



# PERSONAL TOUR



## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE THRACIAN KINGS

The religious cult of Orpheus and Dionysus was given to the world by the Thracian tribes. Their incorrigible spirit of freedom is reflected in the immortal deeds of Spartacus while their skills in crafting fine jeweler have transcended all national boundaries. Academics continue to uncover more and more sensational facts about their distant and enigmatic world and the reality is even more thrilling than the heroic legends. We know from the classical authors that wherever there are Thracians there is wine - the divine elixir of the gods. During your journey you will be able to taste marvelous Bulgarian wines and relive the ancient past of the Thracians!

### ITINERARY

#### **Day 1. Sofia Airport. Sofia (30 minutes, 20 km)**

You will be met at Sofia Airport and transferred to your hotel in the town center.

#### **Day 2. Sofia – Plovdiv (2.5 hours, 180 km)**

The day is devoted to symbols of the Bulgarian capital city, the 4th century rotunda of St. George, the ruins of ancient Serdika, the Presidential Offices... After the distinct contrasts of the city centre, we make our way to the unique church in Boyana, a UNESCO site, and the National Historical Museum. Our journey continues towards the south and the sunny Lower Thracian valley and its endless vineyards. In the centre of this famous wine-growing area we shall visit the “Bessa Valley” vineyard. We will partake in the pleasure of tasting 5 varieties of red wine. Overnight accommodation in the legendary city of Plovdiv.



### **Day 3. Plovdiv – Starosel – Plovdiv (2 hours, 130 km)**

The city of Plovdiv is a contemporary of Troy and Mycenae, and more ancient than Rome and Athens. In the old city we will follow in the footsteps of history as we trace the relics of the ancient Thracian city of Eumolpia towards the Ancient Theatre, the Roman Stadium, a monumental Roman structure able to accommodate 30 000 citizens hungry for spectacle. Then we shall see the varied designs of the Renaissance houses which provide the atmospheric architectural silhouette of Trimontium. The programme also includes visits to regional ethnographic and archaeological museums. Transfer and a visit to the Thracian religious complex (5th Century BC) at Chetinova Mogila and a chance to taste 5 select varieties of red and white wine at the famous Starosel vineyard. In the late afternoon you will have free time to explore Plovdiv alone.



### **Day 4. Plovdiv – Bachkovo – Perperikon – Alexandrovo – Plovdiv (4.5 hours, 280 km)**

After breakfast we depart for the birthplace of Orpheus in the Rhodope mountains. First of all we shall visit Bachkovo monastery (11th century) which is famous for its beautifully decorated refectory and the miraculous Georgian icon of the Virgin Mary. This is followed by a visit to the sacred site of Perperikon. It is believed to be the legendary temple of Dionysus. Perperikon is an enormous complex of devotional architecture which was inhabited by a variety of peoples from the 5th Millennium BC to the Middle Ages. We continue our journey to the necropolis of Alexander (4th century BC) after which we add variety to our programme with a tasting of 5 excellent red and white wines in the "Zagrei" vineyard. The white Mavrud made from red grapes is the pride of the local wine makers.



### **Day 5. Plovdiv – Kazanlak – Etara – Veliko Tarnovo (4 hours, 250 km)**

The tour continues to the North towards to the Valley of the Thracian Kings, referring to the many burial mounds of Thracian aristocrats here. We will visit the Kazanlak necropolis (copy, 4th century BC) - the first site in Bulgaria to be protected under the aegis of UNESCO. It is world famous for its frescoes. Not far away is Golyamata Kosmatka (5th century BC) - a Thracian necropolis with one of the richest repositories of grave goods. Along the road to Veliko Tarnovo we will visit Etara - the biggest



open air museum in the Balkans. Accommodation for three nights in Veliko Tarnovo.



**Day 6. Veliko Tarnovo – Arbanasi – Lyaskovets - Veliko Tarnovo (1 hour, 60km)**

Veliko Tarnovo was once the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (12-14th century) and possesses all the buildings and monuments worthy of the centre of royal and ecclesiastical power. We will begin with the grandiose fortress of “Tsarevets” situated on a hillside carved out of the meandering stream of the river Yantra. We shall continue by exploring the monuments in the centre of the city and set aside some free time for the Samovodksa charshiya market (a street of crafts and trades). The nearby village of



Arbanasi has been declared an architectural reserve, and during our tour we shall visit the fortified house of Konstantseli and look at the murals in the church of "The Birth of Christ". A few kilometres away is the Lyaskovets vineyard, one of the favourite places to taste wine in North Bulgaria. Here we shall taste 5 wines and one variety of champagne. There will be free time for exploring the ancient capital city.

**Day 7. Veliko Tarnovo – Troyan monastery – Sofia (280km, 4 hours)**

We return to the capital city, breaking our journey with a stop at the Troyan monastery. It is famous for its architecture, murals and wood carving, and also with its miraculous icon of The Hold Virgin Mary with Three Hands”. The famous aromatic Troyan Plumb Brandy is produced nearby. 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.**