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Secret chapel of Turkey's Sümela Monastery awaits visitors



During the restoration of one of the most important religious tourism spots in Turkey, Sümela Monastery in Black Sea region's Trabzon province, a secret chapel was found. That newly discovered chapel is now waiting for the day it will welcome visitors.

The monastery is a site of unique historical and cultural significance and a major tourist attraction. It was included on UNESCO's temporary list of World Heritage sites in 2000. The restoration and environmental plans for Sümela Monastery, which is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, were launched in February 2016.

The chapel was found on Sept. 22, 2015 through a secret passage during restoration work in the Sümela Monastery had meant that the site, located in Altındere Valley of northern Turkey's Trabzon, was closed to visitors.

The restoration work was halted briefly due to adverse weather conditions along with measures implemented to combat the coronavirus outbreak in Sümela Monastery, located in the Maçka district, a major religious tourism hub in Turkey. The restoration work resumed in May 2020.

A new project is underway in preparations for the chapel, which stands at the upper slopes of the monastery's northern roof and is accessible through a secret passage that treasure hunters have used in the past to rummage the chapel.

The project will be presented to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, prepared by the firm that is leading the restoration work of Sümela Monastery. If the ministry approves, the secret chapel will welcome the monastery's visitors.

Constructed on the the side of the mountain with a 1,600-year-old history, Sümela Monastery's restoration work, which in total includes three phases, will be completed with the construction of a wooden road to the chapel.

As part of the restoration efforts, the frescoes and the roof part of the chapel will also be repaired. The restoration is expected to finish by a July 1, 2021 deadline.

With the addition of the chapel, Sümela Monastery is expected to attract thousands of local and foreign tourists.

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