

# Bulgaria – Highlights of Bulgaria

Tour Code BG

Bulgaria represents a fascinating destination that offers a perfect combination of history, architecture and tradition. Homeland of Orpheus and, in the 4th-3rd centuries BC, of the horsemen of Thrace, whose rich tombs still survive, and mountains where medieval Christians built remote monasteries with stunning frescoes. An impressive eight UNESCO sites, beautiful scenery, and with a rich folk tradition which still survives in many areas, plus with a direct flight with British Airways of only three hours, Bulgaria is very much open to visitors

Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sofia  
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## ITINERARY

### Day 1 Fly to Sofia. Old City walking tour

We fly from London Heathrow to Sofia direct with British Airways. Lunchtime arrival and transfer to a centrally located 4 star hotel. We have an introductory walking tour to the capital this afternoon, one of the most ancient cities in Europe founded 7 000 years ago. We include some of the historical and cultural landmarks of the city; the Roman Serdica Fortifications (Sofia's oldest preserved building) and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD St. George's Rotunda, famous for its original structure and unique frescoes.. Welcome dinner at the hotel (D).

### Day 2 Drive to Veliko Tarnovo

We drive north east towards Pravets and visit the house and museum of Todor Jivkov ; the longest serving communist leader in the Eastern bloc from 1954 until 1989. We continue east and view some beautiful stalactite formations at Saeva Dupka cave and an open-air ethnographic complex showing the everyday life of local people centuries ago at Etara. Our final destination is Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria's mediaeval capital. Two nights at the hotel Yantra with dinner (B,D)

### Day 3 In Veliko Tarnovo

Sightseeing tour of Bulgaria's medieval capital, picturesquely located on four hills above the Yantra River. We include the Museum of the National Revival, where the First Bulgarian Constitution was adopted in 1879, and the medieval fortress on Tsarevets Hill. In the afternoon, we drive to the nearby museum village of Arbanassi for a visit to the unique 16<sup>th</sup> century Church of the Nativity and the Konstantsaliev House, the oldest house in the village and famous for its traditional architecture (B,D)

### Day 4 Visit Preslav and Madara. Drive to Varna

We drive to Preslav and visit the ruins and museum of the capital of the 1st Bulgarian kingdom before heading south to the town of Shumen. Here the monument known as "1300 year Bulgaria" dedicated to the 1300th anniversary of Bulgarian state stands proud and also the 18<sup>th</sup> C built Tombul mosque. we continue east to visit the Madara Horseman; a mysterious bas relief carved into the rocks at a height of 25 meters and listed under UNESCO. We transfer to Varna for dinner and overnight stay (B,D)

### Day 5 Visit Varna and Nessebur

Sightseeing tour of Varna; one of the most attractive cities in Bulgaria founded as a trade colony by Miletian Greeks in 570 BC in a basement of a Thracian settlement. We include the Archeological Museum and Assumption Cathedral. In the afternoon we drive to UNESCO listed Nessebur situated on a small and rocky peninsula. The towns' striking original architecture is of stone and wood and houses forty preserved churches from various ages. Dinner and overnight stay in Nessebur (B,D)

### Day 6 Visit Kazanlak. Drive to Plovdiv

We drive to the town of Kazanlak and visit to the Museum of History, and the famous 4th-century BC Thracian

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tomb which is included in UNESCO'S World Heritage List. We continue to Plovdiv. Founded about 8 000 years ago, Plovdiv was the capital of Ancient Thrace and was a big trade centre in the Middle Ages. Dinner and two night stay in Plovdiv at the hotel Trimontium (B,D)

### Day 7 In Plovdiv

The city's historic quarter boasts beautifully decorated period houses, ancient fortress walls, a Roman forum and stadium, magnificent churches. We visit the Roman theatre, the Ethnographic Museum, and the Church of SS Constantine and Helena. In the afternoon, we drive to Bachkovo Monastery, one of the oldest monasteries in Bulgaria scenically located on the banks of the Asenitsa River. The monastery is known for its unique architecture and amazing wall paintings and icons (B,D)

### Day 8 Visit Dobarsko. Drive to Bansko

We head south today pausing at Velingrad, famous for its mineral springs. We take a narrow gauge train to Avramovo enjoying the scenery of the Rhodope mountains. At Dobarsko we see the delightful small church of St Teodor Triton, noted for its abundance of original frescoes and icons, some of which are interpreted as portraying Jesus in a rocket! We have a late lunch at a Bulgarian house to taste some traditional home made cooking. We finish the day with a walk through the cobbled streets of Bansko and visit to Holy Trinity Church; the largest and most interesting in the Pirin area. Dinner and overnight stay in Bansko at the Sveti Ivan Rilski hotel (B,L,D)

### Day 9 Visit Rila Monastery. Drive to Sofia

Drive to Rila Monastery, the biggest and most important symbol of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Founded in the 10th century and rebuilt in the 13th and 14th centuries, this monastery is one of the oldest in Europe. It was inscribed on UNESCO'S World Heritage List in 1983. Behind its 20-metre-high walls lie impressive monastic buildings, a church and a chapel with remarkable wall paintings. Two nights at the Crystal Palace hotel with dinner (B,D)

### Day 10 In Sofia. Visit National Museum and Boyana Church

This morning we visit the Alexander Nevski Memorial Cathedral with the Crypt housing a unique collection of icons before stopping at Parliament Square, the National Theatre and the Church of St Sophia. In the afternoon we visit the National Museum of History, where the magnificent Thracian treasures of ancient gold are on display. We'll also visit the Boyana church, world-famous for its wall paintings, which date back to 1259. The most remarkable achievement of Bulgarian mediaeval painting, they are also a precious contribution to European art. The Boyana Church is also one of the best preserved and interesting buildings from mediaeval times in Bulgaria. It is included in UNESCO'S World Heritage List. A farewell dinner in a typical Bulgaria restaurant with folk show has been arranged this evening (B,D)

### Day 11 In Sofia. Fly London

A leisurely morning to enjoy some last minute shopping perhaps or visit to one of the many cultural museums in the city. Lunchtime transfer to the airport for our BA flight return to London Heathrow (B)

**Cost £1395.00** per person in twin room (excl. international flight) Single supplement £180.00



Fresco of Christ, Rila Monastery  
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#### Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by *Patrick Syder FRGS*
- ▶ Specialist Bulgarian guide for our daily excursions
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c coach
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Comfortable 4 star hotels with private en-suite facilities
- ▶ All breakfast and hotel restaurant dinners daily
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, drinks, some meals, guide and driver gratuities, and British Airways international flight (from £200.00 with Flight Centre UK)