

The charming and unforgettable village of Arbanasi is located on a high plateau 4 km from the city of Veliko Tarnovo.

It is known that the village existed during the time of the Second Bulgarian State (1185 - 1393). According to legend, the Tsar of Tarnovo minted coins here. The first written confirmation of the village's existence, however, is in a decree by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1538. The main activities practiced by the residents of Arbanasi during the Ottoman rule were animal husbandry and trade. Some inhabitants bred silkworms.

During the 17th century, Arbanasi rose to prominence as a trading center. Traders from Arbanasi were renowned and traded throughout the Turkish Empire. The houses of wealthy traders from this period resembled small fortresses. They appeared severe and forbidding from the outside, without balconies or terraces, with bars on the windows and strong armored entrances. Within, however, they were richly appointed and most impressive. The entire interior was with doors, windows, closets, floors with exceptionally ornate woodworking and plaster elements, all of which demonstrates the highly developed artistic skills of the builders.

A century later the village was looted and set on fire by the Kardzhalisti (mercenaries engaged by the Ottoman Empire who usually marauded in gangs). The residents of Arbanasi, after suffering through an epidemic of cholera and several earthquakes, were forced to seek a calmer and more secure place to live.

After 1810, Arbanasi was gradually repopulated. The glory that was Arbanasi is still evident in the many houses and cultic buildings, the traditions and customs, associated with its former residents.

The most interesting museums in Arbanasi are the Konstantsaliev house, The Birth of Christ Church, and The Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

The Holy Mother of God Convent is located at the outskirts of Arbanasi, some 5 km from the city of Veliko Tarnovo. It is one of a few sanctuaries near the former capital of Bulgaria that harbors painful memories of the Ottoman occupation. The convent houses the miraculous icon of the Three-Armed Virgin, also known as the Weeping Virgin. According to historical accounts, after the razing of the place by the Ottomans, (1396), the nuns abandoned the convent and buried the icons. Years later a shepherd heard wailing that came from beneath the earth. That is how he found the icon, which he returned to the monastery. The convent's yearly festival is on August 15 – the Day of the Virgin.

At the other end of the village is The Saint Nikola Monastery. It was founded in 1680. Also at that time The Saint Iliya Chapel was built, and its murals have been preserved until the present.

In The Saint Nikola Church there is another wonder-working icon of the Virgin. As legend has it, the icon particularly aids fertility. Women who want to become mothers have to perform the following ritual – after praying before the Virgin they leave an offering of a coin (stotinka) on the icon. If the coin sticks, it means the Virgin has heard their prayers. If the coin falls, their desire to become mothers will not be fulfilled.

Arbanasi as an archeological-museum reserve that is included among the one hundred most important tourist destinations.

Arbanasi offers a variety of accommodations – it is possible to stay in a guesthouse appointed in the traditional style, in modern hotels and in hotel complexes. Restaurants and other dining facilities offer typical Bulgarian fare and a wide range of regional specialties.

DO NOT MISS TO VISIT THAT CHARMING PLACE- WE EVEN RECOMMEND IT FOR ACCOMMODATION
view the photo gallery: <http://s806.photobucket.com/user/MarianaEmil/library/Arbanasi?sort=3&page=1>