

Kremlin and Red Square, Moscow: 25 years with UNESCO

The ensemble of the Moscow Kremlin and the Red Square is a masterpiece of human creative genius and the main symbol of the country. It took more than 500 years to form, reflecting the history of Russian architecture as well as its relationship with the European cultural traditions. Architectural monuments of the Moscow Kremlin and the Red Square are the finest examples of national architectural school. The Moscow Kremlin was the residence of the Great Princes, then, later the Tzar's residence. Currently it is the seat of the President of the Russian Federation.

The Moscow Kremlin is situated high on the left bank of the Moscow River on the Borovitsky hill. Kremlin walls have the shape of an irregular triangle and surround an area of 27 hectares. The southern wall is facing the Moscow River, north-western - the Alexander Garden, the eastern - the Red Square respectively.

According to the XV century chronicle, the first wooden fortress was erected here as early as in 1156.

In the second half of the 14th century a young Moscow Prince Dmitry, later to be nicknamed Donskoi, decided to build a new stone fortress. It took only one year to erect walls and towers of white stone. The territory of the fortress has been expanded northeastward, almost up to the present day size. Since then Moscow has been referred to as "the white-stone city".

The present-day red-brick walls and towers of the Kremlin were built in the late XV century. Prince Ivan III, who was nicknamed the Great, invited architects from northern Italy to perform renovation works. The construction project got started in 1485. The first tower Tainitskaia was erected under the supervision of the Italian architect Anton Fryasin. By 1495 new walls and towers had been completed. More than 100 Italian craftsman and architects had been working in the Moscow Kremlin. In the 17th century the beautiful stone marquees on top of the

Kremlin's towers were built, they changed considerably the outlook of the medieval citadel.

Aristotel Fioravanti from Bologna build in 1479 the Assumption cathedral, the greatest cathedral of the Kremlin.

In 1487, the Grand Prince Palace construction was started by Marco Fryazin and Pietro Antonio Solari. The Faceted Chamber is the only part of the palace that survived to our days.

In 1505-1508 the greatest Moscow Bell Tower of about 80 meters high was erected under the supervision of Bon Fryasin. This Bell Tower was named "Ivan the Great Bell Tower".

The Archangel's cathedral was erected in 1508. The Italian architect who was known in Russia under the name of Alevis Noviy, was specially invited to Moscow from Venice to supervise the construction project. From the outside the Archangel's cathedral looks very much like a Venetian palazzo. Also well recognizable elements of Renaissance architecture were used in its decoration.

Close to the Spasskaya tower, on the Red Square's southern side, you can see the magnificent Pokrovskiy cathedral on the Moat. It was erected on Czar Ivan the Terrible's order in the mid XVI century to commemorate the taking over Kazan and the conquest of the Astrakhan Khanate.

The Arsenal, the Senate, the Grand Kremlin Palace were built in the Kremlin in the 18-19th centuries.

According to the decree of the Soviet government some Kremlin buildings including the Ascension Nunnery and the Chudov Monastery were destroyed in 1929. The Kremlin Military School was built instead of the two monasteries.

The Architectural Complex of the Moscow Kremlin and the Red Square were included to the List of the World Heritage of UNESCO in 1990.

One of the most important aspects of the Kremlin museum's activity is the preservation of the unique architectural monuments of the Moscow Kremlin.

Pre-project studies, including archival, architectural and field studies precede all the restoration works.

Among the recent restoration projects undertaken by the Kremlin Museums we should mention the restoration of the Annunciation Cathedral which had been the Moscow Great Princes' and Czars' personal confessor for centuries.

The most interesting discoveries were made in the underground part of the cathedral (in Russian it's called podklet). Here the lower parts of the walls and foundations of the cathedral of 1416 were found.

More than hundred white stone blocks with a carved ornamentation or fragments of the mural painting on the surface were found under a northern back steps. White stone with carvings previously decorated facades and interiors of the temple. Fragments of monumental painting of the interior of the cathedral dates to the beginning of XV century and is attributed by experts as painting of the Rublev's circle.

The Patriarch's Palace with the Cathedral Church of the Twelve Apostles is the most interesting example of civil architecture of the mid XVII century in the Kremlin. Built by order of Patriarch Nikon, the palace was rebuilt many times.

Restoration of One-Pillar Chamber in the ground floor of the palace began in 2003. In the course of complex researches were revealed two wall-stairs leading to the second floor of the palace. The lost metallic bonds of the interior of the chamber were restored, they strengthened the walls and vaults. After completion of the restoration the Chamber was opened as an exhibition hall of the museum.

Ivan the Great Bell Tower was opened to the public in 2005. The interior of the Bell-Tower remained unique white stone spiral staircases, initial cornices and white stone rosettes.

Now the Bell-Tower hosts an exposition dedicated to the centuries-old history of development of the Moscow Kremlin architectural complex. Here our guests can see the original architectural fragments of ancient buildings that were destroyed, the ancient Kremlin plans and images.

The Archangel's Cathedral, is Russia's first state necropolis is one of the most original monuments of the Cathedral Square.

The most interesting architectural details of the Archangel's Cathedral are certainly the white stone Renaissance portals. Unfortunately they were heavily destroyed due to the high salination and bad ecology in general.

The restoration works of the unique portals of the Cathedral have been carried on since 2005. The white stone details were desalted and the lost carvings was reconstructed. Genuine parts of the central portal were replaced by copies. Later restored columns and pilasters of the portals were transferred to the fund of the architectural details of the museum.

The restoration works in the South Annex of the Archangel's Cathedral began in 2008. Interfloor overlappings, metal stairs and walls, built in the soviet period were dismantled. Now we can see again the vaulted roof structure, copper roofs and facades with reconstruction in its previous form of window openings. At the north and east walls of the South Annex brickwork of the XV century is demonstrated with fragments of rebuild of XVII-XVIII centuries. As a result of long-term restoration and research work of the Moscow Kremlin, the Museum has created an exhibition dedicated to the history of the famous Ascension Convent.

The Assumption Cathedral, erected by Aristotle Fioravanti, is a unique monument of the ancient Russian architecture. During the last years the facades and the roof of the Cathedral were restored. At the same time the restoration was conducted on the north and south portals, with the replacement of the destroyed white stone blocks in the socle. During the restoration of the portals, new door frames were built and installed according to the remaining samples. Old metal doors were also restored.

The facades of the Church of the Deposition of the Robe of the Holy Virgin, were also restored in 2014.

The Moscow Kremlin and the Red Square is a unique artistic ensemble, a masterpiece of creative genius of many generations of outstanding artists. Now it is a world-famous museum, which is visited annually by more than two million guests.