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MACEDONIA

ARCHEOLOGICAL TREASURE THAT TAKES YOU BREATH AWAY

MONASTERY LODGINGS OASIS OF SILENCE



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ARCHEOLOGICAL TREASURE THAT TAKES YOU BREATH AWAY

Macedonia is like a chest, filled with precious things, that eagerly waits to be opened. It has abundance of history and tradition dating back to the Neolith, witnessed by the numerous archeological treasures found in the earth's womb. The Maenad from Tetovo, Adam from Govrlevo, the golden mask from Trebenishta from the 6th century B.C., the Neolithic ceramics, findings from the Bronze Age, remains of Roman buildings, as well as mosaics with precious value, are only part of the rich cultural heritage

that for centuries has been found in this land. About 4.000 archeological sites, thousands churches and monasteries, over 200 mosques, fifty towers and bridges are only part of the provocation necessary to visit this rare and archeologically rich country. Even 130 Early Christian basilicas have been discovered in the country at different locations. Numbers are getting even more impressive if it is known that thousands of archeological exhibits decorate the shelves of the Macedonian museums and galleries.





Skopje

The capital Skopje and its surroundings are especially interesting for research.

Near the settlement "Zlokukani" are the remains of the Roman city Skupi. In ancient times, this territory was inhabited by the Dardani, until 4th century B.C., when Philip the Second of Macedonia took over the authority here. After his death, Skupi remains within the kingdom of Alexander the Great, and in year 164 B.C. it was conquered by the Romans. Using the position of an important crossroad, the city developed very soon. After the Milan Edict of 313, Skupi was made a Head Seat of Episcopacy and later on of the Archiepiscopacy. However, this glory ended after the city was destroyed by the earthquake in 518, after which it died out. At the location, the archeologists found a basilica from the 4th century, whose central arc is covered with mosaic, theater built according to Roman scheme and palace decorated with frescoes.

Near the road Skopje-Kacanik is the Aqueduct. It was built of stone and tiles with 55 arches resting on massive pillars, 450 meters long. It is believed to be built in the 6th century, and later was reconstructed and built because of its importance-to provide the city with water from the mountain springs of Skopska Crna Gora.

In 535 the new city-successor of Stobi, was promoted. It was built by the Byzantine

emperor Justinian, as a debt to his birth place. Justiniana Prima was surrounded by numerous fortresses, of which the biggest-"Crnce" on mountain Vodno, helped fighting back the attacks of the Slavic tribes. But, this was only until 694 when the Slavs took over the city and gave its today's name-Skopje.

Blocks of the ruins from the city of Skupi were used to build the Skopje fortress, located at a highland on the right side of the Vardar River. This area, according to the findings of the excavation, was inhabited even in Neolithic times and the early Bronze Age. The oldest architecture on the Fortress dates back in 535, in the period of ruling of Justinian I. There are remains of this fortress in length of 120 meters.

Under the fortress is the **Old Skopje Bazaar**, the most picturesque part of the city. The Bazaar has still kept some of the old crafts and stores, due to which thousands of years ago, its streets were filled with visitors. The Turkish itinerant Evliya Celebi, during his stay in Skopje (1660/61) in his books wrote

that the Bazaar had 2.150 stores, squares and markets, and compared it with the Baghdad Bazaar. Kurshumli Inn is in the Old Bazaar, an impressive building, built during the period of Justinian I. It is thought that on the basis of an older building, the Ottoman Turks have built and adjusted it into a caravan-palace. As such, it worked until 1787, and later it was transformed into prison. Today, the rooms are used as rockery of the Archeological museum. The object **Kurshumli Inn** or Led Inn is considered to be the most beautiful monument of culture in the city. **Daut Pasha Turkish bath** is located near the Stone Bridge, at the entry of the Bazaar. It is listed among the most important monuments of the Islamic profane architecture, and its history began in the second half of the 15th century, when Daut-pasha lived in Skopje. The Bath was damaged during the famous fire caused by the Austrian army-leader Piccolomini in 1689 and long after that it was left untouched and was slowly decaying. Its space was reconstructed for the first time in 1948 and later on the Art





Gallery was located there.

The Stone Bridge in Skopje is one of the most monumental buildings in the country that connects the two banks of the Vardar River. According to some, it was built in the 6th century in the period of Justinian, and according to others, it was built by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. According to Ottoman sources, the bridge was constructed with well processed stone blocks in the second half of the 15th century. In the past it was also called

Dushan's Bridge.

The massive construction lies on solid pillars connected with 13 semicircular arches. It is 214 meters long, and 6,33 meters wide. In 1992 the reconstruction of the bridge started, after which its original look was changed. The Stone Bridge was built with stone blocks, while its massive construction lies on pillars, mutually connected by semicircular arches. Today, only pedestrians are allowed to cross it.



Heraclea Lynkestis

Near Bitola is the site **Heraclea Lynkestis**. These are remains of the once ancient city that was main centre of Lynkestis, area of the Illyrian-Macedonian tribe Lynki. Heraclea was founded by Philip 2 of Macedonia around the middle of the 4th century B.C. Two centuries later, the city was conquered by the Romans, after which it flourished. In the early Christian period, Heraclea became Episcopal seat and centre of the new Christian faith. During the archeological researches at the site, early Byzantine church was found. East of it, Roman spas were found, and the mosaics on the floor of the narthex of the Big Basilica distinguished with their painting values and iconographic features. It is assumed that the mosaic was made at the end of the 5th century B.C. This ancient city also had a theatre in a form of horse shoe, where theatre shows were held, but also gladiators' fights.

Stobi

Macedonia has abundance of archaeological sites from Ancient time. The most famous is the Ancient city **Stobi**, which is located south of Veles, at the estuary of the Crna River in the Vardar River. The assumptions are that the city was built in the Hellenic period, in the 3rd or the 2nd century B.C., but it is possible that the area was inhabited since the Neolith. After two big earthquakes in the 6th century, the inhabitants left the city completely. In Stobi, among the other, there was a money forge where coins called "denarius" were forged, after which the today's national currency got the name. The most impressive object that was discovered is the theatre, dating from the 2nd century B.C. and is similar to the Greek theatres. It had 7.000 seats, and in a certain period was readjusted in a gladiators' arena. Also discovered in Stobi were: an Episcopal residency, prison, as well as Episcopal basilica with wonderful mosaics.





Vinicko kale

The site **Vinicko kale** set on the hill above Vinica is widely known for the Vinica icons found in this place. These are the most authentic and original discoveries from the soil of Macedonia, which are in many aspects exceptional. The story began in 1985, when at the site a depot was discovered with early Christian terra cotta icons, dating from the 6th and 7th century. These are unique icons in Europe made with a moulding technique, in two different dimensions. During the research, as a whole or in fragments, 49 samples of terra cotta reliefs were found. These are clay plate with quadric or rectangular shape, with dimensions of about 30cm. They contain texts written in Latin, and 15 scenes were found on the icons. They were found on the walls of an object, which was probably sacral.



Isar

The famous archeological site **Isar**, near the village Marvinci is interesting because of the numerous objects that archeologist found. Those are ceramics processed on pottery roundel, amphorae, vessels, terra cotta, jewelry, weapons, statues and coins from the settlement. The settlement was part of Paionia and was established in the 6th century B.C.



Vardarski Hill

Near Gevgelija is the former settlement **Vardar Hill**. So far 6 settlements have been discovered, one over the other, where there was life from the 13th to the 2nd century B.C. These old Macedonian settlements originate from the period before and after the rule of Alexander the Great. Especially rare is the cup with wine mould, found at this site. Numerous silver and bronze coins forged during the period of Alexander the Great and his father Philip were also found at this site.



Ohrid

The lake city of Ohrid is a real archeological and historical treasure. At the location of the today's city, the city of Lichnidos existed, which in the 4th century B.C. was conquered by Philip the Second of Macedonia. In its focal point there was an ancient theatre, believed to date back in the 3rd century B.C., and in Roman times animal fights were held there. The **Samuil Fortress** is considered to be one of the biggest preserved fortifications in the country. For the first time it was mentioned by the historian Livy in the 3rd century B.C., when it was fortress to the city of Lichnidos. It is considered that the today's form of the fortress dates back in the 10th century, when Ohrid, as a capital of the Macedonian Tsar Samuil, had reconstructed and strong fortresses. With its big walls and towers, the fortress surrounded the whole city, and the entry was enabled by three gates, of which one is preserved today and is famous as the Upper Gate. In the archeological researches of the gate, 145 tombs and necropolis were found with rich objects from the Archaic, Macedonian-Hellenic and Roman period. In one of the tombs a golden mask, golden glove and about seventy other golden, silver, bronze, iron, ceramics and amber objects from the 5th century B.C. were found.





Macedonia may be proud of its rich architecture and objects that until today have kept the authentic look. **The house of Robevci family** in Ohrid, where the Archeological Museum and the Ethnology exhibition are placed, is considered to be one of the most representative objects of urban architecture in Macedonia, which reaches its zenith in the course of XIX century. The construction of the house of the two brothers Robevci was done by the builder Todor Petkov from the village of Gari, near Debar. The object was built in 1825 after which it was burnt and then built again next year. The house is protected monument of culture and contains three floors, plus the up most floor, the so called "shirvan". The lower part has exhibited epigraphic monuments from Ohrid and the surrounding, as well the valuable exhibits: "Miljokaz" (found on the Via Egnatia Road), the two torsos of the Goddess Isida etc. Archeological exhibits dating from the Pre-Historic period to the Middle-Ages are exhibited on the second and third floor.

MONASTERY LODGINGS OASIS OF SILENCE

Almost all Macedonian monasteries have been built in the mountains' bosoms at places difficult to access, in areas with wonderful natural beauties, surrounded by thick forests and wide meadows. Although monks have always wanted to be alone in their spiritual life, they have still opened the gates for the population from the surrounding villages, who have therein celebrated their religious holidays, their village religious holidays and sought comfort and salvation in difficult times.

Because of the extraordinary touristic potential and the possibility to enjoy the peace, silence and tranquility, many of the Macedonian monasteries are called oasis of peace. The estimations are that there are 155 preserved monasteries, while about hundred are half-ruined or don't exist. Although the church tourism in the country is still in its germ, each year, more and more tourists from around the world decide to step on the monastery paths and get to know the Macedonian history and tradition, transfused in rare frescos, iconostasis and engravings, made by eminent Macedonian groups.

The womb of the Macedonian sanctuary- the ancient city Ohrid has 365 monasteries and churches. Because of its huge spirituality, it is not accidentally called "the City of Light". The road of all travelers that come to visit this spiritual treasury always ends in the "St. Naum" monastery on the bank of Ohrid Lake, where the eternal home of the saint is located. There is something magnificent and unexplainably powerful in the ritual of kneeling by the tomb of the saint Naum, while you carefully place the ear on the tombstone and excited wait to hear the beat of the big heart with healing power. Although it is only a legend, rarely anyone doubts it, as probably there is no man that hasn't thrown a coin in the wish well, in the middle of the church yard. The holly place where the monastery was built gives peace and tranquility. It was not accendently that Naum has chosen the rock overnaging Ohrid Lake for his spiritual peace. Here are mixed the waters of the springs from the Crn Drim River and the



clear waters of Ohrid lake. Over the monastery rises mountain Galicica with meadows filled with thick herbs. This place is as it was created for healing the ill. St. Naum has done that-used the power to help the mentally ill, but also to develop monkhood, and together with St. Clement form Ohrid, continued the mission of the first Slavic Enlighteners, the brothers Sts. Cyril and Methodius. He died in 910, after which for his body found its eternal peace in the tomb placed on the southern side of the church.

St. Naum in the 9th century has built the church "St. Archangels", which was ruined in the Ottoman period. On the basis of the original church, between the 16th and the 17th century, the today's church was built. Its frescoes were painted in XV and XVI century and the today's frescoes in the period between 1800 to 1806 were painted by the icon-painter Trpo from Korca. The splendor of the painted cycles and scenes lists the church among the biggest monuments from the 18th and 19th century in

Macedonia. Naum's monastery and the church Sts. Archangels, as well as the monastery of Cement and church St. Pantelejmon in Ohrid are the first monuments of the Slavic church architecture and art in the region of Ohrid. The legend says that when St. Clement came to Ohrid, he has introduced the Glagolitic alphabet of the holly brothers Cyril and Methodius to the local people and he revealed to them the secret of building stone houses instead of the straw cottages where they used to live. For that purpose he first built a church. That was St.

Pantelejmon monastery, built on the hill above Ohrid. After his death, Clement was buried in the tomb that he himself prepared in his church on **Plaoshnik**.

This, one-time centre of the Ohrid School, from where the Slavic literacy, spirituality and culture were spread, is considered by archeologists to be one of the most important cites in the country. The monumental early Christian church was built and decorated in the 5th century, in the period when **Lychnidos** (today's Ohrid), was an important centre of bishops. It

was built in a shape of a trefoil leaf, on the basis of an older ancient building. The arches of this temple were decorated with mosaics that had golden basis. Near Plaoshnik, in 2002, the St. Clement temple was renewed and after 530 years the relics of the first Slavic Bishop and founder of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, St. Clement, were brought here. In the excavations in 1999, baptistery of a five-arc basilica, with swastikas on the mosaic floors dating from the period between the 4th and 6th century, was found. It is believed that this Early Christian basilica on which the monastery of Clement was built in the 9th century was dedicated to Apostle Paul.

"St. Sofia" church is one of the biggest middle age churches, which for a long period of time was a synod church of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. It was built on the foundations of an old sacral building in the period after the big mission of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, when Macedonian Slavs have accepted Christianity in Slavic language. It probably served as cathedral in the period of Tsar Samuil, who by the end of the 10th century, transferred his throne center from Prespa in Ohrid. However, there are theses that in that period, on the same place, there was a church that for unknown reasons was ruined. There is no inscription for the period of construction of this church, but it is said that it was reconstructed during the period of Archbishop Lav, who from 1035 to 1056 headed the church throne. Lav was also a trustee of the painting decoration in the church and had big influence on the way it looked. Later the Ottoman Turks have turned "St. Sofia" in a mosque and have drastically changed its look. The frescoes were painted with lime, the dome was ruined and a minaret was built. The paintings of this church are considered to be the zenith of the Middle Ages painting in Macedonia and wider. Here are the best preserved pieces of Byzantine monumental painting. The outside shape of St. Sofia, which has for a long period of time been a synod church of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, is in the shape of the letter "T". It was built of tiles, scale and stone. Because of the acoustic features of the space, today important concerts are being held in the church.

Sv. Bogorodica Perivlepta (Preslavna) church was built in 1295 by the Byzantine army leader **Progon Zgur**, relative of **Andronic II Paleolog**. After St. Sofia was transformed into



mosque, St. Bogorodica Perivlepta became a synod church of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Due to its exceptional architecture and frescoes, **St. Bogorodica Perivlepta (Holly Mother of Good Perivlepta)** is among the most important Middle-Ages monuments in the country. The frescoes in the church were made by the eminent Middle-Ages icon-painters- Mihailo and Evtihij. This wall painting provided the basis for a new style of Byzantine art-Renaissance of Paleoliths. The church was built in a shape of an embedded cross. The construction material that was used consisted mainly of tiles and scale, whose skillful laying provided a rare impression of harmony and polychrom, separating it from the other Byzantine and Macedonian monuments of the 13th century.

Built on a rock in the old part of Ohrid, above a former fishermen settlement, **St. "John Theologian-Kaneo"** captures you with its beauty, peace and tranquility. This is the favorite place for the people that are in love, for the believers, but also for all the tourists in the City of Light, who come to rest in a place where the blue colors of the sky and the lake are joined. The church was built and painted at the end of the 13th century. This Middle-Ages monument is a successful combination of Byzantine and Armenian elements.

Hidden in the Southeast side of Ohrid Lake, near the village Trpejca, the church **"St. Zaum"** is a real challenge for the visitors since it may be accessed only by boat. It was built in 1361, in a form of an embedded cross, with central dome. The legend says that the Tsar's daughter was visiting St. Naums monastery and by the time she should have gone back to Ohrid, big waves appeared in the lake. Even after the advices that she should wait for the waves to calm, she started her way back, but she hardly managed to save herself. At the place she was rescued, as a sign of gratitude and **"for being reasonable in future"** ("Za um" literally translation), the Tsar's daughter has built this church.

In the Northeast part of Macedonia, near the city of Kriva Palanka, is located the monastery **St. Joachim of Osogovo**. It is located at the slopes of Osogovo mountain, surrounded by deep oak forest and separated from the city, offering peace and tranquility for the visitors. The monastery was founded in the 17th century. The big monastery church was made of hacked stone and was built by the famous constructor

Andreja Damjanov with his group. The church was painted between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century and dominant there is the composition **"Baptizing of Christ"**. Most of the frescoes were made by the famous frescos painter Dimitar Andonov Papradishki, assisted by icon-painter Petar Nikolov. Northeast of the big monastery church, there is a smaller church dedicated to the birth of the Virgin Mary, built in 14th century. Within the church there is a spring of holly water with healing features. Beside the churches, the most important object is the three-storey lodgings and for the guests here traditional food is prepared.

Surrounded by the babbling canyon of the Radika River, sunny mountain Bistra, Mavrovo lake and the magnificent mountain Korab, in the most picturesque part of Macedonia, monastery **"St. John the Baptist"** is located. It is called **Bigorski** (made of scale, literally translation), since it is made of stone scale. It is believed that the icons of the monastery have healing features for several illnesses, including

infertility. The monastery was founded in 1020, and then with the coming of the Ottoman Turks it was ruined and from all the objects only one small church was left. It was reconstructed in 1743 by monk Ilarion. It has one of the most famous iconostasis, work of xylographers Petre Filipovski-Garakata, from the village Gari and Makarija Frckovski from the village Galicnik. According to the beliefs of the monks of the previous century, the monastery was built by the monk John, the last head of the Ohrid



church in Samuil's state, at the place where a miraculous icon of "**St. John Preteca (the Forerunner)**" appeared. The magnificent icon of John the Baptizer, 980 years old, has the central place in the monastery. According to the legend, the icon came itself to the place where the monastery was built and was floating above the springs of the Radika River. It is told that the monastery was destroyed three times by the Ottoman Turks, and the icon always disappeared and was returned again. This monastery



is composed of monastery church and complex of monastery and guest lodgings.

The monastery Middle-Ages church "**Holly Mother Eleusa**", located in the village Veljusa, near Strumica, has an important place in the church and cultural history of the Southeast part of Macedonia. It is a women's convent, dedicated to the holiday of Presentation of the Mother of God to the Temple, celebrated in December. The preserved inscriptions point out that the church was built in 1080 by the monk Mauel. "**Holly Mother Merciful**" is important because of the originally preserved architecture, paintings, mosaic floor and marble iconostasis.

The fascinating church "**St. Pantelejmon**" in Veles was built in 1840. The history of Balkan architecture defines it as the most splendid art of Renaissance, and with the area of 810 square meters it is considered to be one of the biggest churches built in that period.

In the city of Skopje and its surroundings there are plenty of religious objects worth to be visited, such as the church "**St. Pantelejmon**",



located in the village Gorno Nerezi. It was built in 1164 during the rule of the Byzantine dynasty of Comnens. The paintings in the church is considered to be one of the most important monuments of the Byzantine art. Here are the famous compositions of frescoes: "The Birth of the Mother of God", "Lamentation of Christ" and "The Entry into Jerusalem". There is wonderful view of the capital from the church's yard.

In the valley of the Marko River, near the village Sushica is located **Marko Monastery**, whose construction was started by the king Volkashin. The construction started in 1345 and was completed and painted by his son, king Marco in 1371. At the beginning of the 19th century, the famous literary Kiril Pejcinovic stayed there. The monastery of Marco is composed of several buildings located in circle around the church. There are lodgings and an old dining room, which is especially interesting for the visitors. The most picturesque monasteries are located in the gorge of the Treska River. Hidden among the steep and high rocks, at the bank of Lake Matka is the breath-taking monastery "**St. Andrew**", built by the second son of the king Volkashin, Andrew, in the period 1388-89.

In the Old Bazaar in Skopje is the church "**St. Spas**", built after the fire in Skopje by the Austrian army leader Piccolomini in 1689. It is famous for its iconostasis, the deep engraving, made between 1819 to 1824 by the Mijak masters. The decoration is graceful, in the spirit of baroque, with different ornaments and motifs. The church is the home of the relics of the Macedonian revolutionary Goce Delcev.

Above the picturesque Prespa village Kurbinovo is the oldest church in the region of Prespa - "**St. George**". Located on a highland it offers a unique view of almost the whole Prespa Lake and the island Big City. This 12th century monument is a real precious stone of the Byzantine wall painting of that period. The church was built in 1191 and its frescoes were painted by five unknown masters from Kostoria. This church was built in the same period when the churches "St. Pantelejmon" in Nerezi and "St. Vraca" in Kostoria were built.

On the slopes of the mountain Osogovo, monastery of Lesnovo was built. Its lodgings were built in the 19th century, and the church was built in the 14th century. The despot Oliver built the church "St. Archangel Michael" in 1341, on the foundations of an older basilica that

existed during the time of the eremite Gavril from Lesnovo, who in XI century started living in Lesnovo wood and founded the monastery. From the graceful painting, which even today enchants you with its beauty, one may mention the presentations of "Archangel Michael", compositions of the life of Christ and the Saints, illustrations of David psalms. The iconostasis, which in 1814 was made by Petre Filipovski-Garkata, is considered as the first work of the Mijaks xylographic school.

Monastery "**Treskavec**" is located 10km from Prilep, among the rocks of Zlatovrv, at a height of 1.280 meters. This place offers a unique view of Pelagonija, Kajmakalan and Pelister. The monastery complex is composed of the church "Dormition of the Virgin Mary" and impressive lodgings, often visited by numerous guests from the country and abroad. The church "Dormition of the Virgin" was built in the 13th century, and the oldest frescos date back from a century later. The monastery was ruined during history, but was reconstructed in the 16th century.

Of the numerous Islamic objects, interesting to mention is the **Jaja Pasha mosque** in Skopje, characteristic for the size of its minaret, 50 meter high. The mosque was built by **Jaja Pasha** in 1504. At the top of the minaret, there are crescent moon and star made of gold. East of the main entry of the Skopje fortress is the **Mustafa Pasha mosque**, which is recognizable by its narrow and high minaret and the impressive dome. It was built in 1492 by Mustafa Pasha, who was an eminent person in the Ottoman kingdom. The impressive Mustafa Pasha mosque in Skopje is considered to be one of the most beautiful mosques in the country. At the south part of the mosque there is a beautifully made sarcophagus, believed to mark the tomb of Umi, one of Mustafa Pasha's daughters. One of the most interesting monuments of the Islamic sacral objects is the **Colorful mosque** in Tetovo. Its original name was Aladza (textile colorful cotton, literally translation), and in the 19th century it was named Pasha-mosque, after the renovator Abdurahman Pasha, Ottoman feudal master and Governor of the Tetovo region at the time, who also built the Fortress on Baltepe. The original Colorful mosque was built in 1495 and had the function of an Islamic synod temple. It was reconstructed between the 16th and the end of the 17th century, when





it was completely burnt in a big fire in the city. The numerous paintings, ornaments and painting techniques of the most famous masters are rarities that include this mosque in the anthologies of Islamic architecture. **Jeni mosque** in the centre of Bitola was built in 1558 by Sir Kadi Mahmud, over a Christian church devoted to St. George. The inside of the object is filled with fresco-decoration with rare landscapes of the 18th century, deep engravings on the wooden doors and decorative plastics in form of stalactites. Today it is used as an art gallery.





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