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PANAGIA SUMELA MONASTERY IN PONTUS FULLY REOPENS, RECEIVES 5,000 VISITORS IN TWO DAYS



The world-renowned Panagia Sumela Monastery in Trabzon, Turkey, saw thousands of visitors in just two days after it fully reopened to the public for the first time in six years.

More than 5,000 tourists visited the monastery on Sunday and Monday, May 1 and 2, despite the rainy weather and fog, reports the Orthodoxia News Agency.

For centuries, the cliff-side monastery in the Black Sea city served as the cradle of Pontian Hellenism. After 88 years of banning access to the site, Turkey reopened it on August 15, 2010, and a new tradition of Patriarch Bartholomew celebrating the monastery's patronal feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos there began.

However, the monastery was closed for restoration in September 2015, and the Patriarch was not permitted to serve throughout the restoration process, which mostly addressed the stability of the cliff.

A series of mini-inaugurations have successively opened more sections of the monastery. It was opened up through the first courtyard in May 2019, and in July 2020, 65% of the monastery was opened to the public and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated again on Dormition that year.

Turkish authorities say the restoration of the monument is now 95% completed and that there will be no new closures.

A scandal involving the monastery erupted in February when Turkey shot a tourism advertisement with scenes of the monastery being used as a night club.

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