

Pilgrimage to Holy Relics of saint Alexander Nevsky in St. Alexander Nevski Cathedral, Sofia Bulgaria

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It is my third day, I'm staying in Sofia and I'm trying to use the time as efficient as possible. I had a dinner with my school years friend and my current employee Anton in a small restaurant near Hotel Pliska called King's breakfast. I wanted to save some money so use Sofia's public transport to reach to hotel Pliska from a train stop near the so called "Winter Palace". The bus I traveled with was crowded, I was not sure of which bus-stop I had to go down of the bus so tried to ask the bus driver. Interestingly he seemed puzzle that I asked him and being lazy to explai me or not being sure of the number of bus stops I had to count until I reach to Pliska Hotel, he suggested to ask someone in th ebus. Thanksfully there were some people helpful and thanks God the young student Lady which sit near me, had to go down on the same bus stop as me and was kind and helpful.

I should stop for a second and mention few words on the bus hygiene, I've not been in Bulgaria over the last 5 months and I didn't travelled in Sofia bus for maybe at least 2 or 3 years - the hygiene was worse than critical it looked unhygienic there were some weird stickers which was supposed to instruct the reader something but they were so intuitive, that I hardly doubt anyone fully understands, some of the visual instructions seemed also ridiculous The bus I traveled with was probably at least 20 or 25 years old, and it seemed the last time it was clean by someone was maybe a few months before, of course the weather was rainy and this is one of the reason of the dirt, but even besides that it was obvious noone puts

even a cent for hygiene and the bus aesthetic appearance. Well so far so good. What I liked of the bus is the ticketing system which was very old fashioned, you buy a ticket which costs the low fee of 1 lv (0.50 cents), you pierce it on a mechanical pierce machine located on few places on left and right and that's all, in some buses a control person comes by and checks if the person has pierced the little piece of paper ... Just for comparison in Arnhem, the ticketing system was a bit different whether you desire to buy it from the driver, he give you a ticket and stamps it with a date and hour, then the ticket is valid 1 hour after so you can use it in another bus as well. Also just as a matter of short comparison in Holland, maybe 50% of people or more already use the new contactless OV-Chipkaart which is a standard way to pay for transportation. Happily, such a system is not available in Bulgaria - and hence from purely tracking perspective and freedom prespective and efficiency the symplicity of ticketing system in Bulgaria and the low price rox and IMHO beats up Western one :)

Back to where I was after using Bus number 280, I reached and having the dinner with my dear friend, I had a walk of about 30 minutes from Hotel Pliska (which is one of the most key (and busy) central bus stops in Sofia). The walk was not nice, a multitude of cars, dirty air smog, muddy streats, broken sideways, very little space allowing only one person to walk by The infrastructure of this Boulevard was meakly said SHIT and it seems it was not planned at all for people like me who like walking or for bikers.

On the way I've seen a bunch of beautiful architecture buildings and this was all the enjoyment besides the dirt, something that little raised up my very negative opinion of this 30 minutes walk was the sideview of Vitosha mountain (worthy scenery to see).

After 25-30 minutes I reached a Subway of a central busy place, which was leading to city Sofia's State University St. Kliment Ohridski, to the city center where st. Alexander Nevski, the National Assembly and the Bulgarian Patriarchate is located.

I wanted to go and pilgrimage to st. Alexander Nevski's cathedral, since I was there just one or two times and my memories of the Biggest Cathedral Orthodox Church on the balkans was little. St. Alexander Nevski's size and architecture is mostly amazing surely even for non-believers. As a believer I was thankful to God for being able to enter the Church light up a candle and pray, my joy was double cause in the Church I found there wss a miracle making icon of Holy Virgin Mary (probably from Holy Mount Athos), there was acathist (a little prayer service in glorification of the Mother of God asking the Holy Mother of God to pray the Lord Jesus Christ for us. I stayed for the Church service and tried litening to the priest leading the serive, there was a young deacon helping in the service, which I happened to have met and know in my stay in Pomorie Monastery before 5 months time. After the end of the acathist, all Christians who stayed until the end of prayer service including me went and bowed down to venerated the Holy icon. I take a quick look in st. Alexander Nevski and venerated the rest of icons I see in the Church. I was mostly surprise to find on the left side near the ikonostas a small treasurer holding incorruptable (finger) of the Saint.

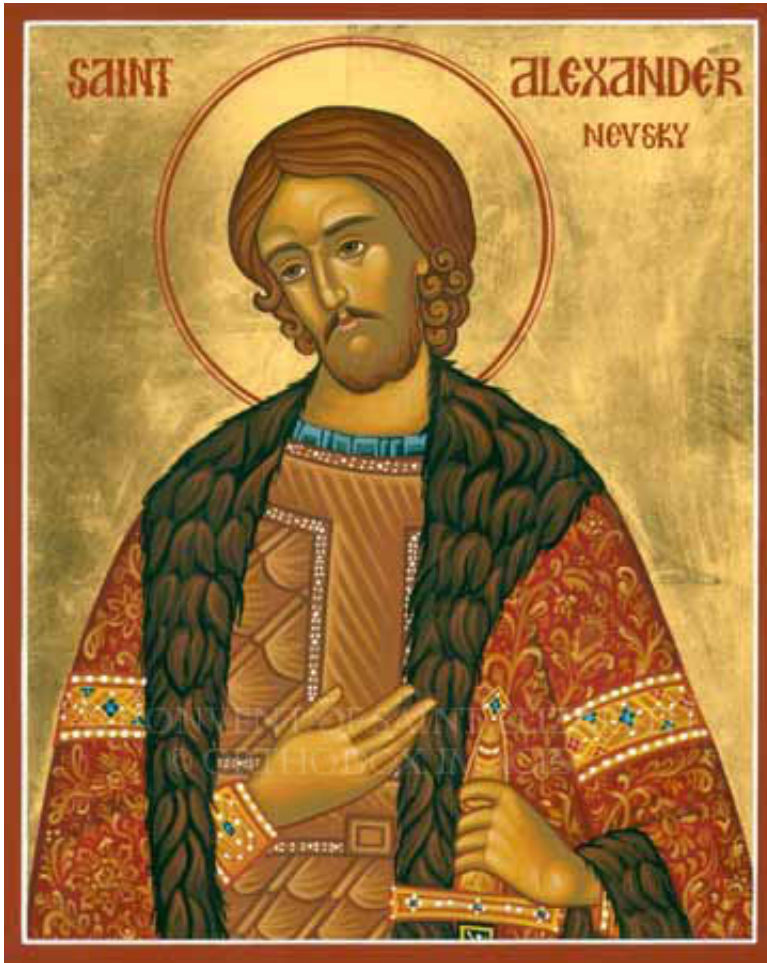


I venerated and asked st. Alexander Nevski to pray the Lord for me the sinner this completed my short pilgrimage to the Patriarchate Cathedral and biggest Church building in whole Bulgaria. I had desire to venerate also the other neraby ancient Church saint Sofia, but it was already 6:30 and the Church was closed.

On left side of the exit of st. Alexander Nevsky is located another of the old and important buildigns in Sofia, the holy synod palace (ДѣД, Д½Д¾Д°Д»Д½Д° ДЎД°Д»Д°Њ, Д°) - a place where Bulgarian Church hierarchs, gather routinely to discuss and take important decisions concerning our autocephalous Church. This building represents a Roman Catholic Holy See Orthodox Church equivalent and if I'm not mistaken is an official residence of the Patriarch.



Since I had to go back to my friend's house which is nearby the Winter Palace, I took bus 280 from the *bus stop located nearby Sofia State University* and went back, engraced and thankful to God for the big blessing to be able to venerate the Holy Relics of one of the greatest Russian Saints st. Alexander Nevski.



Last year 2012 in st. Alexander Nevski Church, his holiness Patriarch Maxim - [Patriarch of our Bulgarian Orthodox Church who recently passed away together with all metropolitans and bishops canonized the Holy Martyrs of Batak slaughter](#). *St. Alexander Nevski is a monument also playing significant importance reminding Bulgaria for back times, when Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Romanians helped us to receive liberation from Turkish 500 years slavery. If you happen to be visiting Bulgaria, somehow I warmly recommend you visit this magnificent Church, even if you're not a strong believer or Catholic, you will certainly appreciate the beautiful wall paintings and magnificent*