

Sümela aims to host 500,000 tourists



The majestic Sümela Monastery in Turkey's Black Sea province of Trabzon aims to welcome a total of 500,000 local and foreign tourists this year, an official said.

"Although the monastery was closed last year, we had hosted around 290,000 people. Hopefully, we will surpass that," Ali Ayvazoğlu, the provincial head of the Culture and Tourism Ministry, told Anadolu Agency.

The monastic complex hosted about 50,000 tourists between May 25 and July 1, after being closed for three years during a first phase of restoration work, Ayvazoğlu also said.

The first phase was launched in February 2016. A second phase, which has already started, is expected to be completed by 2020.

The cliff-face monastery drew the attention of foreign and local visitors despite being closed for tours, Ayvazoğlu said. Nearly 290,000 tourists went to see the monastery in 2018 – even though they were not permitted to tour the inside.

Located in the Maçka district of Trabzon, the monastery is a site of historical and cultural significance as well as a major tourist attraction. It was included in UNESCO's temporary list of World Heritage sites in 2000.

The monastery was also reopened for religious use on Aug. 15, 2010 with the permission of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, following an 88-year hiatus.

Sümela Monastery is a Greek Orthodox monastery and also has a very significant place in the history of art. It is believed that the monastery was constructed in the fourth century, although Alexios III (1349 - 1390) is believed to be the real founder.

It is built on a steep cliff at an altitude of 1,200 meters in Altındere National Park and is surrounded by a beautiful forest. At the bottom of the mountain flows one of the arms of Değirmendere Creek.

Vehicles can reach up to the parking lot at 950 meters high near the river, and from that point one needs to hike uphill through the path way approximately 1 kilometer to reach the entrance of the monastery.

Admission costs 10 Turkish Liras (\$1.70) per person.

- Source: hurriyetdailynews.com