



International Sufi Conference

The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

Sarajevo's Divine Temples: A Journey Through Spiritual Heritage

For all inquiries please contact:

Emina Abrahamsdotter

email: emina.abrahamsdotter@gmail.com

WhatsApp/Viber/Phone number +387 61 48 22 47



International Sufi Conference The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

Introduction

Sarajevo, often called the Jerusalem of Europe, is a city where different faiths have coexisted for centuries, leaving an extraordinary spiritual and architectural legacy. Throughout history, its religious sites have served as places of worship and as centres of culture, education, and community life.

During our journey, we will explore Sarajevo's most significant divine temples, each with a rich history and profound cultural importance. We will visit one sacred site from each of the major religious communities—Islamic, Roman Catholic Christian, Orthodox Christian, and Jewish—and be hosted by their representative, engaging in a conversation and listening and learning about the insights, perspectives, and stories about their faith and the role of these religious monuments in Sarajevo's history and present-day life.

Sarajevo's divine heritage is a testament to centuries of coexistence, where a mosque, a Catholic church, and an Orthodox church all stand within 200 meters of each other, reflecting the city's deep-rooted tradition of religious tolerance.

We invite you to join us on this extraordinary journey, where history, spirituality, and culture merge to create a unique and unforgettable experience.



International Sufi Conference The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

A Testament to Islamic Heritage: The Emperor's Mosques of Sarajevo

One of our visits will take us to Emperor's Mosque, the first mosque built in Sarajevo, constructed in 1457 by Isa-bey Ishaković-Hranushich and dedicated to Sultan Mehmed II El-Fatih, the conqueror of Constantinople.

The first settlements in Sarajevo developed around this mosque, marking the beginning of the city's expansion. Adjacent to it, the residence of the Sultan's representative was later built, along with a hammam (public bath) and a wooden bridge leading directly to the mosque. While the original bridge was relocated under Austro-Hungarian rule, it still stands today just a few meters upstream.

Originally constructed of wood, the mosque was rebuilt in 1565, significantly enlarging its structure. Additional side rooms were added in 1800, and they were later connected to the central prayer area in 1848. Between 1980 and 1983, the mosque's interior decorations were carefully conserved and restored, preserving its original beauty.

The burial ground beside the Emperor's Mosque contains the graves of viziers, muftis, sheikhs, sufis, and other notable dignitaries of Sarajevo, reflecting its historical and spiritual significance.

Our host from the Islamic community will welcome us and guide us through the mosque's history, offering insights into its religious, cultural, and social role in Sarajevo's development.





International Sufi Conference The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

A Testament to Orthodox Christian Heritage: The Cathedral Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos

The next stop on our journey is the Cathedral Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos, the largest Serbian Orthodox church in Sarajevo and one of the largest in the Balkans.

Built at the request of the Orthodox parish of Sarajevo, construction took place between 1863 and 1868. The church is a striking example of cross-shaped basilica architecture, featuring five domes, with the central dome significantly larger than the surrounding four. The small gilded baroque-style belfry at the entrance enhances the church's grandeur.

The inside walls are adorned with painted ornaments, with the lower sections designed to imitate marble construction. The arches and vaults are beautifully decorated with intricate patterns, creating a sense of harmony and spirituality. In 1898, the Orthodox Metropolitan Palace was built near the cathedral, further emphasising the significance of this religious complex.

The lead architect of this masterpiece was Andreja Damjanov, a renowned builder from the Damjanovi-Renzovski family, a lineage of skilled masons, painters, carpenters, and stonecutters from the village of Papradište, near Veles.

During our visit, we will be welcomed by a representative of the Orthodox Church, who will share insights into the spiritual, historical, and architectural importance of the cathedral and the Orthodox Christian community in Sarajevo.

The next stop on our journey is the Cathedral Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos, the largest Serbian Orthodox church in Sarajevo and one of the largest in the Balkans.

Built at the request of the Orthodox parish of Sarajevo, construction took place between 1863 and 1868. The church is a striking example of cross-shaped basilica architecture, featuring five domes, with the central dome significantly larger than the surrounding four. The small gilded baroque-style belfry at the entrance enhances the church's grandeur.

The inside walls are adorned with painted ornaments, with the lower sections designed to imitate marble construction. The arches and vaults are beautifully decorated with intricate patterns, creating a sense of harmony and spirituality. In 1898, the Orthodox Metropolitan Palace was built near the cathedral, further emphasising the significance of this religious complex.

The lead architect of this masterpiece was Andreja Damjanov, a renowned builder from the Damjanovi-Renzovski family, a lineage of skilled masons, painters, carpenters, and stonecutters from the village of Papradište, near Veles.

During our visit, we will be welcomed by a representative of the Orthodox Church, who will share insights into the spiritual, historical, and architectural importance of the cathedral and the Orthodox Christian community in Sarajevo.





International Sufi Conference The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

A Testament to Catholic Heritage: St. Anthony Church

Located in the heart of Sarajevo, St. Anthony Church stands as one of the city's most significant Catholic landmarks, embodying centuries of Franciscan presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The church is dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, a revered saint known for his teachings and devotion to the poor.



The original church was built in the mid-19th century, but over time, it underwent several renovations and expansions, with its current Neo-Romanesque structure completed in 1914. Its architecture blends simple elegance with striking details, featuring a tall bell tower, arched windows, and an interior enriched with stained glass and religious frescoes.

St. Anthony Church has historically served as a spiritual refuge for Sarajevo's Catholic community and a center of interfaith dialogue. Despite the challenges of war and shifting political landscapes, the church has remained a symbol of resilience, peace, and coexistence in Sarajevo's multicultural fabric.

During our visit, we will be welcomed by a representative from the Franciscan Order, who will share insights into the church's history, its role in the community, and the Franciscan legacy in Sarajevo.

This visit will offer a unique glimpse into the Catholic heritage of the city and the enduring spiritual significance of St. Anthony Church.



International Sufi Conference The Spring of Reflection: The Living One Who Sees

Sarajevo, 9-13 April 2025.

A Testament to Jewish Heritage: Sarajevo Synagogue

The Sarajevo Synagogue, located on the south bank of the Miljacka River, is the largest and only active synagogue in Sarajevo today. Built in 1902, it is a testament to Sarajevo's Jewish community's long and rich history, which has coexisted peacefully with its Muslim and Christian neighbours for centuries.

Jewish presence in Sarajevo dates back to the 16th century, when Sephardic Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. In 1581, with the support of Turkish Beylerbey Sijamush Pasha, the first Sephardic synagogue was established in Velika Avlija to support the city's poorer Jewish residents. This synagogue was rebuilt multiple times after being destroyed by fires in 1679 and 1778, and today, it serves as the Jewish Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the Austro-Hungarian period, Ashkenazi Jews also arrived in Sarajevo, building their own Ashkenazi Synagogue in 1902, designed by the renowned architect Karel Pařík. Meanwhile, the Sephardic community constructed the Il Kal Grande Synagogue in 1932, which was once one of the largest and most ornate synagogues in the Balkans before it was devastated by the Nazis in 1941 during World War II. The Ashkenazi Synagogue, however, survived the destruction.

The Jewish community of Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced significant challenges, from the Holocaust in the 1940s to the Bosnian War in the 1990s, which left fewer than 5,700 Jews in the former Yugoslavia. Despite these hardships, Sarajevo's Jewish heritage remains a fundamental part of the city's multicultural identity.

The Sarajevo Synagogue was built in the Moorish Revival style, a popular architectural choice for synagogues during the Austro-Hungarian period. Its enormous arches, richly painted decorations, and high ornate ceiling are among its most striking features, with a ten-pointed star symbolising Jewish identity. Today, services are held in the women's galleries on the upper floor, while the stone menorah at the entrance commemorates 400 years of Jewish presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During our visit, we will be welcomed by a Jewish community member, who will share insights into Sarajevo's Jewish population's history, resilience, and cultural contributions. This visit will provide a unique opportunity to connect with Sarajevo's Jewish heritage and witness how the city's Jewish community has preserved its traditions and identity through centuries of coexistence, hardship, and renewal.

