

Come once more to



THE RILA MONASTERY, situated at an altitude of 1,147 meters above sea level, amidst the coniferous forests of the Rila Mountain. The monastery consists of a set of religious, housing and farm buildings on an area of 8800 sq.m. The Rila Monastery has a unique architecture. On the outside, with the 24-meter tall stone walls of the main buildings shaped as an irregular pentangle, the

monastery resembles a fortress. Therefore, any pilgrims or tourists, who find themselves on the inside of the iron gates is astounded by the softness of the architectural elements: arches, colonnades, covered wooden stairs and wood carved verandas, leading onto the cells - 300-400 of them in all. In the centre of the paved courtyard is the uncommon symbiotic relations of the austere battlements of the Hreljova Kula and the baroque silver domes of the main church. The monastery has a library of great value, consisting of volumes, collected for centuries on end. It contains precious Bulgarian literary heritage of around 250 manuscripts dating back to 11 - 19 centuries, 9000 old prints, inscribed manuscripts, and graphic prints from the period of the Revival, etc. The on-site museum also boasts of a rich and varied collection containing 35000 exhibits: icons, applies arts and crafts, woodcarving, religious and ethnographic objects. The museum contains a unique work of art - the Rafael Cross. It is made of a single wooden piece (81 x 43 cm.) and bears the name of its creator. The monk has used fine chisels, small knives and magnifying lenses in order to carve onto the cross 104 religious scenes and 650 small shapes. It took him no less than 12 years to make it, and was completed in 1802 - the year its creator lost his eyesight.

THE SMALLEST TOWN IN BULGARIA - MELNIK, is famous for its heavy red wine. One of the famous places in it is the hose called the Kordopulovata kashta, built in 1754 by a wealthy Greek merchant of the Kordopulos family. It is one of the most monumental houses of the Period of the Revival in the country. It contains a display of the typical wine cellar in the region of Melnik: a tunnel borne through rocks deep underground, with the drums for storage of the wine of Melnik. In the vicinity one can see the Monastery of Rozhen, among the medieval Bulgarian monasteries that have survived almost intact. The Monastery was built in the 13th century. It is situated around 7 km from Melnik, at the foot of the Pirin Mountain. It sports an outstanding vista towards the peaks of Pirin and Belasitsa, as well as towards the famous mel formations - pyramidal hills scattered across the town caused by the erosion of the clay-like earth. The current monastery building dates back to the 19th C. The monastery is a remarkable monument of culture. The oldest inscription on the wall murals dates back to 1597. The church has an interesting wood carved iconostasis, murals, glazing on the east.



THE OLDEST GOLD JEWELLERY ON EARTH is in Bulgaria. It was found in the Varna Necropolis (total weight of 1 517 grams) and at another archaeological site - the Necropolis of the Big Island of the Durankolak Lake, where golden jewellery dating back to the Fifth Millennium B.C. was found.

The Necropolis of Durankolak is the biggest pre-historic necropolis on earth. It was thoroughly excavated and researched. It contains 1 204 graves. To explain the significance of this artefact it must be understood that throughout the world there are only three necropolises from the same stone-copper age. The gold found in this region had been found in a pure form in nature, probably in the sands. It was then processed, unlike the first gold artefacts dating back to the ninth millennium B.C. /found in Caionu, North-east Turkey/.