

BULGARIA

RILA MONASTERY

Orthodox name: Saint Ivan of Rila

The Rila Monastery lies in the very Rila mountain, at 1,147 meters above sea level. It is situated 117 km away from Sofia to the south, and is no doubt the most popular tourist site among all monasteries in Bulgaria equally for its size, natural surroundings, architecture, wall paintings and ancient history. The monastery offers a great view to the surrounding peaks of the mountain and represents a developed tourist sight,

Rila Monastery was founded in the 10th century by St. John of Rila, a hermit canonized by the Orthodox Church. His ascetic dwelling and tomb became a holy site and were transformed into a monastic complex which played an important role in the spiritual and social life of medieval Bulgaria. Destroyed by the fire at the beginning of the 19th century, the complex was rebuilt between 1834 and 1862. A characteristic example of the Bulgarian Renaissance (18th-19th centuries), the monument symbolizes the awareness of a Slavic cultural identity following centuries of occupation.

