

Best of Bulgaria (8 nights)

Tour Description:

Begin your tour in Sofia, where you'll take in the spectacular sights of the Bulgarian capital while strolling along its famous yellow cobblestoned streets. The next day, tour Boyana Church, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 11th century, and the fantastic Rila Monastery, a Bulgarian arts and culture repository since the Middle Ages.

Explore Samovodene Street in Veliko Tarnovo, a vibrant shopping destination for traditional arts and crafts. Savor a cup of Turkish coffee brewed over hot sand, just as it was prepared hundreds of years ago. A guided walking tour of Arbanassi provides an exclusive view into daily life during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Next, tour three astonishing UNESCO World Heritage outdoor sites: the Ivanovo Churches, the Sveshtari Thracian Tomb, and the ancient Madara Horseman, a famous symbol of Bulgaria.

Your adventure continues in Varna, where you'll view the world's most ancient gold treasure. Relax on the beach, or explore the exquisite Balchik Palace and the caves of the Aladzha Monastery.

On the peninsula of Nessebar, you'll find a gorgeous town with a history spanning thousands of years, beautiful old cobblestoned streets, and delightful restaurants with sea views. In Kazanlak, the center of the famous rose harvest, visit the Hellenistic Thracian Tomb.

Wind down your epic tour in Plovdiv, a modern urban center with a lovely Old Town and deep ties to the past. Visit Bachkovo Monastery and Asenovgrad Fortress before going to ancient Starosel, Bulgaria's largest Thracian complex.

Tour Highlights:

- explore Sofia, the Bulgarian capital
- tour Bulgaria's two most famous holy sites: the Boyana church and the Rila monastery
- walk the streets of the ancient, quaint towns of Plovdiv, Nessebar, and Veliko Tarnovo
- discover the exquisite Thracian Tombs at Kazanlak, Sveshtari, and Starosel
- discover all seven of Bulgaria's UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- enjoy the services of a private, licensed tour guide who will uncover the best sights along your route
- overnight in centrally located, quaint, locally-owned 3, 4, and 5-star hotels, perfect for exploring on own

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Sofia, city tour

Arrive in **Sofia**, get acquainted with your guide, and make yourself comfortable at the Hotel Niky, conveniently located on Sofia's main shopping thoroughfare.

It's the ideal jumping-off place for taking in the vibrant, revitalized tone of the city. In the afternoon, savor a **guided walk** along Sofia's cobblestoned streets, paved with Viennese gold-colored bricks. You'll visit the magnificent Aleksandar Nevski Cathedral, the Roman Rotunda of St. George, the Presidency, and the Parliament.

*Please note that if you experience a delayed arrival in Sofia for any reason, the city tour can also be done the following day

Overnight in Sofia, [Hotel Niky***](#) (centrally located)

Day 2: Sofia - Boyana church - Rila monastery - Sofia

Today, drive to the base of Vitosha Mountain to visit the **Boyana Church**, a UNESCO World Heritage site famous for its outstanding collection of meticulously-preserved 13th-century frescoes and iconic art.

Next, travel to the UNESCO World Heritage **Rila Monastery**, built in the 10th century. Inspired by the reclusive Saint Ivan of Rila, the complex was built by his students and is regarded as one of Bulgaria's most sacred religious sites. This spiritual and historical epicenter maintained Bulgarian cultural preservation for hundreds of years, from the medieval era all the way through to the 19th century. In the 1800s, careful restoration efforts produced many new icons and paintings by celebrated masters.

Overnight in Sofia, [Hotel Niky***](#) (centrally located)

Day 3: Sofia - Arbanassi - Veliko Tarnovo

After breakfast, depart Sofia for **Veliko Tarnovo**, medieval "City of the Tsars." Take a leisurely **walking tour** of the Old Town, where you'll find delightful shops filled with traditional arts and crafts. You'll learn all about icon painting, woodcarving, textiles, and metalworking.

In the afternoon, continue to the village of **Arbanassi**, which features rare architectural treasures of the 17th and 18th centuries. Arbanassi enjoyed the patronage of an Ottoman sultan, thereby emerging as a residential center for wealthy merchants. At the **Konstantsalieva house**, you'll have the chance to observe, in fine detail, exactly how the elite class lived during the 18th century.

Next, discover the **Nativity Church** in Arbanassi, built during the Ottoman occupation according to the strict codes and tenets enforced during that epoch.

Overnight in Veliko Tarnovo, [Hotel Yantra****](#) (located in the Old Town)

Day 4: Veliko Tarnovo - Ivanovo Rock Churches - Sveshtari Thracian Tomb - Madara Horseman - Varna

Today, you'll have the rare opportunity to travel to three separate outdoor UNESCO World Heritage sites. You'll start the day at the **Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo**, an extraordinary medieval religious complex carved into solid rock.

Next, move on to the 3rd-century B.C. **Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari** renowned for its unusual half-plant, half-human caryatids, and extensive murals.

Round out the day at the UNESCO World Heritage **Madara Horseman**, an ancient landmark and famous symbol of Bulgaria. This massive early-medieval relief, cut into a high cliff, may represent a bygone military triumph or Thracian deity.

Arrive in Varna in the late afternoon or evening.

Overnight in Varna, [Grand Hotel London****](#) (located next to the Varna Cathedral)

Day 5: Day trip to Balchik and Aladzha monastery

This morning, stroll along the sweeping Sea Garden in the Black Sea resort of Varna, passing by the Roman Baths. Visit the **Archaeological Museum** to view the Gold of Varna, the oldest gold treasure ever discovered, with priceless items dating to 4000 B.C.

Spend the afternoon on your own, relaxing on the beach, or tour the lovely **Balchik Palace** and botanical gardens and the **Aladzha Monastery**, a cave structure beautifully painted with bright exterior frescoes.

Overnight in Varna, [Grand Hotel London****](#) (located next to the Varna Cathedral)

Day 6: Varna - Nessebar - Kazanlak Thracian Tomb - Plovdiv

This morning, journey to **Nessebar**, a beautiful 9000-year-old town built on a former island (now a beautiful peninsula). Nessebar is known for its picturesque churches and houses, and the settlement still supports a vibrant fishing culture. Find a table at one of the delightful restaurants overlooking the sea, and fill your lungs with the beautiful salt air.

Next, stop at **Kazanlak**, an area renowned for its rose harvest. Here, you'll visit the magnificent UNESCO World Heritage **Thracian Tomb**. This astounding complex, discovered in 1944, encompasses a vast Thracian necropolis featuring a massive array of murals. It represents Bulgaria's only collection of Hellenistic masterpieces still in their original state.

Arrive in **Plovdiv** in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Plovdiv, [Hotel Evmolpia****](#) (located in the Old Town)

Day 7: Plovdiv walking tour, day trip to the Bachkovo monastery and the Asenovgrad fortress

Today, explore **Plovdiv**, one of Europe's most historically diverse cities. Founded by the Thracians, Plovdiv later became a strategic Greek and Roman center. The city is known for its lively arts scene and bohemian atmosphere featuring an abundance of galleries and cafés. With your guide, visit the ancient Roman theater of Philippopolis and the preeminent Ethnographic Museum, situated in one of the oldest houses in Plovdiv.

Next, journey to the Chepelare River to tour the vast **Bachkovo Monastery**, founded in 1083; enjoy the fantastic view at the imposing **Asenovgrad Fortress**, built on a strategic high point inhabited since the Thracian and Roman eras.

Overnight in Plovdiv, [Hotel Evmolpia****](#) (located in the Old Town)

Day 8: Plovdiv - Starosel - Koprivshitsa - Sofia

Today, you'll explore the delightful village of **Koprivshitsa**. On your **guided walking tour**, wind your way along narrow cobblestoned streets to view the abundance of 19th-century architecture: over 400 of Bulgaria's best-preserved National Revival houses can be found here.

Travel through the beautiful countryside to **Starosel**, the site of Bulgaria's largest known Thracian complex. The mausoleum, comprised of six underground temples, dates to the 6th century B.C. Tour the Chetinyova Mogila temple, the only one of the existing sites open to the public.

Continue to Sofia; arrive in the late afternoon or evening.

Overnight in Sofia, [Hotel Niky***](#) (centrally located)

Day 9: Sofia, departure

Your tour ends. Transfer to the airport for the flight home.

Tour prices:

Single traveler: from 3240 euro pp

2 travelers: from 1745 euro pp

3 travelers: from 1330 euro pp

4 travelers: from 1340 euro pp

For a different number of travelers, please get in touch

Included services and features

- The possibility of having your itinerary customized at no extra charge
- Great flexibility regarding changes to the daily itinerary even after the start of the tour
- The services of a private, licensed English-speaking guide/driver, available throughout the tour
- All guide's expenses (meals, accommodations, etc.)
- Private transportation in an air-conditioned car or minivan (depending on the number of travelers joining)

- Complimentary wireless internet access in the car/minivan so that you can stay in touch with your loved ones even while traveling
- All car/minivan expenses, such as gasoline, parking, and road tolls
- Entrance fees as per the itinerary, with guided visits. If you wish to add any sight on the go, the guide will always be available with information during the visit
- Accommodation as per the hotel list above (we can also offer a different selection of hotels)
- Breakfast every day
- Airport transfers
- All taxes

Not included

- Airfare to and from Bulgaria
- Meals or beverages other than the included ones
- Credit card fees (3.25%). We offer you the possibility of paying by domestic bank transfer (for U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom)
- Photo fees (some sights require the payment of a fee for allowing you to take pictures - they are mostly inexpensive, around 2 or 3 euro/sight)
- Gratuities for your guide (entirely up to your discretion)

Additional information

You can further explore this tour's route by looking at the [tour map](#) we created, with the cities the tour overnights in and all sights (Google Maps).

Click [here](#) to browse this tour on our website, send us your inquiry, and [here](#) to read our FAQ.

To read what past travelers think of their travel experience with us, check out our [Testimonials page](#). Additionally, you might be interested in reviews from past travelers posted on websites like [Trustpilot](#) or [Tripadvisor](#).

About us



We are Vlad and Zoe Trestian - the owners and managers of Balkan Trails. Vlad is Romanian, Zoe is Bulgarian - we have first-hand, local knowledge of the countries our tours explore.

We have been working in the travel industry in Eastern Europe since the late 1990s. In 2009, we established *Balkan Trails* as a family-owned and managed tour operator business. When trusting us with your travel experience, you will deal directly with one of us. Zoe or Vlad will be your single point of contact, so you're always talking to an expert who has an overview of all details related to your tour.

We understand that traveling is personal and individual, and no two travelers are alike. That is why the majority of our tours are based on customized itineraries. Your tour is exactly that: YOURS. Just let us know when you'd like to arrive and depart, your interests, and the type of hotels you prefer, and we'll take care of the rest.

We work with a small number of hand-picked, licensed guides. They all have solid experience and speak excellent English. During your time with them, you will get an insider's perspective on the country, its people, and its culture. They are also the ones who will help you interact with locals - meeting locals is key to truly understanding a country.

Being a small, family-run business and working with a small number of carefully selected guides also means we can only manage so many tours each year. And that's OK. Our focus is not organizing lots of "just OK" tours. We are here to create memorable travel experiences. And those do come in limited numbers. We are looking forward to showing you our part of the world.

Vlad Trestian Zoe Trestian

Contact Information

Balkan Trails

Tour Operator license #757

Address: 29 Mihai Sebastian St., building S7, ent. A, apt. 37, sector 5, 050784 Bucharest, Romania

Telephone: 0040 723 578 452

Email address: office@balkantrails.com

Website: www.balkantrails.com

Last updated: September 28th 2022