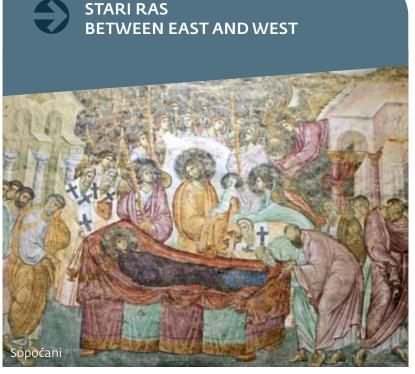


The most famous Serbian fresco, White Angel of Mileševa, was first broadcast via satellite in 1963, as Europe's greeting for America. A little later, the same signal was sent into space.

n Serbia, there are more than two hundred monasteries, 54 of which, have been declared cultural monuments, while **Stari Ras** (Old Ras) with Sopoćani, Studenica and the medieval Serbian monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija, namely Dečani, Gračanica, Pećka patrijaršija (Patriarchate of Peć) and Bogorodica Ljeviška (Our Lady of Ljeviš) have been inscribed onto the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Noted for their important cultural and spiritual heritage which are of permanent value to European history, and indeed, the whole world.

Hidden in wooded areas, under cliffs or on the mountain rivers' sources, the monasteries enshrine the serenity of monastic life. Close by refectories, temporary lodgings and repositories were built, and stone walls protected them. Yet, historically, the Serbian monaseries have not isolated themselves from the rest of the world. They have always been places for people to oather, as is the case today and their gates remain open to welcome visitors.

In the Middle Ages, monasteries were very significant: As the European culture was developing under the aegis of the church, places for praying and pilgrimage became national anchorages and hotbeds for education and art. Knowing and understanding their role and significance, all Serbian rulers without exception, starting with the Nemanjić family, built numerous monasteries. Instead of building sumptuous palaces, these fighters for high principles built monasteries as their pledge for the future. Their endowments testify to their donators' faith, perseverance and devotion to spiritual values, and also to the creative energy of that era.



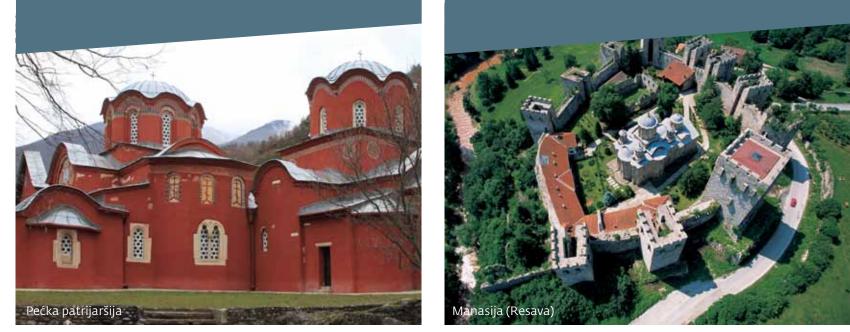
The thriving popularity of the Serbian monasteries started with Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the Serbian state, in the second half of XII century. In the vicinity of the first residence, the town of Ras, the monasteries Sv. Nikola (St. Nicholas) in Kuršumlija, Sv. Bogorodica (Our Lady) in Toplica and **Đurđevi stupovi (George's Pillars)** emerged one after another; however, in later eras, they were unfortunately heavily stricken. As a church builder, Nemanja laid the foundations for a centuries-long rulers' tradition, and his last endowment, the monastery of **Studenica**, was a great building that future builders identified with.

As the Byzantine power weakened in XIII century, an opportunity arose for Nemanja's successors to build the state and cultural identities of their country. In **Žiča**, Stefan the First-Crowned was crowned king, and Sava Nemanjić made the monastery the centre of the independent Serbian Archbishopric. The idea of an ideal Christian blend of the Church and the state was embodied in the monasteries - as such, they became spiritual, political and cultural centres. It was here that the most important pages in Serb' history were written

In XIII century, following a critical point in terms of interests and influences, Serbia created its national art, which resulted from a blend of influences typical of the Romanesque and Byzantine arts. The originality of such an art blend was manifested in the Bogorodična crkva (Our Lady's Church) in **Studenica**, permeated with the Romanesque style in the decoration of the marble façades and in the sculpture on the portals and the windows; however, its interiority is spiritually Byzantine and the walls are painted with frescoes of surreal beauty.

The monumental Beli Andeo (White Angel) in the monastery of **Mileševa** is the most beautiful example of that extraordinary style based on harmony and the classical ideals of beauty. In **Sopoćani**, built a little later, that style reached perfection. The solemn and rejoicing Sopoćani figures exude internal beauty with dignified expression. That is the antique concept of art, a sort of Renaissance celebrating the beauty of human nature. Sopoćani is the Sistine Chapel of the Serbian Middle Ages.

The most beloved Serbian Queen, Jelena Anžujska (Helen Anjou), was the one to bring the touch of the Gothic style to Serbia. The French princess, married to King Uroš I, is fondly remembered to have been a great benefactress, and the first female donator in Serbia. Her endowment **Gradac** was built on the example of Studenica, with the interweaving of the French Gothic style elements.



MORAVIAN SERBIA

ON EUROPEAN DEFENSIVE WALL

At the beginning of XIV century, King Milutin relocated the capital of Ser-The powerful empire of the Serbian Middle Ages fell after Emperor bia to Prizren (Kosovo) and went to conquer Byzantium's southern territo-Dušan's death. After the Turks had penetrated into the Balkan Peninsula, ries. A five-year-old Byzantine princess, Simonida, who, as the guarantor the state's ruling centre relocated to the west, to the valley of the Moraof peace, was married to Milutin and brought to Serbia Constantinople's va. However, besides the chaotic political circumstances, in the state of education, ceremonies, dress, food and culture, and as such, the Serbian Prince Lazar's and his son Despot Stefan's, culture surprisingly flourished. culture was transformed in direct contrast with Imperial Byzantium. Faced with the Islamic invasion in a long and almost incessant warring during the last decades of XIV and in the first half of XV century, the In his life, King Milutin built more than 40 endowments. Throughout Kosmonasteries became real fortifications. Ravanica and Manasija are surovo, famous builders from Constantinople and Thessaloniki built churchrounded by the great walls fortified with tall towers for defending from es in the form of a cross in a square, with one or five domes, whose extethe Turks' attacks. Within the monasteries' walls, Serbia defied the enemy with its culture, which was the ultimate defence. Despot Stefan accomrior was intricately decorated with stones and bricks. The masterpiece of that particular style is **Gračanica**, a harmonious and dynamic building, modated the learned, writers and artists from conquered countries. In where the Byzantine idea of the church as a 'picture of universe' is perfect-Manasija, the Resava Manuscript School worked hard, and, there, the ly realized. King Milutin brought the distinguished Byzantine painters Midespot himself wrote his "Slovo ljubve", one of the most beautiful poems chael and Euthychios to decorate his endowments. Their extraordinary of the Serbian medieval poetry.

frescoes in **Bogorodica Ljeviška**, as well as in other royal endowments

The Moravian churches Lazarica, Ravanica, Ljubostinja and Kalenić represent the most beautiful Constantinople's pieces of art of that era. were a new type of church, where decorative sculpture had a significant After Milutin's death, the conquering continued in the south and, siplace. On the portals, windows, rosettes and arches, interweaving bands and fantastic animals, as well as human figures come one after another. multaneously, estate-owners and ecclesiastical circles abruptly gained greater power. They became the new donators and built more and more The Moravian ornament is a brand novelty and proof of the epoch's creamonasteries. **Pećka patrijaršija** was the spiritual center of the state and tive power also the place where the Serbian state reached the peak of its fame – in Peć, Stefan Dušan was crowned Emperor and Serbia became an empire. On the Morava School's frescoes, the great Byzantine painting tradition blazed for the last time. Manasija's and Kalenić's elegant aristocratic painting exudes lyrical atmospherics and sophistication. Divine clothes, precious jewels, shining vessels and unusual hoods following the fashion of that time, transformed the walls of the Moravian churches into a historical document for understanding the spirit of the time which disappeared for good with the fall of Smederevo, in 1459, and the decline of the Serbian medieval state.

Throughout Dušan's vast empire, monasteries were also significant educational and cultural centres. There, books were translated and copied, schools and big libraries established, and, in the imperial monastery of Dečani, there was also the renowned school for icon-painting. KOSOVO is currently administrated by UNMIK based on United Nations Security Council Resolution No.1244.

**MONASTERIES OF OVČAR-KABLAR GORGE** HARBOUR OF SERBIAN CULTURE

KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

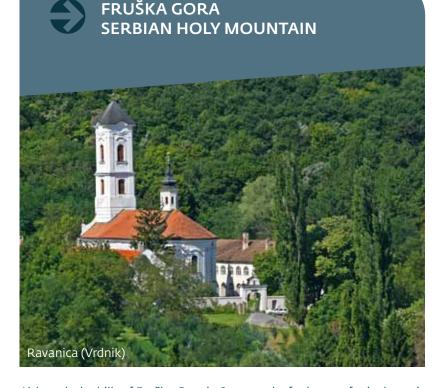
**RISE OF SERBIAN EMPIRE** 



If you visit Žiča, Studenica, Gradac, Đurđevi Stupovi or Sopoćani, you will find yourself on the European "Transromanica" route which links Europe's Romanic heritage. On that important cultural route, which makes its promotion possible, the Serbian monasteries are a 'must visit attraction' owing to their original contribution to the European cultural heritage legacy.



In the picturesque gorge of the West Morava, on the precipitous slopes of Ovčar and Kablar mountains, there is a unique community of monasteries known as the Serbian Holy Mountain. The monasteries were being built in XIV and XV centuries, in the turbulent times when the Turkish Empire put the Serbian territory under control. Retreating from the Turkish conquerors, Serbian monks found a solitary and isolated spot in the gorge and started building the monasteries. Tradition has it, that there were more than forty monasteries on that small space, and today there are ten: Blagoveštenje (Annunciation), Vavedenje (Presentation of Mary), Vaznesenje (Ascension), Ilinje, Jovanje, Nikolje, Preobraženje (Transfiguration), Sretenje (Presentation of Jesus at the Temple), Uspenje (Assumption) and Svete Trojice (The Holy Trinity) monasteries. For centuries, those monasteries preserved the orthodox spirituality and national awareness of the Serbs. Refugees also hid here - in the gorge and nearby caves. Cultural and artistic activities were never discontinued in the Serbian Holy Mountain - even in the most difficult of times. In XVI century, schools for copying books worked there, churches were decorated with frescoes, icons were painted and valuable objects were designed.



Although the hills of Fruška Gora in Srem are by far known for its beautiful nature and noble varieties of grapes used for producing the best quality wine, it is, first of all, known for its monasteries, whose building started here after the Great Migration of the Serbs in 1690, when the Serbs moved to Hungary and, exiled by the Turks, sheltered there. Fruška gora is frequently said to be the Serbian Holy Mountain because on its slopes there are numerous monasteries, and consequently, the spiritual centre of exiled Serbs was established there – the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. In Fruška gora's monasteries, the spirituality and culture of the Serbs have been preserved through centuries; they were also an important political centre and were the symbol of the national resistance to the Turkish Em-

In the monasteries Krušedol, Vrdnik or Novo Hopovo (New Hopovo), there is the evidence of a great artistic renaissance that emerged when it crossed with the West-European culture. In Fruška Gora, the authentic baroque style was incepted, the first printing shops opened and Serbian graphics were born. Very tall and decorative baroque bell-towers were built to churches, along with baroque iconostases with big and richly carved wooden separation walls covered with icons painted by the best Serbian painters of that time inside them. While opening towards the European culture, there was a vivid remembrance of the golden era of the Nemanjić family epoch, so, the specific style of the Serbian baroque came to surface in that blend of the modern and the traditional. For all that, the seventeen preserved Fruška Gora's monasteries have a great significance in Serbia's cultural and historical heritage.



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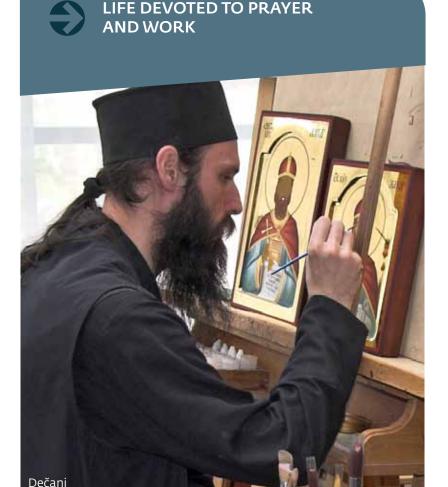
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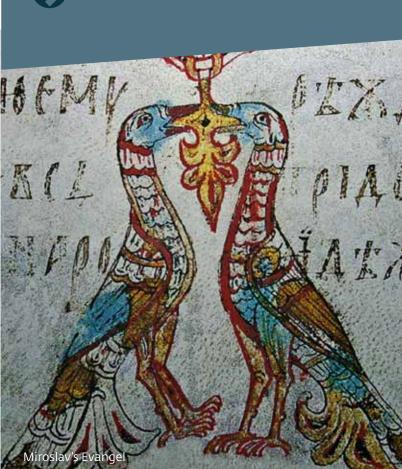


ORGANISATION

of SERBIA



Although mostly built in the medieval eras, the monasteries remain active today too. Monks living there, live according to the ancient monastic rule: prayer and work. That is why serenity and happiness emerging out of the harmonious blend of the spiritual and the physical permeate them. Also, they are distinguished by the familiar hospitality of orthodox monasticism from the Holy Mountain to Russia, so they will engage you with respect and human warmth. The fruits of monastic work vary from spiritual, such as books, icons and prayer beads to physical goods, such as honey, wine, medicinal teas and nice fabrics. Entering a monastery in Serbia makes you feel as if you were stepping out from the race of living in the real world and instead, stepping into tranquility which, can symbolise that perhaps, eternity is not too far from us.



REPOSITORIES

The most famous Serbian manuscript, Miroslav's Evangel, writ ten at the court of Prince Miroslav, Nemanja's brother, around 1180, is decorated with luxurious miniatures, vignettes, and the Romanic style initial letters (UNESCO, program "Remembrance of the World").

Repositories emerged at the same time with the foundation of the monasteries as donators and numerous pilgrims gifted valuable artistic and liturgical objects. Today, in the monasteries' repositories' china cabinets, visitors can see the monasteries' relics, evangels, chalices, gold crosses, ecclesiastic embroidery, silver-plated icons and many other valuable obiects.



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