousness.*

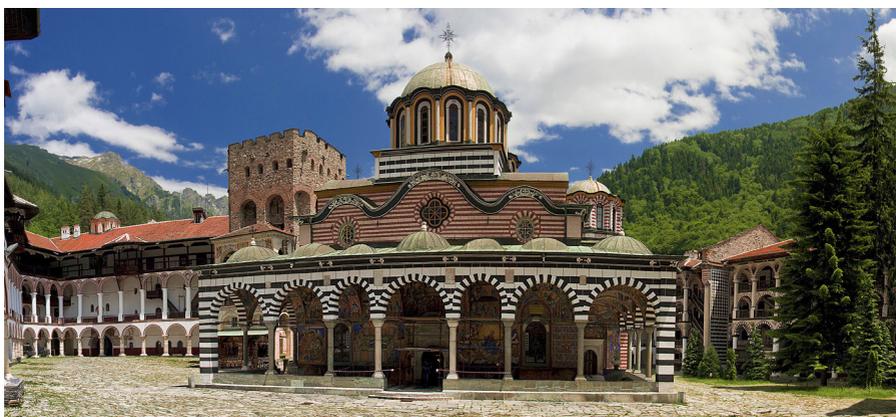
*Nowadays there are nearly 100 monasteries in the country. Some of them are not operating, but others have been operating almost without interruption for more than 1,000 years.*

*Visiting the Bulgarian monasteries is equal to time travelling - it allows you to acknowledge the country's history, which was marked by very light and difficult times.*



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## RILA MONASTERY



*Rila Monastery is the largest monastery in Bulgaria. It was built in the tenth century and has kept and preserved the Christian values for over a millennium, It is located in the heart of the Rila Mountain. The Rila monastery, in its present look, dates back to the 19th century, and only part*

*of its new eastern wing dates back to the 20th century. The oldest building in the monastery complex is the Hrelyova tower, which was built in the 14th century (in 1335).*

*It used to be the fortress of the monastery and home for the monks, during times of trouble.*



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*There is a museum at the monastery, where you can learn about the museum's history. The Rila Monastery was included in the UNESCO List of Global Heritage because of its exceptional architecture and cultural heritage.*





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## ROZHEN MONASTERY

*The Rozhen monastery “Nativity of Virgin Mary” is located 5 kilometers east of Melnik. It is the largest Orthodox monastery in the Pirin region. There is no*

*accurate information about the time when it was founded, but it is known that it had suffered a devastating fire in the 17th century.*





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*A century after the monastery was restored, it continued its Enlightenment and spiritual activity.*

*Nowadays the monastery is well preserved and is visited by many tourists. The monastery memorial day is 8 September. Many legends are told about the miraculous icon of Virgin Mary, which is kept in the monastery.*





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## BACHKOVO MONASTERY



*The Bachkovo monastery “The Assumption of Mary” is located on the south end of the Rhodope village of Bachkovo, 10 kilometers south of Asenovgrad. The monastery was founded in 1083 by the Georgian Grigoriy Bakuriani and was a Georgian monastery for a long time. It is believed that after the falling of Bulgaria under Ottoman Dominion (late*

*14th century) the last Bulgarian Patriarch in the monastery - Evtimiy - was banished. The yard of the monastery, which is home to many interesting plant species, is a favorite place for pilgrims and visitors. Bachkovo is an operating male monastery, which offers accommodation. The memorial day of the temple is 15 August.*



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## CHIRPAN MONASTERY “ST. ATHANASIUS”

*The monastery St. Athanasius is situated near the village of Zlatna Livada, Chirpan region. It is believed that it is the oldest monastery in Europe and it was founded by St. Archbishop Athanasius of Alexandria himself in 344 AD.*

*During its centurial history,*

*the temple St. Athanasius was constructed and destroyed several times. In the 80s of the twentieth century, a large new building of the monastery was built.*

*St. Athanasius is an operating convent, which has three memorial days - 18 February, 2 May and 14 October.*





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## PATRIARCHAL MONASTERY “ST. TRINITY”



*The Patriarchal Monastery “Holy Trinity” is located 6 kilometers north of Veliko Tarnovo. It is believed that the monastery was founded in the*

*14th century, but there are theories according to which it was initially founded in the 11th century. The church of the monastery*



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*was built in 1847 by Kolyu Ficheto - one of the most famous master builders of the Age of Revival. The famous Bulgarian artist and painter of the Samokov School of Arts - Zahari Zograf, painted the large icons in the temple. Currently the monastery is a convent. The memorial day of the temple is celebrated on Pentecost.*





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## BASARBOVSKI MONASTERY

*The rock Monastery "St. Dimitar Basarbovski" is located in the valley of Rusenski Lom river, near the village of Basarbovo at a distance of 10 kilometers from Ruse.*

*It is the only operating rock monastery in Bulgaria.*

*The monastery was founded during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185 - 1393), but the exact year is not clear.*

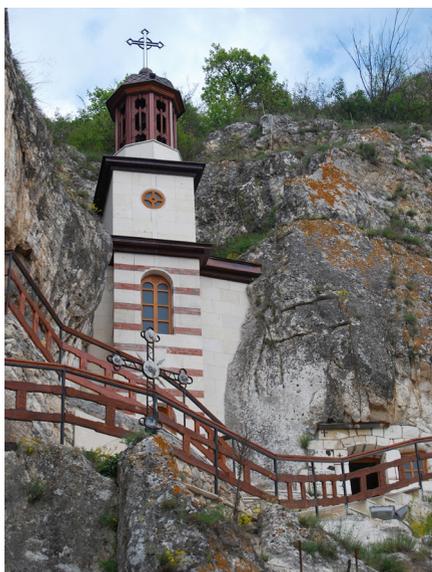




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*The monastery was named after the local saint, St. Dimitar of the village of Basarbovo, who had the largest contribution for the development of the monastery. For a short period of time during the 19th century, the monastery was deserted, but the spiritual activities were resumed in 1930s. The memorial day of the temple is 26 October.*





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## DRAGALEVSKI MONASTERY



*The Dragalevski monastery “St. Mary of Vitoshka” is located in the Vitoshka mountain, over the Sofia district of Dragalevtsi. It was founded by Tsar Ivan Alexander (reigned 1331-1371) about 1341 year and survived the conquest by the Ottomans in 1382. The Dragalevski Monastery is a*

*part of the monastery complex Sofiyska Sveta Gora (Sofia Holy Forest). The monastery complex consists of a church, residential buildings and farm buildings. The monastery complex used to have a church school in the 17th century. The memorial day of the temple is celebrated on 15 August.*



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## OSENOVLASHKI MONASTERY

*Another monastery of the Sofiyska Sveta Gora is the Osenovlashki monastery. Its Christian name is "Virgin Mary", but it is known among the pilgrims as the monastery of the Seven Altars. It is located in the Balkan Mountain, 15 kilometers from the railway station Eliseyna. According to*

*the legend, the monastery was founded in the 11th century. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The church in its present form was built and restored in 1815. The name of the monastery comes from the seven thrones (altars) in the temple. The wooden chandelier called "Horo" is a unique*





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*monument of culture - it consists of 15 separate parts and was donated by the residents of the village of Leskov Dol.*

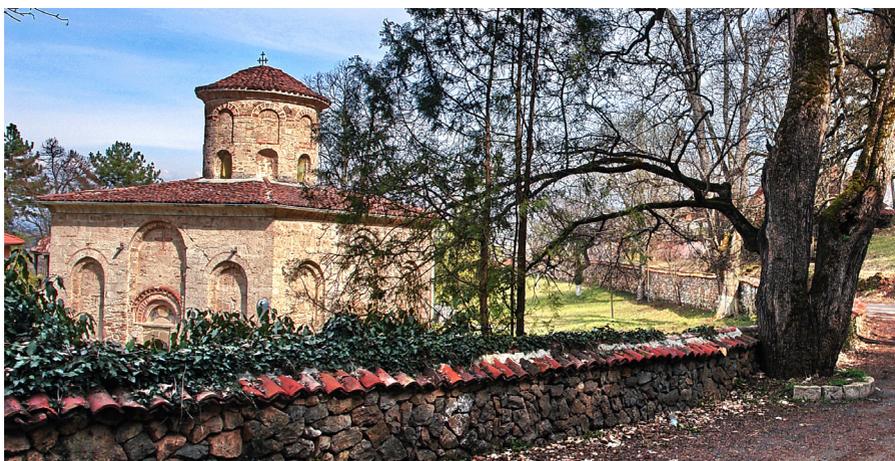
*The monastery is operating and offers accommodation. The memorial day of the temple is on 8 September.*





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## ZEMENSKI MONASTERY



*The Zemenski Monastery "St. John the Evangelist" is located 1.5 kilometers from the town of Zemen and 70 kilometers southwest of Sofia.*

*The monastery was founded during the First Bulgarian Kingdom (7th - 11th century).*

*The church of the monastery preserves parts of the frescoes, which date back to the 12th century. Due to its valuable murals, the monastery was declared a cultural monument. Nowadays it is not operating and is turned into a museum.*



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## SOKOLSKI MONASTERY

*The Sokolski Monastery "The Assumption of Mary" is located in the area Sokolova Cave, 15 kilometers east of Gabrovo and 4 kilometers from the Ethnographic*

*museum complex Etara.*

*The monastery was founded in 1833.*

*In the years before the liberation from the Ottoman Domination (1878) the monastery had*





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*a monastery school, and the monastery sheltered many fighters for national liberation.*

*Nowadays the monastery is an active convent with a beautiful garden and a splendid fountain, built by the famous Renaissance master builder Kolyo Ficheto.*





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## KAPINOVSKI MONASTERY

*The Kapinovski Monastery “St. Nicholas the Miracle Maker” is located at a distance of 14 kilometers from Veliko Tarnovo and about 5 kilometers from the*

*village of Velchevo. It is believed that it was founded in the 13th century, and over the centuries it was repeatedly burned and rebuilt. In the nineteenth century*





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*the Kapinovski monastery was an important religious center, and had a monastery school. Monks from the monastery took active part in the struggles for liberation from the Ottoman Dominion. Nowadays it is an operating monastery. The memorial day of the temple is celebrated on 6 December. The monastery offers accommodation.*





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## PLAKOVSKI MONASTERY



*The Plakovski Monastery "St. Elijah" is located at a distance of about 2 kilometers from the Kapinovski monastery and about 20 kilometers from Veliko Tarnovo.*

*It was founded during the reign of Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218 - 1241).*

*The monastery has existed on its present location since the 13th century. It is assumed that the monastery church was built by the Revival master builder Kolyo Ficheto in about 1845.*

*The memorial day of Plakovski monastery is 20 July.*



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