



They are part of the rock monastery compound of the Holy Archangel Michael, consisting of medieval churches, chapels and monk cells. They are to be found in the rocks on the two banks of Rousenski Lom River, east of the village of Ivanovo, about 20 km from Rouse. The Ivanovo Churches are testimony to the flowering of a large colony of Hesychast monks during the 13th-14th centuries, connected with the capital city of Turnovo of that time. It existed until circa 17th century. Inscriptions and magnificent mural paintings have survived. The local population has given folk names to these places – the Church, God's Valley, the Church Covered by Earth, the Destroyed Church, the Letters (a locality with preserved inscriptions and signs). Accessible for visitors is the Church of the Holy Virgin, built and decorated with murals with the support of Tsar Ivan Alexander. It is 16 m long, 4 m wide and 2.15 m high and is in the rocks, 38 m above the road, which smoothly follows the meanderings of the river. One can get there by steps, cut into the rocks and fenced off by a safety parapet. The church comprises two sections and a small chapel. There are remains of rock monastery cells around. The mural paintings in the church have exclusive expressiveness and perfect composition, defined as some of the most outstanding achievements of Bulgarian medieval art of the 14th century. The Ivanovo Rock Churches and the lands around have been proclaimed an archaeological reserve. They are part of the Rousenski Lom Nature Park. Since 1979 they have featured in the List of the world cultural heritage under UNESCO protection.