



PERSONAL TOUR



CLASSIC TOUR OF BULGARIA

Majestic mountains crossed by valleys steeped in the fragrance of Gallic roses, vineyards bordering on broad, smiling sandy beaches... Oh yes. This is Bulgaria! Over the centuries this impressive landscape has been the setting for dramatic conflicts and cultural exchanges between East and West. The generous heritage left today to its inhabitants by the Thracians, Ancient Greeks, Goths, Huns, Romans, Slavs, Protobulgarians and Turks is a kaleidoscope of customs, religions and history. Will globalisation erase this unique Bulgarian identity? Will its living traditions turn into a cheap modern commercial side-show? Perhaps. Act now and experience it while you still can! Soon it may be too late. Twelve unforgettable days dedicated to UNESCO sites, sensational archaeological finds, natural wonders, short walks and picturesque landscapes, wine tasting, a great atmosphere and wonderful emotions.

ITINERARY

Day 1. Sofia Airport – Sofia (20 km, 30 min).

Greetings and transfer from Sofia Airport to a centrally located 3- star hotel in Sofia.

Day 2. Sofia – Koprivshitsa – Troyan Monastery – Veliko Tarnovo (300 km, 5 hours)

We leave the Bulgarian capital city. Our journey takes us between the summit of the Stara Planina mountains and the gentle slopes of the Sredna Gora mountain range. Our first stop is the picturesque little town of Koprivshitsa with its well-preserved examples of Bulgarian Renaissance architecture. We will take a walk along the cobbled streets and peep into the museum homes of some of the most famous Bulgarian poets and revolutionaries of the 19th century. Transfer to Troyan monastery, home to the unique icon of "St. Virgin Mother with Three Hands". The church is richly decorated by Zahari Zograf, probably the most famous Bulgarian Renaissance artist. Accommodation for two nights in Veliko Tarnovo.



Day 3. Veliko Tarnovo – Arbanasi – Preobrazhenie Monastery – Veliko Tarnovo (50 km, 1 hour)

During the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, the borders of Bulgaria stretched to three seas. At that time Tarnovo was the city of rulers, a centre which united absolute political and religious power. It has frequently been compared to Rome and referred to as the Second Constantinople. The entire day is spent exploring the sites of the city and the region. We will look at the centre, the Tsarevets fortress and the church of "Sts. Petar and Pavel". Nearby is the architectural museum reserve of "Arbanasi". We will visit the Konstantseli fortified house built in a typical 17th century style and the small church of "Nativity of Christ", which despite its ascetic outward appearance hides a richly decorated interior. In the late afternoon there will be time for a relaxing walk through the busy craft shops of the Samovodska market area in Veliko Tarnovo.



Day 4. Veliko Tarnovo – Tryavna – Etara – Kazanlak – Starosel – Plovdiv (290 km, 4 hours)

From Veliko Tarnovo we make our way to the small town of Tryavna. In Tryavna we shall visit the Daskalov house which is home to the Museum of Wood Carving and the Museum of "Tryavna Iconography School". Today we shall visit the open-air museum at Etara, where skilled craftsmen will make us feel part of Bulgarian folk traditions in metal working, leather crafting, potting, wood carving, wool spinning and working with other types of material. From here we shall continue our journey to the Kazanlak necropolis. This is the first Bulgarian site to have been included in the list of sites under the aegis of UNESCO. It is a masterpiece of Thracian architecture and famous for its unique frescoes which tell us so much about the skills of Thracian artists and the day-to-day life of the ancient Thracians. Overnight accommodation in Plovdiv.



Day 5. Plovdiv – Bachkovo Monastery – Brestovitsa - Plovdiv (60 km, 1 hour)

The old town of Plovdiv is famous not only for its fabled Renaissance architecture and important ancient ruins, but also as a centre for artists. A culture tour of the town includes the Ethnographic Museum, the Ancient Theatre, the Roman Stadium and the Dumaya Djamiya Mosque. Near Plovdiv quite close to Asenovgrad is one of the oldest monasteries in the Balkans - Bachkovo Monastery - an example of the interaction of three cultures - Byzantium, Old Georgian and Bulgarian. The unique architectural and artistic masterpieces preserved here are of priceless value for all Orthodox culture. In the afternoon we will have the chance to taste 5 wines in the boutique vineyard of Todoroff, one of which is Mavrud made from a Bulgarian grape variety. Overnight accommodation in Plovdiv.



Day 6. Plovdiv – Rila Monastery – Sofia (300 km, 5 hrs)

After breakfast we continue our journey to Rila Monastery (UNESCO) – the most famous and largest Christian monastery in Bulgaria. The exceptional frescoes in the central church form a gallery of masterpieces of Renaissance art and could be considered a Bulgarian analogue of the frescoes of the Sistine chapel. We will learn the history of the monastery from the exhibition in the museum, which includes the Cross of Raphael – an exceptional example of miniature wood carving. Return to Sofia.



Return to Sofia.

Day 7. Sofia

Breakfast and a cultural tour of the eclectic heart of the Bulgarian capital city which has preserved many examples of its multifaceted history. We shall see the ruins of Roman Serdika, the early Christian rotunda of "St. Georgi", the former Tsar's palace and the administrative buildings constructed during the communist regime. The Orthodox cathedral of "Alexander Nevski", the Mosque of Banya Basi, the Synagogue – the biggest in the Balkans, the catholic cathedral of "St. Joseph", are only streets away from each other – conclusive evidence of the envious religious tolerance of the Bulgarian people. Free time in Sofia.



Day 8. Sofia – Sofia Airport (20 km, 30 min)

Departure from Sofia to Sofia airport according to your return flight.

Accommodation: 3/4-star hotels, en-suite double rooms on bed and breakfast basis (lunches and dinners will be included).



THE PRICE DEPENDS ON THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (FOR EXAMPLE GROUPS OF 10, 15, 20 OR MORE PEOPLE) AND THE SEASON. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US.