

BASILICA SAINT SOFIA

City of Nessebar, Bulgaria

Hagia Sophia Church, Nessebar

THE CHURCH ST. SOFIA, known as The Old Bishopric, is situated on the place supposed to be the old Centrum of the settlement. It is a three-nave basilica with a semicircular apse, a three-part narthex and an atrium (an inner yard). It is of 25,50 meter length. The central nave is separated from the two side aisles with orthogonal stone columns and brick arches. Above there is a second arcade. There are three arch windows over the apse at the East Side and a two slopes roof structure, not preserved. The apse possesses a synthronon, which can be seen today. Inside the church is plastered up and covered with frescoes.

The basilica was built at the end of 5th century and the beginning of 6th century. There were two periods in its construction, rebuilt subsequently in the beginning of the 9th century. It was an important part of the Nessebar bishop's residence.

From the sights of Nessebar this week we will present the Church of Saint Sophia.

The Basilica of St. Sophia (Old Metropolis) is one of the symbols of Old Nessebar. It is part of the Architectural and Historical Reserve in the town of Nessebar.

The original construction of the Old Metropolis dates back to the fifth century. The temple is a three-nave basilica with dimensions – width about 20 m and length about 26 m

Inside the church was plastered with mortar, and its walls were painted with icons of saints. Its entire floor was covered with a mosaic of multicolored, small pebbles.

Today the Basilica of St. Sophia is visited all year round by thousands of Bulgarian and foreign tourists. Located on the supposed old town center.

Location:

The Church of Saint Sofia (Bulgarian: Църква Света София, Byzantine Greek: Ναός Αγίας Σοφίας), also known as the Old Bishopric (Bulgarian: Старата митрополия) is an Eastern Orthodox church in Nessebar, eastern Bulgaria. It is situated in the old quarter of the town which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site list and of the 100 Tourist Sites of Bulgaria.

History, architectural and artistic features

The church is located in what is supposed to have been the center of the ancient city. It is a three-naved unvaulted basilica with a semi-circular apse, a narthex and an atrium. The church has a total length of 25.5 m and a width of 13 m. The division into three naves was effected by two rows of five pillars each. The middle nave (9.3 m wide) ends to the east with a big closed apse, round outside and three-sided inside. There are three arched windows on the eastern wall above the apse. The basilica used to have a double-sloped roof which has not been preserved.

From the inside the church used to be plastered and then painted with frescoes. The whole floor used to be covered with mosaics made out with little coloured stones. It has mixed masonry of stone and brick and is the largest of the Nesebar churches whose overground structure has survived.

The basilica was constructed in the late 5th and early 6th century. Its present appearance was dated from the beginning of the 9th century when it was reconstructed. During the Middle Ages it served as a cathedral for the bishopric eparchy centered in Nesebar. In 1257 the church was looted by the Venetians during a campaign against the Bulgarian Empire and many religious relics were taken in the Church of San Salvatore in Venice. The basilica was abandoned in the 18th century.