



# PERSONAL TOUR



## MONASTERIES AND OLD TOWNS

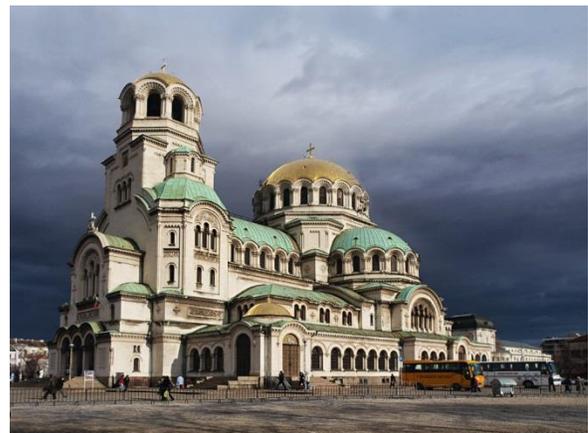
A classic journey through the history of Bulgaria. Centuries, indeed millennia will pass before your eyes as you explore museum villages, ancient monasteries, tombs and sanctuaries in the Rila, Pirin, Rhodope and Balkan mountains. There is no better way to experience Bulgaria and no more delightful way to taste the local cuisine, to experience the local habits and way of life and to appreciate the natural surroundings..

### 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 – Rila Monastery (111 km, 1 h 40 min).**

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. Afternoon – departure for the Rila Monastery. The Rila Monastery is the biggest monastery in Bulgaria, founded in the 10th century by the monk and hermit St. John of Rila, patron and protector of Bulgaria. The tour includes a visit to the monastery, the main church and the



monastery museum. Dinner and overnight near Rila Monastery.

**Day 3. Rila Monastery – Melnik – Bansko (220 km, 3 h 10 min).**

Breakfast. Departure for Melnik, a picturesque town at the foot of Pirin Mountain. On the way - visiting The Stob Pyramids – a natural landmark

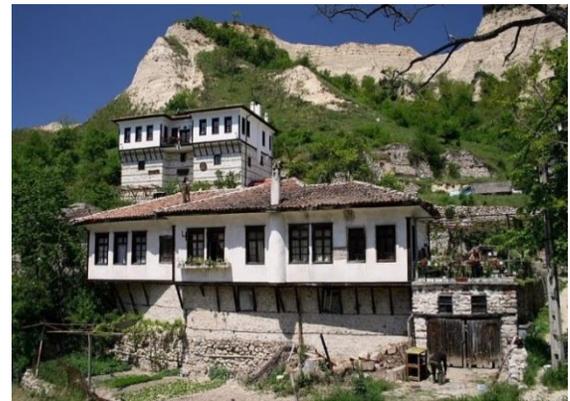
The pyramids are near the village of Stob, in the region of the southwestern Rila mountain

From above the pyramids, there is an excellent overview of the entire Rila Valley and its river that leads to The Rila Monastery set against snow-covered mountain peaks.

The pyramids are 30-40 meters thick and 6-10 meters high, reaching a height of 12 meters in some places. Some of the pyramids are pointed and needle-like, while others are round and topped with sandstone “hats” having dimensions of 120/80 cm. and resembling giant mushrooms. Their bases are wide and often joined to neighboring formations.

Arrival in Melnik. Melnik is famous for its wine cellars. Lunch in Melnik. Visit of Rozhen Monastery - founded in the 13th century.

Departure for Bansko - the centre of the Bulgarian way of life from the Revival period and a famous ski resort today. Visit to the Holy Trinity Church, visit to the Velyanov’s House - the best preserved house from the Revival Period. Dinner and overnight in Bansko.



**Day 4. Bansko – Plovdiv (150 km, 2 h 20 min).**

Breakfast. Departure for Plovdiv. 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 5. Plovdiv – Kazanlak – Etara – Veliko Tarnovo (250 km, 4 hours)**

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.



**Day 6. Veliko Tarnovo - Troyan monastery (100 km, 1 h 20 min).**

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). We will continue our journey with a visit to 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.

**Day 7. Troyan – Sofia (165 km, 2 hours).**

Breakfast and departure for Sofia. 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.**