

Ancient Church Reborn in Vladimir

UNESCO World Heritage site is freed from the power lines that marred it

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Photograph of the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl taken from the only angle that didn't show the power lines. **Wikicommons**

If you've ever visited Vladimir and Suzdal, you may have taken a side trip to Bogolyubovo to see the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl.

This tiny white stone church that was built in one season in 1165 has been called "the most perfect thing created by medieval Russian architecture" by William Craft Brumfield, one of the world's foremost specialists in Russian architecture.

Built on an artificial hill where the Kliazma and Nerl Rivers meet, the single domed church constructed under Vladimir Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky seems to rise up from the fields around it. In the spring when the rivers flood, it stands on a small island and is reflected in the

water around it. In the winter, it appears to be carved of ice and snow. Even if you know nothing about churches or architecture, its proportions are innately pleasing, and the church is at once snug and uplifting.

Part of the magic is that there are no roads leading to the church. As you cross a broad field to approach it, you see it as it was conceived and originally placed in nature.

But since the 1960s the perception of the church was ruined by massive electrical power lines and towers placed a mere 60 meters from the church.

This week the power lines were taken down. After decades of discussion, the Vladimir regional administration and Rosseti power company dismantled and rerouted the lines.

If you're looking for a weekend getaway from Moscow, this is another good reason to visit — or revisit — Suzdal and Vladimir. Just be sure to bring your camera. Now you can photograph the church from every angle.

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