

Manuscript received: 31.03.2023
Accepted: 03.04.2023

International Journal of Economics, Management and Tourism
Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 86-90
Online: ISSN **2671-3810**
UDC: 338.48-6:2(497.777)



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**GOCE DELCEV UNIVERSITY OF STIP
FACULTY OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS**

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS,
MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM
VOL. 3 NO. 1
2023**

ISSN 2671-3810 online version

Publisher:

Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics
Goce Delchev University of Shtip
"Krste Misirkov" no.10-A P.O. Box 201 Shtip 2000, North Macedonia
Tel: +389 32 550 350
www.ftbl.ugd.edu.mk
www.ugd.edu.mk

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The International Journal of Economics, Management and Tourism (IJEMT) is peer-reviewed and issued two times per year, in online version at the following website of the web portal of Goce Delcev University in Stip: <https://js.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/ijemt/index>. The official language for papers is English language.

IJEMT DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46763/IJEMT>

IJEMT Vol.3 No.1 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46763/IJEMT2331>

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dushko Josheski; Natasha Miteva; Tatjana Boshkov ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH FINANCIAL AND UNEMPLOYMENT FRICTIONS	7
Tatyana Dimitrova; Slavi Dimitrov POSSIBILITIES FOR REALIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABOR MARKET IN THE NORTH CENTRA REGION OF BULGARIA IN 2022	36
Erika Kormaniková; Anna Šenková THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC CRISIS ON CHANGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES IN SLOVAKIA	45
Mimoza Serafimova; Snezana Bardarova Minov; Drasko Atanasovski THE LABOR MARKET IN MACEDONIA AND THE REGION – SITUATIONS AND ANALYSIS	57
Aneta Vasiljevic - Shikaleska; Sandra Spirova AIR POLLUTION IN SKOPJE: PRACTICE AND AWARENESS IN THE SCOPE OF HOUSEHOLD HEATING	65
Cane Koteski; Gjorgi Petkoski CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SPACE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHURCH "ST. ANNUNCIATION" IN PRILEP	79
Gjorgi Petkoski; Nikola V. Dimitrov OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM AT HOLY SAVIOR - KRUSHEVO MONASTERY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA.....	86
Zlatko Jakovlev; Vladimir Kitanov PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE TOURIST STAY	91
Nikola V. Dimitrov "BIBLICAL MACEDONIA" - TOURIST CHALLENGE	98

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM AT HOLY SAVIOR - KRUSHEVO MONASTERY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

The Church "Ascension of Christ", also called "**Holy Savior**", is a Macedonian Orthodox church located 2 km (a straight line of distance) southeast of the centre of the town of Krushevo, Macedonia. The Christian temple was built in 1826. This church is located at an altitude of 600 meters. It is one of the biggest tourist attractions of the city of Krushevo.

In the courtyard of the monastery, next to the church itself, there is an old inn with blue doors and windows, which are also characteristic of the Krushevo houses of that period. The guest house also has a high loggia from where you can enjoy the beautiful view of the largest valley in Macedonia - Pelagonia, and from the other side, you can see the beautiful beech forest that changes colours depending on the seasons.

The guesthouse of the monastery has a large number of rooms, where guests have the opportunity to spend the night. More recently, another new guesthouse has been built on the other side of the church, which is of great importance to preserve this piece of historical heritage, so that more people can have the opportunity to come, spend the night and feel the graces of this place.

Keywords: tourism, rural tourism, cultural heritage, historical landmark

INTRODUCTION

The Monastery of Saint Spas, located a few kilometres from Krushevo, is one of the places most visited by tourists in this region. It can be reached when you turn left from the Prilep-Krushevo regional road, near the "Opalenik" industrial zone, and then you have 3 km left to reach it. The monastery and its surroundings have a really impressive history, which is connected with the very formation of the city of Krushevo.

The monastery is a part of well-known monasteries in the Pelagonian planning region, which are part of them: Monastery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Treskavec, Slepčani Monastery, Monastery of St. Archangel Michael, the monastery of St. Dimitria - village Selce and other monasteries and churches.

The monastery in its landmark brings several glories that guests and local residents have the opportunity to visit. The main glory that is celebrated on Spasoen, that is, 40 days after Easter, that is, on the day of Christ's ascension, from where and what the name of the church comes from. The monastery also celebrates the fifth week of Easter fasting, and the first week of October, where all Macedonian saints are celebrated.

These celebrations are of great importance for the rest of the monastery, because they bring visitors from various places and thus develop the rural tourism of the monastery and the surrounding areas. For these celebrations to be held in that place, the monastery has lodgings with beds that are offered to visitors for sleeping, and there are also kitchens where food is cooked. All this allows for the maintenance of the historical heritage of the monastery and the development of greater rural tourism in the monastery and surrounding areas.



Figure 1: Monastery St. Spas, Krushevo

1. Historical development of the monastery of St. Salvation

Data on the historical development of the monastery come from the end of the 19th century. The monastery from the 19th century onwards, that is, until its current state.



Figure 2 – Current state of the monastery

The construction of the largest church in this town, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, which was destroyed by the Ottoman army during the Ilinden uprising, is connected with the inhabitants of the village of Stari Dol and their settlement on the territory of today's Krushevo. After that destruction, that church was rebuilt in 1836, which is considered the date of existence of the church that is still in operation today. The church had no painting in this period, only one fresco on the arch of Christ Pantokrator. There is no active monasticism, the last nun who lived here, the nun Cheruvima, died in 1988. The monastery has always served as a refuge for the troops during the Ilinden period, but also during the NOB. Despite the devastation in this region, the monastery of St. Spas remains untouched by any armies, for which there are interesting historical records. Namely, when it was marched towards Krushevo, there were events where the Ottoman soldiers defended the monastery from devastation because of the benefits they had from it, or rather, several children who did not speak after a certain time in the monastery regained their speech. These graces still exist in the monastery today.

Furthermore, during the 19th century, it is noted through documents and sources that there was a large influx of population in this region, which lasted sometimes until 1840. Then, from all the gender regional branches, that is, the Vlachs from Mosko Pole and Gramos and the Macedonians Brsjatsi and Mijatsi choose a delegation that they send to Istanbul to the Jerusalem Valia Ephrem who allows them to buy that land, and where they continue to live, and today that time, that place is known to us as the city of Krushevo, one of the first Macedonian cities. The city experienced a great economic expansion during 1872 and filled a

large area in today's Western Macedonia as a centre. The Ottoman government forms a nahiya, which is the city of Krushevo with the villages of Selce, Aldanci, Norovo, Trstenik, Birino, Ostriltsi and Rilevo, so that the Muslim administration does not remain in the city, except for the army and the police.



Figure 3 – Current state of the monastery

2. Road infrastructure to the monastery of St. Salvation

If you decide to travel from Skopje to the monastery of St. Rescue by car will take you somewhere around two and a half hours. There are two routes via E75 - the Friendship highway and the regional road (R106) Gradsko-Prilep with a length of 132 kilometres or via the M4 Skopje - Tetovo - Gostivar - Kichevo - Makedonski Brod - Prilep (R513) with a length of 118 kilometers. Prilep is far from St. Spas is about 27 kilometres, and the fastest way to reach it is via the regional road from Prilep to Krivogastani (19.3 kilometres), then you continue 4 kilometres from Krivogastani to the industrial zone "Opalenik", and finally you have 3 kilometres left to go to the monastery.

3. Preparing and serving food in the dining room of the monastery

An inevitable thing in every monastery is the kitchen and dining room. On the day of the monastery's glory, dishes are prepared depending on which day the holiday falls on, if it is on Wednesday and Friday then the menu is lean, if it is on other days then fatty food is prepared. Bearing in mind that the monastery has 3 feasts a year, the dishes that are prepared for each feast are different. For example, the first feast which is Mary Magdalene of Egypt, which is before Easter, is a fasting feast, and therefore fasting dishes of the type are prepared:

- **Lenten beans** (the recipe dates back to the 18th century, and has not changed at all over the years)

Ingredients:

- 150g Beans
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of salt
- 1 spoon of red pepper



Figure 4: Lenten Beans

- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 hot pepper
- 10g black peppercorns
- 3 leaves of fresh mint

- Lenten Yavnia

Ingredients:

- 1 onion head
- a few potatoes
- 1 large carrot
- 2 peppers
- 1 medium-sized tomato
- 1-2 cloves of garlic
- salt, red pepper, black pepper
- Parsley to taste.



Figure 5: Lenten Yavnia

When an oily glory is celebrated, the dishes that are prepared are the following:

- Yavnia with veal
- Young roasted veal

We slaughter the lambs that they bring for our health and let them roast, then we bring them back and after the public service, we also distribute roasted lamb (Kolaroski).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The monastery of St. Spas is the reason why this area is visited every year by numerous tourists and believers from the country and abroad and represents a great potential for the development of religious tourism in the Pelagonian planning region. With its rich history and intact historical heritage, this monastery plays an important role in the development of rural tourism in this region. The monastery lodgings, which carry with them a deep historical tradition, have a great role in overnight stays for visitors. Also, the kitchen that serves food preparation and the dining room make visitors all the conditions needed for a stay.

The cultural heritage, the well-groomed yard and the nature around the monastery on the mountain represent a true paradise for the enjoyment of all tourists who are always delighted. Every domestic and foreign tourist who has visited the monastery is amazed by the peace and deliciously prepared food. The motivation to visit this historical and religious site is primarily from a spiritual aspect, but also from the wonderful experience that this area offers.



Figure 6 – Current state of the monastery

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