Tour Code
BU1

ADVENTURESABROAD

BULGARIA

8 days

Created on: 12 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrive in Sofia

Arrive in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria.

Overnight in Sofia.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Sofia & Rila Monastery

We journey 121 kilometres south of Sofia through high rock walls with formations like giant animals waiting to pounce, arriving at the 10th-century Rila Monastery nestled in soft, green woods. Mountains rise all around this most-revered of Bulgarian monasteries, while below, the Rilska River races over a stony bed through pristine wilderness.

In the 9th century, twenty-year-old Ivan Rilski (John of Rila) fled to this peaceful place seeking escape from worldly corruption. Finding a cave in the woods above the present monastery site, he embraced the hermit life, feeding animals and birds while praying in the stillness. Like-minded men eventually joined him, building the first monastery about 2.4 kilometres from the present site, where today you can visit his tomb, the little Church of St. Luke, and the cave he inhabited.

Rila Monastery ranks among Europe's largest monasteries, located in some of Bulgaria's most beautiful terrain. Our exploration features the unsurpassed frescoes of the Church of the Blessed Virgin, where monks still practice within this five-domed treasure. The exquisite fortress-like walls also contain the Historical Museum, featuring objects connected with the monastery's thousand-year history, including precious manuscripts, woodcarvings, and ecclesiastical treasures.

After lunch, we return to Sofia for a visit to the National Museum of History, providing an excellent introduction to Bulgarian culture, from ancient Thracian gold treasures to medieval manuscripts to folk traditions that survive today.

Overnight in Sofia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Sofia - Plovdiv

We travel to ancient Plovdiv, situated in the Plain of Thrace, where history unfolds in layers across three dramatic hills. Plovdiv was formerly known as Pulpudeva until Philip II of Macedon's weary horse collapsed beneath him at the edge of the Thracian plain in 342 BC. Taking this as an omen, he built Philippolis on the site in his horse's honour. Later Romans renamed it Trimontium – the City on Three Hills – while five centuries of Turkish rule (when it was known as Philibe) brought significant changes to its character.

Today Plovdiv charms visitors with its lovely "stariyat grad" (old town), displaying Turkish influences alongside a distinctive Bulgarian character. Our tour explores the Old Quarter, the Ethnographical Museum housed in a beautifully preserved 19th-century mansion, and the remarkably well-preserved Roman Amphitheatre, still used for performances during summer festivals.

Within Trimontium, the historic heart of Plovdiv, typical 19th-century Bulgarian homes line cobblestoned streets, their overhanging upper floors and painted facades creating one of the Balkans' most photogenic neighbourhoods. The revival-period architecture reflects the prosperity of 19th-century Bulgarian merchants who traded throughout the Ottoman Empire while maintaining their cultural identity.

Overnight in Plovdiv

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Plovdiv - Valley of the Roses - Veliko Tarnovo

The world-famous Valley of the Roses unfolds before us, where 70 percent of the world's "attar" (rose extract) is produced in fields that transform into a pink carpet during May and June harvest season. Nimble-fingered women and girls do most of the picking in the early morning hours, while donkeys carry the precious petals to distilleries where the ancient art of rose oil production continues unchanged for centuries.

In Kazanlak, we visit the Thracian Tomb (4th-3rd centuries BC), a UNESCO World Heritage site representing the original Bulgarians' sophisticated burial customs. The Thracians, closely linked with ancient Greeks, created this underground chamber decorated with remarkable frescoes that survive as masterpieces of ancient art.

Before crossing the spectacular Shipka Pass with its majestic vistas and momentous history, we visit the Shipka Memorial Church, where golden domes rise from the hillside in Russian style, commemorating Bulgarian and Russian soldiers who died fighting for Bulgarian independence. The open-air Ethnographical Museum of Etura recreates a typical 19th-century village, where traditional crafts and rural life continue in authentic workshops and homes.

We arrive in Veliko Tarnovo, once Bulgaria's capital (1185-1396) and still displaying remains of its past glory through fortress walls and palaces perched among steep cliffs of the Yantra Gorge. This capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom rises on three main hills: fortified Tsarevets; Trapezitsa, where boyars lived; and Sveta Gora, once a scholarly monastery centre, now a university site.

Overnight in Veliko Tarnovo

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Veliko Tarnovo: Town Tour

We explore this town laced with history through our tour of the commanding Tsarevets Citadel (Castle of the Czar), first fortified in the 6th century and evolved into the royal centre of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom by the 12th century's end. The breathtaking views from this picturesque region reveal why medieval Bulgarian rulers chose this dramatic setting for their capital.

A short drive brings us to the hilltop village of Arbanassi, first settled by Albanian immigrants in the 15th century. Here we visit several houses dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, their thick stone walls and hidden courtyards reflecting the uncertain times when wealthy merchants needed to protect their families and fortunes from bandits and tax collectors.

These remarkable houses demonstrate how Bulgarian Christians maintained their prosperity and culture during Ottoman rule, creating architectural gems that blend Bulgarian, Byzantine, and Ottoman influences. The Church of the Nativity contains some of Bulgaria's finest religious frescoes, painted when the village served as a summer retreat for wealthy Bulgarians.

The afternoon offers leisure time to absorb the medieval atmosphere of Veliko Tarnovo, perhaps exploring artisan shops or enjoying coffee while watching the Yantra River wind through the dramatic gorge below the ancient fortress.

Overnight in Veliko Tarnovo

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Veliko Turnovo - Sofia

The beautiful Danube Plain provides our scenic route back to Sofia as we cross the Troyan Pass and visit the nearby Troyan Monastery, Bulgaria's third largest. This spiritual centre, founded in the 17th century, houses remarkable frescoes and wood carvings that represent the pinnacle of Bulgarian religious art during the National Revival period.

After lunch, we continue to the well-preserved "museum-town" of Koprivshtitsa, where the revolt against Ottoman occupation began in 1876. This historic town preserves an invaluable collection of 19th-century Bulgarian architecture, when wealthy merchants built elaborate houses that celebrated Bulgarian identity through distinctive design and decoration.

Our walk through this enchanting town reveals unique houses with wooden columns, painted facades, richly decorated interiors, and lovely

gardens that create a living museum of Bulgarian Renaissance culture. Each house tells stories of the families who lived here during Bulgaria's struggle for independence, when education, culture, and commerce flourished despite political oppression.

The architectural ensemble of Koprivshtitsa demonstrates how Bulgarians expressed their national awakening through art, literature, and architecture, creating a distinctive style that blended traditional Bulgarian elements with cosmopolitan influences from across Europe.

Overnight in Sofia

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Sofia: City Sightseeing

Sofia's motto proclaims "Sofia Grows but Never Ages," reflecting a city founded over 7,000 years ago that today serves as an exciting meeting place of history and modernity. Traces of Thracian and Roman lives, Proto-Bulgarian and Slavic cultures create layers visible throughout the contemporary city, while more than 250 historic, archaeological and architectural monuments preserve Sofia's role as the centre of Bulgarian political and cultural life.

Our walking tour reveals Sofia's most famous landmarks, beginning with the magnificent St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, one of the city's most spectacular buildings. Beyond the splendour of the building itself, the cathedral houses remarkable icons and murals painted by the era's foremost artists, while its crypt contains Bulgaria's most valuable collection of medieval icons spanning centuries of religious art.

St. Sofia's Church, the second oldest but most significant building in the city, gave Sofia its name and stands as a remarkable archaeological monument witnessing Serdica's golden age during the 6th century. The large archaeological complex of Roman and medieval ruins, dominated by St. George Rotunda, preserves Sofia's oldest building. Repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt, the 5th-century St. George Rotunda has been restored to its original appearance as a Christian church, its circular walls containing frescoes from multiple historical periods.

The remainder of the afternoon invites independent exploration of this fascinating capital, where ancient ruins neighbour contemporary galleries, traditional restaurants serve dishes perfected over centuries, and modern Sofia continues its eternal dance between past and future.

Overnight in Sofia

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Departure

Departure from Sofia.

As we bid farewell to our fellow travellers and this land of endless discoveries, we carry with us memories of spectacular landscapes, architectural treasures, and the warm hospitality of peoples whose cultures have endured and flourished despite centuries of challenge and change.

PRIJATNO PATUVANE!! (Pleasant Journey in Bulgarian!)

Included Meal(s): Breakfast