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Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage in Thracian Tourist Region

Suggestions for religious temples to visit in the region



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Remains of many ancient civilizations have been found on the territory of the **Thracian Tourist Region**. These are the cultures of prehistoric societies, of the Thracians and the ancient Greeks, of Rome and Byzantium, of Christianity and Islam. The settlers have left on the territory of the region the rich cultural heritage of seven different civilizations.



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Municipality of Perushtitsa holds a place of honor in Bulgarian history with its churches:



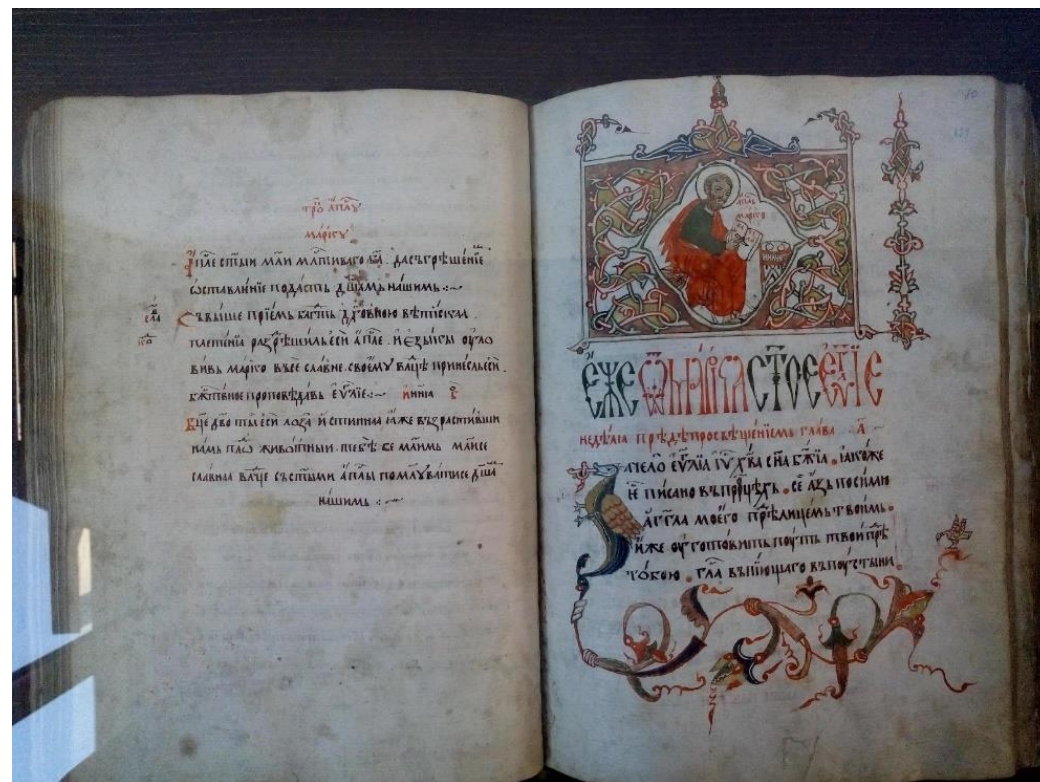
- **The Red Church** - built in the early Middle Ages (V-VI century) and is one of the most important early Christian basilicas in the Balkans. It skillfully combines ancient Greek with Byzantine style and certain forms of Roman mausoleum architecture, observing the requirements of the Christian cult.
- The historical church of **St. Archangel Michael** was built in 1849. It served as a fortress and refuge of the upraised citizens of Perushtitsa in April 1876, in which 347 of them (men, women and children) preferred death to captivity.
- **Church of St. Athanasius** - the old church, built in the XV and XVI centuries. It is the place where is given the beginning of the April Uprising in this area, during the rebellious events it was burned to the ground by the enslaver.
- Chapel of **Saint Reverend Petka**.
- Monastery of **St. St. Theodore Tyrone and Theodore Stratilat** – medieval monastic monastery.



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Municipality of Brezovo

- The Church of **St. Dimitar** in the town of Brezovo was built in 1843. It was painted by masters from the Debar School of Icon Painting. The church is painted with 146 frescoes, most of which are preserved. It has been declared a cultural monument.
- The village of Rozovets and the church of **St. Athanasius**
- The ancient church of **St. Georgi**, which was once a literary center - one of the largest damaskin and art centers in the XVII century. In the 1930s, the Etropole writer Pop Yovko worked here. His followers are teacher Philip and priest Nedyalko.





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Parvomay Municipality



- Church of **Saint George** is located in the city center. In 1928 during the Chirpan earthquake, the church was severely damaged, but now it has been restored. The temple holiday is on May 6, when the Orthodox Church honors St. George the Victorious.
- The Church of **Saint George the Victorious** in the village of Bodrovo was built in 1858, built thanks to the wealth and generosity of Hadji Georgi, who received permission to build a church in 1856. The whole village participates with its work in its construction.
- **Evangelical Pentecostal Church** in the village of Vinitsa
- **Saint Athanasius Monastery** near the village of Zlatna Livada, which is the oldest active monastery in Europe.



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Dimitrovgrad Municipality has 27 Eastern Orthodox churches and 31 chapels with holy places. The oldest ones were built in the middle of the 19th century and impress with their size, interior design and frescoes of high artistic value.

- The oldest is the Church of **St. George the Victorious** in the village of Gorski Izvor, built in 1854. It is a cultural monument of national importance since 1964.
- Temples of historical value in the municipality of Dimitrovgrad are the churches of **St. Dimitar** in Rakovski and **St. Georgi** in the Chernokonevo district; **St. St. Constantine and Helena** - the village of Krepost; **St. George** - the village of Bodrovo, **St. Ivan Rilski** - the village of Dobrich; **St. Nicholas** in the town of Merichleri; **St. George** - the village of Brod; **St. Prophet Elijah** - the village of M. Asenovo; **Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary** - G. Asenovo village, **St. Dimitar** Church - Yabalkovo village, **St. Charalampius** - the village of Chernogorovo, the **Monastery of the Holy Mother of God** - the village of Dobrich.





Municipality of Topolovgrad

- **Holy Trinity Monastery** is an active female monastery - one of the largest spiritual centers in this part of the country. It is believed that a monastery on this site dates back to the fourteenth century during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander.
- Rock Christian temples: **the Old Church** - was used as a church in the tenth century, located above the monastery of **St. Trinity**; the chapels of **St. Marina** in the village of Sakartsi and **St. Spas** north of the town of Topolovgrad and a rock church near the village of Matochina;
- Temples in the area: **St. Parashkeva** - the village of Oreshnik; **St. George** - church - the village of Hlyabovo; **St. Dimitar** - the village of Orlov dol (cultural monument); **St. Dimitar** - the village of Knyazhevo; **Ascension of the Lord** - the village of Srem; **St. Dimitar** - the village of Ustrem; **Life-giving source** - the village of Kapitan Petko Voivoda; **St. Mother of God** - church - Chukarovo village; **St. Mother of God** - the village of Svetlina; **St. Archangel Michael** - the village of Mramor; **St. Prophet Elijah** - the village of Sinapovo; **St. Petka** - the village of Dobroselets; **St. St. Constantine and Helena** - the village of Radovets.
- Church of the **Holy Mother of God**.



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Harmanli Municipality

- **St. Athanasius Church** – 1835
- **St. Ivan Rilski Church**
- **Chapel of St. Tryphon**
- And some of the old churches in the area: **St Nedelya Church**, built in 1874 in the village of Cherepovo; **St. Archangel Michael**, built in 1852 in the village of Slavyanovo; **St. Elijah**, built in 1859 - the village of Polyanovo; **St. Dimitar**, built in 1867 in the village of Ovcharovo; **St. Ivan Rilski**, built in 1836 in the village of Dositeevo; **St. Mother of God**, 1877 - the village of Bulgarin; **St. Great Martyr George** – Rogozinovo village; **St. George**, built in 1899 in the village of Cherna Mogila.





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Municipality of Mineralni Bani



- Church of **Saint George** - the village of Mineralni Bani;
- Mosque in the village of Kolets;
- Church of **Saint Anastasius** of the village of Sesame;
- Mosque in the village of Karamantsi;
- Church of **Saint Nikola** in the village of Sarnitsa;
- Mosque in the village of Sarnitsa;
- Mosque in the village of Boyan Botevo.



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Chirpan Municipality - most churches are preserved from the 19th century and have both spiritual cultural and historical significance

- Temple of the **Ascension of Jesus**.
- Temple of **Saint Archangels** (1860) – Chirpan. This is the only Sunday school for young people and adults in this district in Bulgaria.
- The Church of the **Holy Mother of God** is the first large Christian church in the town of Chirpan. It was built in 1835 on the site of a small church from the 18th century.
- **Monastery complex Saint Athanasius the Great** - The village of Zlatna Livada. The monastery is considered to be the oldest active monastery in Europe. It was built in 344 and preserves the world's only copy of the Reims Gospel, on which the French kings swore an oath until the 19th century.
- Ruins of the medieval monastery of **Saint Panteleimon** - Stoyan Zaimovo village.





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The municipality of Maritsa has a rich history from the distant past - from the time of the Thracians, during the era of Roman rule to the present day. There are many myths, legends for personalities such as Master Manol, the Tarnevi family, the associate of Deacon Vasil Levski - Ivan Arabadzhiyata from Tsaratsovo and for Levski himself, who travelled the villages in the region.

- **St. Trinity** church in Benkovski, built in 1880, declared a cultural monument due to its valuable frescoes and iconostasis. The baptismal font of 1856 shows that religious life also existed during the Ottoman rule.
- The first church in the village of Voyvodinovo - **Saint Spas**.
- The Church of the **Ascension of Jesus** was consecrated in 1892 in the village of Graf Ignatievo.
- **Assumption of the Virgin** Church in Dink village. According to legend it was built on the ruins of an old Roman building.
- Church of **St. St. Cyril and Methodius** in Kalekovets village is built in 1860.
- The first church in the village of Rogosh was built in 1866. After the Liberation (1878), a new church was built on the site of the Revival Church - **St. Athanasius**, overthrown by the 1928 earthquake.
- Church of the **Holy Prophet Elijah** - Scutare village was built in 1879.
- **St. Nikola (Ieten)** church in Stroevo village, built in 1866, has valuable architecture and houses 23 icons.
- The Revival Church in the village of Trud - **Saint Trinity** was built by master Mincho Bogdanov Stari in 1869.



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Stara Zagora Municipality

- **Parish temple Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker** - heir to a church built in 1834, and the famous St. Nicholas School, which educated many young people, including Vasil Levski. Destroyed during the Russian-Turkish War and rebuilt between 1896 and 1909.
- **Parish Temple Holy Trinity** - related to the tragic history of Stara Zagora during the Russian-Turkish War of Liberation. In 1877, thousands of innocent Stara Zagora residents were killed here, seeking refuge in the temple. It was restored after the Liberation.
- **Parish temple Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** - on the site of the destroyed church during the battles for Stara Zagora during the Russian-Turkish War of Liberation was built a new one, completed in 1881. Here on October 5, 1912, after a solemn prayer, King Ferdinand read the manifesto announcing the start of the Balkan War in 1912.
- **Cathedral of Saint Dimitar (martyr)** – built in the period 1859-1861, witnessing the most significant events in the history of the city during the Renaissance. Two of them - the life and work of Vasil Levski in Stara Zagora and the welcoming of the Russian liberation troops and the Bulgarian militia in the city, are depicted on murals by Prof. Nikola Kozuharov. In the yard of the church is the Hilendar convent, historically connected with the life and work of Vasil Levski.





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- **Saint Theodore Tyron** Chapel - is located on the territory of Metropolitan Metodiy Kusev Park (Ayazmoto). Consecrated in 1896. Some of the saint's relics are kept in the altar of the temple. The frescoes are from the mid-40s of the twentieth century and are unique in their mosaic workmanship.
- Temple of **Saint Ignatii Starozagorski** - the last church built in the city in 2014. It is named after St. Ignatius of Stara Zagora, born at the end of the 18th century, accepted his martyrdom after refusing to change his Christian belief.
- **Architectural complex Museum of Religions** - located in the center of Stara Zagora, a place where for thousands of years various gods have been worshiped, and the temples dedicated to them have been built on top of each other. The oldest remains here are from a cult pit (X -IX century BC). Archaeological excavations also reveal a pagan sanctuary dedicated to the Thracian horseman (II - III century) and the foundations of a medieval Christian cemetery church (late X - XIII century). All of them can be seen in the interior of the museum. The best preserved is the architecture of a Muslim temple, built in the early XV century.

Stara Zagora Municipality





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Plovdiv Municipality

- **St. St. Constantine and Helena Church** - 1832. There was a Christian sanctuary in this place in the IV century. In 304 the martyrs Severian and Memnos were beheaded in the same place because of their Christian belief. Before them, 38 Plovdiv martyrs also suffered because of their faith. Today the temple is a valuable religious, historical and cultural monument.
- **Cathedral of St. Marina** - a legend tells about the existence of a church from the V century. Today's church was built in 1851. Nowadays it is the only Plovdiv church with the largest number of bells and one of the most valuable carved iconostasis.
- **Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Kevork** - built by Armenian masters from Asia Minor in 1828. There are two chapels to this church, St. Bartholomew and Thaddeus and St. Stephen.
- **Zion Jewish Synagogue** - Built in 1886-1887, in the heart of the historic Jewish quarter of Orta Mezar. It was expanded in 1922.





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- **The Evangelical Cathedral** is 25 meters high and is built entirely of granite. This is the largest evangelical church on the Balkan Peninsula. Its solemn consecration took place during the Second Council of Evangelical Cathedrals in the autumn of 1901.
- **The Catholic Cathedral of St. Ludwig** - built in the XIX century by Roman architect Alfonso. Here in 1861 the first organ in Bulgaria was installed. The bell tower was built in 1898 and is equipped with 5 bells, a gift from Pope Leo XIII
- **The Jumaya Mosque** (15th century) is said to have been built on the site of an ancient Christian church. There is a sundial on the outer wall of the southwest corner. Jumaya Mosque is a functioning Muslim temple, the second largest in Bulgaria with an area of about 1500 square meters.
- According to researchers, the **Cathedral of the Assumption of the Mother of God** has had a beautiful and majestic church since the Middle Ages. The first information preserved about it dates back to IX-X centuries. In 1859, a service in Bulgarian was held here for the first time, which marked the beginning of the movement for an independent Bulgarian church.

Plovdiv Municipality

