



# Blagaj Tekke

At the Source of Holiness

Built: 16th century CE, restored several times since,  
Blagaj, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since late antiquity, these waters have witnessed countless believers in various states of prayer.

Like a splendid painting come to life, the dervish monastery of Blagaj Tekke rests at the foot of a towering cliff, nestled by the sacred source of the Buna River. Its gray stone walls and small white balconies reflect in the turquoise water below. From cracks in the walls and crevices in the rock, green leaves and small bushes sprout, adding to the serene beauty. For centuries, this magical place has drawn seekers of spiritual enlightenment.

Blagaj Tekke was built in the 16th century by the Bektashi dervishes, a mystical Sufi brotherhood, and the monastery's architecture is a harmonious blend of simplicity and symbolism. The central prayer room, the Semahana, invites visitors to a state of inner contemplation. Wooden balconies and intricately decorated window frames showcase the period's Ottoman craftsmanship. Even before the Tekke's construction, this site was considered sacred. The Bogomils, a Christian sect of the Middle Ages, had once erected a sanctuary here. Archaeological excavations further reveal that the Buna River's source had been used for religious ceremonies since late antiquity.

Yet the centuries have left their marks: landslides, wars, and political upheavals repeatedly brought destruction to the monastery. Each time, however, it was lovingly restored and often enriched with new stylistic elements. Turkish baroque features, such as the oval roof above the entrance facade and the elaborately decorated ceilings, were added during later renovations. In its most recent restoration phases, the Tekke was outfitted with facilities like the *musafirhana*, or guesthouse, which offered hospitality to wandering dervishes and travelers, in keeping with the brotherhood's traditions.

Today, no dervishes live permanently at the Tekke. Nevertheless, it remains a vibrant center of spiritual practice. *Dhikr* ceremonies are held three times a week, where worshippers chant the names of God in rhythmic recitation. Accompanied by drums and special breathing techniques, participants enter a state of deep focus and spiritual ecstasy. During Mawlid, an annual festival celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, hundreds of worshippers gather at the Tekke to pray, perform *dhikr*, and celebrate the spiritual traditions of this holy place.

For those who wish to visit, the Tekke's doors remain wide open. Here, at the source of the Buna, the mysteries of Sufism seem almost tangible, framed by the breathtaking natural beauty of this small corner of Eastern Europe.