

S. Marchenko, Student
L. Petliovana, PhD in Ped., As. Prof.
Khmelnytskyi National University

THE SVIATOHIRSK LAVRA: A TOURIST GUIDE TO DONETSK REGION

The aim of this study was to investigate and explore Donetsk Region in eastern Ukraine that boasts a rich cultural and historical heritage. One of the most notable attractions in the region is the Sviatohirsk Lavra, a complex of historical and religious buildings located in the town of Sviatohirsk. This paper serves as a tourist guide to the Sviatohirsk Lavra, providing information on its history, architecture, and cultural significance.

History. The Sviatohirsk Lavra was founded in the 16th century by the monk Jonah, who established a monastery on the site of a former pagan temple. Over the centuries, the Lavra grew in size and significance, attracting pilgrims from all over Ukraine and beyond. During the Soviet era, the Lavra was closed and used for various secular purposes, but it was returned to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the 1990s and has since been restored to its former glory. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Lavra became one of the most important religious and cultural centers in Ukraine. It was a place of pilgrimage for Orthodox believers and served as a center of education and scholarship. The Lavra's monks were known for their knowledge of theology, philosophy, and the arts, and they produced many valuable manuscripts and books.

During the Soviet era, the Lavra was closed in 1935 and used for various secular purposes, including a prison and a military base. Many of the Lavra's buildings were damaged or destroyed during this time, and the Lavra's treasures and artifacts were confiscated or destroyed. After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the Sviatohirsk Lavra was returned to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and restoration work began. The Ukrainian government provided funding for the restoration, and many of the Lavra's original buildings and artworks were carefully restored or recreated. Today, the Sviatohirsk Lavra is a symbol of the resilience of Ukrainian culture and religion in the face of adversity [6,7].

Architecture. The Sviatohirsk Lavra is a complex of buildings that includes several churches, a bell tower, and living quarters for the monks. The most notable building in the complex is the Holy Assumption Cathedral, which was built in the 18th century and features stunning baroque architecture. The cathedral is adorned with frescoes and icons that depict scenes from the Bible and the lives of the saints. Other notable buildings in the complex include the Church of the Intercession, the Church of St. Nicholas, and the Refectory Church [1].

Cultural Significance. The Sviatohirsk Lavra is an important religious site for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. It is also a popular tourist destination, with visitors coming to admire the Lavra's stunning architecture and learn about its rich history. In addition to its religious and cultural significance, the Lavra is also an important natural landmark, situated on a hill overlooking the picturesque Don River.

The Sviatohirsk Lavra is known for its network of caves and grottoes, which have been used by monks for centuries as places of meditation and spiritual retreat.

The caves are located in the hill on which the Lavra is built, and they are accessible to visitors as part of guided tours of the complex [4].

The caves, which are also known as "cells" or "kel'ias" in Ukrainian, vary in size and shape and are interconnected by narrow passageways. Some of the cells have been furnished with simple wooden furniture and religious icons, while others are bare except for small niches cut into the walls where candles can be placed.

Visitors to the caves can learn about the history and significance of the cells, as well as the lifestyle and practices of the Lavra's monks. The cells were used by monks for prayer, meditation, and contemplation, and they were often used as living quarters by individual monks or small groups of monks[2,3].

While the caves are a fascinating and unique feature of the Sviatohirsk Lavra, visitors are advised to take care when exploring them. The passageways can be narrow and steep, and the caves can be dark and damp. Visitors are advised to wear sturdy shoes and to be prepared for some physical exertion, as the caves involve some climbing and crawling. Additionally, visitors are asked to be respectful of the caves and to avoid touching or removing any of the religious artifacts or furnishings[8,5].

Visiting the Sviatohirsk Lavra The Sviatohirsk Lavra is open to visitors every day. Admission is free, but donations are welcome. Visitors are advised to dress modestly and to be respectful of the religious significance of the site. Guided tours are available in Ukrainian and audio guides are available in English and other languages. Visitors can also purchase souvenirs and religious items at the Lavra's gift shop.

Conclusion .The Sviatohirsk Lavra is a must-see destination for anyone visiting Donetsk Region. Its stunning architecture, rich history, and cultural significance make it one of the most important landmarks in the region. Whether you are a religious pilgrim or a tourist interested in history and culture, the Sviatohirsk Lavra is sure to leave a lasting impression.

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