

AWE AT RILA

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In a hidden remote mountain

valley there is a Christian monastery built over a thousand years ago by the students of a hermit who became the patron saint of Bulgaria, St. John of Rila. The colonnade you see leaves you awe-struck. Earthquakes, fire, pillaging by Ottoman raiders, all through the centuries the Rila monks would build it back ever-better and care for it immaculately.

It is little wonder that the Rila Monastery is a World Heritage Site. The picture you see is only one small section of the magnificent frescoes of the exterior archways – and the interior is equally extraordinary. There are nine more World Heritage sites in this Virginia-size country, like the 3,000 year-old (and still flourishing) city of Nessebar on the Black Sea. Bulgaria is one of Europe's true undiscovered gems. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World* #74photo ©Jack Wheeler)

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