



Visiting Hours		
April 15 - August 31 Opening Time: 08.00 Closing Time: 19.00 Ticket Office Closing Time: 18.30	September 1 - October 14 Opening Time: 08.00 Closing Time: 18.00 Ticket Office Closing Time: 17.30	October 15 - April 14 Opening Time: 08.00 Closing Time: 17.00 Ticket Office Closing Time: 16.30
It may change due to restoration works.		
Address: Altındere Vadisi Maçka, Trabzon		
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SUMELA MONASTERY

GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR
CULTURAL ASSETS AND MUSEUMS





The Sumela Monastery has been founded for Virgin Mary (Panaghia), and it is one of the most important monasteries in Anatolia. The name of the monastery is believed to have been derived from the word "mela", meaning "black" or "dark" in Greek, as the monastery is built around a natural cave, on a steep slope of Karadag (Black Mountain).

According to a legend concerning its foundation, Virgin Mary had appeared in the dreams of Athenian priests named Barnabas and Sophronios who lived in the 4th century AD, where she had told them to find her icon painted by Saint Luke, and that to do this they should follow the path she would show them to reach the Mela Mountain. The saints had arrived in the region after a long journey, where they had found the icon of the Virgin Mary in a cave and had built a monastery there.



The Monastery was enlarged in the 6th century by General Belisarios with orders from Emperor Justinianus, and it had been looted several times during 7th century by bandits. During the same century, the Monastery was restored to his former glory by Saint Christopher, who was miraculously appointed there.

The importance of The Sümela Monastery had increased during the Empire of Trebizond, which was established in 1204. It had become a scene of important construction activities especially during the rule of Aleksios Komnenos III. The monastery had been given concessions and gifts by the Ottoman Sultans. The monastery has taken its present shape as a result of major repairs and additions during 18th and 19th centuries.

Sümela Monastery has become a frequent destination of travelers and researchers visiting the Black Sea Region. It has been evacuated during the population exchange between Türkiye and Greece as required by the Treaty of Lausanne, which was dated January 30, 1923. Today the monastery welcomes visitors as a monumental museum.

The Sumela Monastery had hosted a crowded community at 19th Century. Its main church (Katholikon) had been the Cave Church, and it also had 10 Chapels of various sizes, an ayazma (holy spring), a bell tower, a library, a two storied kitchen, a fountain, administrative areas, dwellings of monks and guestrooms. Today the monastery is surrounded by an entrance with high stairs and a protection wall. Aqueducts can be seen at the



front face. The water that was carried from the southern water springs through these arches had been used in the fountain and waterways which were located at the courtyard of the monastery.

The cave church which is located at the center of the monastery actually has the appearance of a natural cave. Its eastern section was closed through additions of a wall and a chapel, both of which are covered by murals. These murals had been renewed during different periods, and they depict various subjects such as the creation of the earth, scenes from lives of Jesus and Mary, prophets mentioned in the Old Testament, and of various saints, and many others. The majority of the chapels are located at the northern section, and all of them are single naved. Many of these chapels are covered by murals, which are mostly dated back to 18th and 19th Centuries. At some places three different periods can be observed together. The oldest of these murals is dated back to 14th century, located at the Hidden Chapel.

The library which had been situated to the east of the entrance of the monastery and the bell tower which had been to the east of the cave church could not survive to date. Rare manuscripts of the library known to be quite rich in content are under protection at the Hagia Sophia Mosque of Istanbul today. The eastern part of the monastery and 72 rooms compose its monumental façade. The rooms in this section, which are in varying sizes, are all crowned with a balcony each, and they have niches of cabinets and stoves at their walls.

