

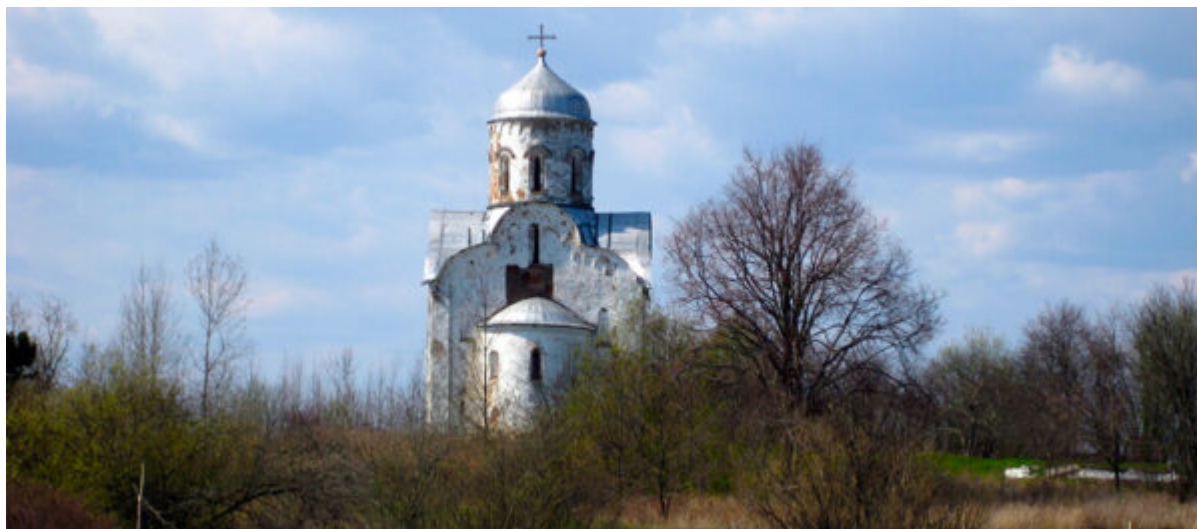
13th-century Novgorod church reopens after large-scale restoration



One of Russia's oldest surviving churches has reopened after a two-year process of restoration. The 13th-century Church of St. Nicholas on the island of Lipno was built after the Mongol invasion, and it was painted soon after its construction in 1292.

Unique frescoes of the 13th century and later paintings have survived to the present day, and the church is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Large-scale work on the church began in 2016 under instruction from Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, with \$326,445 (21 million rubles) being allocated for the project, reports the site of the Novgorod Province administration.



Much was accomplished over the past two years, including the preservation of the church's monumental icons, the restoration of the interior walls, and the preservation of fragments of 13th-14th century sash frames. The choir lofts and staircase were also recreated according to archived drawings.

"I want everyone who visits this place to treat it with care. This church has stood for more than a thousand years and I hope that it will continue to stand just as long," said Deputy Governor of the Novgorod Province Sergei Sorokin at the opening ceremony on September 21. According to Sorokin, the main task in restoring the church was to make it accessible to people.

The foundations of the bell tower and western porch from the 19th century, lost during World War 2, were also discovered in the archaeological study of the church that was carried out during the restoration. In fact, a third of the church was destroyed in the war. Restoration was carried out in the 1950s, though the church was again in need of restoration.

Two children's graves dating to the 16th-17th centuries were also discovered.

Archaeological work and the restoration of the icons continues, as well as the beautification of the area around the church. The church has also been provided with electricity thanks to a power station installed nearby.

"The 13th-century paintings are unique—they will be a point of study for students of the leading universities in the country. Of course, we will organize an excursion-tourist route. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation plans to allocate funds to purchase a boat to take tourist groups to the island," explained the General Director of the Novgorod Museum Natalia Grigorieva.

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