

Active Holidays in Bulgaria

Walking, Trekking, Rock-climbing, Horseriding and Biking

About Inter Jet Tours & Penguin Travel

We are a small team of highly qualified professionals in their own fields that have been dedicated to FIT travel over the past 12 years since Inter Jet Tours/Bulgaria and Penguin Travel/Denmark have been in existence. Our staff includes

- Dimitri Popov, Founder and Director of Penguin. Dimitri is an educated geographer and has worked as a ski and mountain trek guide both in Bulgaria and in Western Europe. His travel experiences include Mongolia, the Himalayas, Siberia and Northern Russia.
- Anton Paskov, Founder and Director of Inter Jet. Anton has specialised in recreational geography and tourist management, and has held various positions in the travel industry. He has travelled widely throughout Bulgaria and has been a mountain guide. With offices in Denmark and Bulgaria and with a wide network of local contacts in the destination country, we are able to take care of any incentive travel needs promptly and effectively. Our staff as well as the many locally hired operators and reliable suppliers ensure that your tour programmes will be conducted professionally, safely and cost-effectively. We have wide experience in different programmes for active holidays and we will be glad to offer you to partake of our expertise and research. Please, feel free to contact us with any group or individual tour ideas you may have, and we will be pleased to offer you a competitive quotation.

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We hope that this catalogue with a lot of exciting and attractive trips to Bulgaria will inspire you in planning new tour programmes in South-Eastern Europe and we look forward to working with you to make them a success!

In our 12-year presence on the travel market in Bulgaria, we have always paid special attention to arranging tours to areas, which are not spoiled by mass tourism. In such parts of the country the infrastructure is not adjusted to the luxurious demands of the sunbathing tourists and sometimes it is not possible to plan and foresee everything. On the other hand, in this kind of trips there is more eccentricity, closer contact with Nature and local people, culture and way of living. There is a feeling of attractive unexpectedness with the tourists, which sustains their interest throughout the whole journey. We visit small and forgotten villages unspoiled by civilization in remote pristine regions. Of course big cities and important tourist sights are also included in some of our trips. So, if you love exciting and thrilling experience - you are welcome to our world of adventures.

Key to classification and abbreviations listed for each tour. We reserves the right to make changes if necessary without warning. For current changes and new offers please go to our web-sites given above !!!

Guides

We have both individual and group tours with a guide, as well as combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local

We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

IT: Individual tours

There is no guide on this tour. You travel individually and we are responsible for the hotel overnights and /some/ transfers. Sometimes you will travel together with other people. If you wish a guide can be arranged, if ordered. We take it for granted that you can read maps, provided by us upon arrival.

IT+: Individual tours with a guide.

The same as the Individual tours, with the only difference that there is a local

people with good knowledge of English. The group size is normally 6-12 people, if not specially mentioned.

IG: International group tours

The tours are similar to our group tours. The only difference is that these are multi-national. Guided services are in the English language, if no special arrangements have been ordered.

Trekking Holidays

To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. **And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday, is to chose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!** Here is the general guide to the gradation of our trips.

A: Light

No special experience is needed; everyone who is in condition to cope with long Saturday walks in the forest, can also cope with these tours. As a rule, the trips are short and at a low altitude. Often, it is your choice to join or skip a daytour. The routes follow a hilly terrain without steep ascents and descents. Normally we walk 3/5h a day.

B: Moderate

Most of you who are used to walking during a long weekend, will be in condition to cope with a tour of this level. You should be in good health condition and not too bad physical condition. We have successive days of longer and more difficult walking and days of lighter walking. Some parts of the day routes are done at a higher altitude. The paths are in good condition. We walk for 5/7h a day. You are free to skip some walks and have a rest.

C: Difficult

These tours include trekking which is a little harder. Normally on a challenging terrain. We take it for granted that you are in good condition and fit. You should be physically prepared at home to get the maximum of the tour. Most of the trekking is done at a greater height (max 3000m). As on other tours you are free to skip some treks and have a rest.

D: Challenging

Tours of this level demand that you be really in good shape. The paths are not always in the best condition and the marking can be scarce. There are daytreks with big ascents and descents. Changing weather conditions /even in midsummer/ play an important role when trekking at a very high altitude and may cause changes of the preliminary route. This is to be decided by the mountain guide on the spot. Normally, the treks are 6/8h per day, but some can be longer. Preliminary trekking experience is an advantage, but not necessary if you are really in good shape. Note that during some of the days, you should personally carry your baggage, which naturally is an additional difficulty.



language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Tour Types

Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group.

guide provided for some of the days. During the days with a local guide most probably you will be together with other tourists.

GT: Group tours

There is a guide accompanying you throughout the whole trip, meeting you at the airport upon arrival and leaving you at the airport again for departure. We use well-trained and experienced local



Equestrian Holidays

This is a different way to explore the country, its nature and culture. They are intended for those of you who want to change the riding grounds or the short Saturday riding tour with riding in the wild nature of South-Eastern Europe in a tempo which suits you best. All tours require that you be used to riding and have some experience in riding in the open fields and on an unknown terrain. A different skill grade is necessary for the various tours. And here is how they are divided into the following categories:

1. No or just a little experience.
- 2.. Experience relevant to 1-2 years of a riding school, you should have tried the different paces and individual tours in the open fields
3. You must have several years of experience and be well-trained in riding at all paces and on challenging terrains.
4. Your skills must be enough so that you can fully control the horse and not the opposite. You must have excellent experience in riding different horses of various breed and temperament.

Cycling Holidays

If you are looking for a holiday in Bulgaria, which will give you the chance to explore the country in your own tempo,, you should try and book a cycling holiday! We offer you two options. The first one demands normal cycling condition, while for the other one we recommend that you train biking some 80km per day for a couple of weeks prior to starting this tour. Being in good condition is a guarantee that you will manage the new terrain and that you will fully enjoy your time.

Singles and Groups

Do you know that around 50% of our clients for active holidays travel alone? That is why we have arranged a group size of min. 2 persons for most of the tours! Of course you must check yourself the minimum group size for each tour.

What is more ? we can customize the existing programmes according to your personal preferences and requirements. It will be our pleasure to work out a special tour for you and your friends - just give us a call or e-mail us.

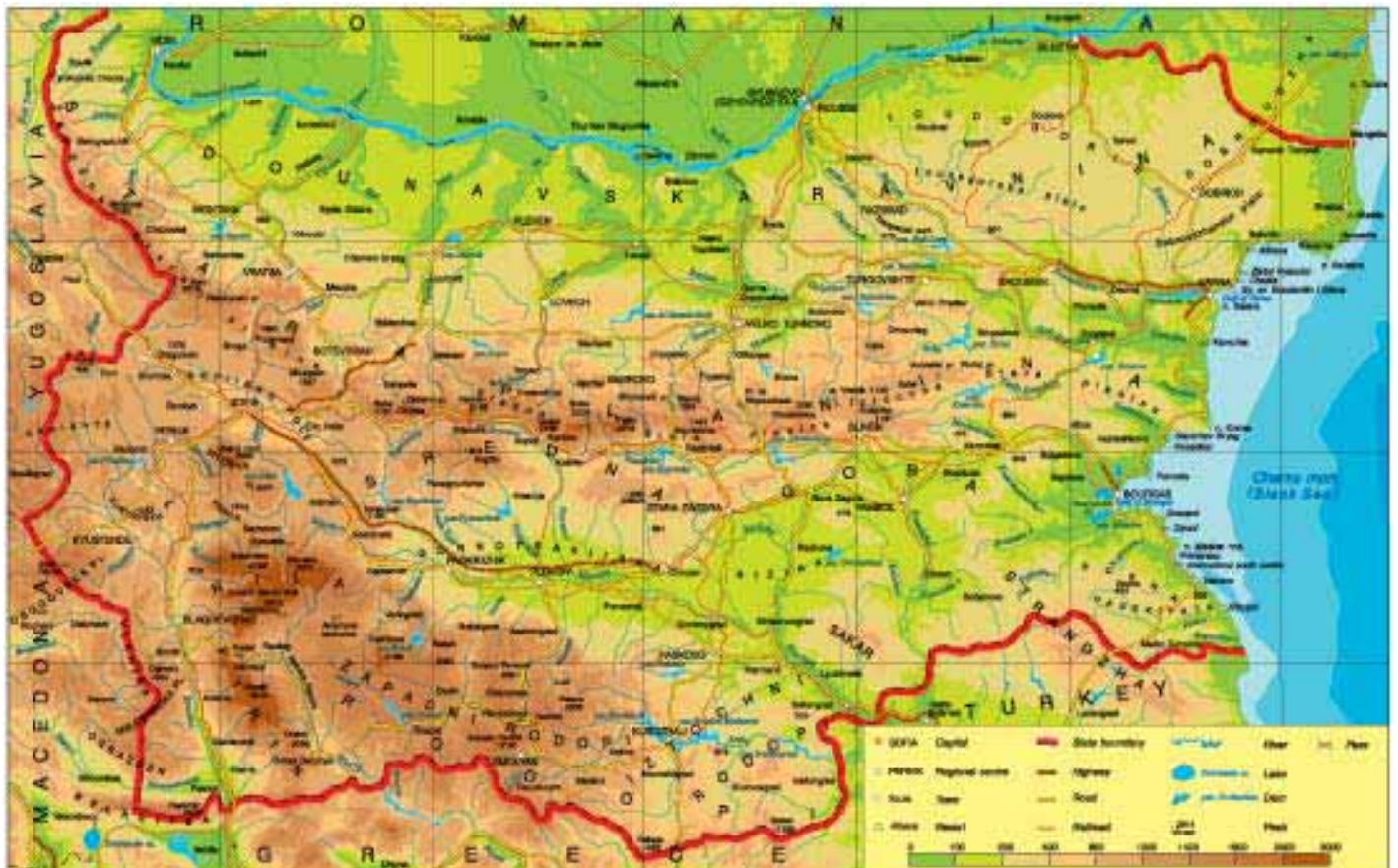
Extensions

This is a unique proposal which gives you the opportunity to stay in Bulgaria for one week more at an incredibly low price. We can offer a great variety of means of accommodation ? from home stays (no meals) to 2, 3 and 4-star hotels (BB or HB) on the Southern Bulgarian Black Sea Coast:
 Sunny Beach - a big modern resort with hundreds of hotels, cafes, pubs, casinos, water-sports facilities, etc.
 Nessebar, Sozopol - small towns (founded by the Ancient Greeks) with picturesque Old Quarters and a specific atmosphere
 Lozenetz - a peaceful small village with a beautiful beach. Only 4-5 km from the forests of the Strandza Mountains where you can go walking or biking
 For more info please contact us or visit our web-sites!



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Walking Holidays in the Pirin Mountains, Bansko



The Pirin mountains, named after the Thunder God Perun, are Bulgaria's wildest mountains with lots of protected areas and no less than 79 peaks over 2500 meters high. Bansko is situated a 3 hour-drive from Sofia. This is the basic camp for this walking holiday. With its special architecture of Ottoman and Greek origin, Bansko offers the visitors lots of experiences. The stone houses, many of which look like miniature monasteries, exist harmoniously side by side with the modern centre of the little town, which houses only around 12000 inhabitants. In Bansko, there is a multitude of restaurants and local eateries as well as a lively café scene. From the cafes you can sit and enjoy the exotic sight of the locals, which together with house animals and carts are on their way to the market to sell fruits and vegetables. Do not be surprised if you should step out of the way for a herd of sheep on their way through the town.

Trekking possibilities:

Bansko is located in the outskirts of the Pirin National Park - the biggest one in Bulgaria. Spread over a huge area, there are 175 lakes with crystal clear mountain water, which are just perfect for drinking. The area is rich with animal and plant life, a great amount of which are unique for this area and both eagles and falcons reign in this pristine mountain. With its well-developed network of mountain paths and marked walkways, Pirin is a popular destination for foreign tourists and Bulgarians alike. The group is provided with a local English-speaking guide for 3 days. There are 2 walks (5-6 h) out of Bansko in the Pirin National Park. Ascending Mt. Vihren (2914) is a one-day experience. Generally, the terrain is Alpine, meaning that most of the trekking is done above the tree zone. While walking, the group passes by stupendous views of crystal-clear mountain lakes, green dales exotic rock formations and rich animal life. During the rest of the tour there are options to explore the mountains alone, or to partake of the local treks that the guide may organize on the spot.

Excursions:

Melnik: Bulgaria's smallest town with around 300 inhabitants and probably Bulgaria's best wine. Visit to Rozhen monastery.

Rila Monastery: Bulgaria's biggest

tourist attraction from the tenth century with 1200 wall paintings.

Kovachevitsa: Beautiful village found in the 16th century with original houses built of stone. On the way we pass the spa Ognjanovo, where one can bathe in a warm mineral water swimming pool.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Bansko, hotel overnight.

Day 2-7. Bansko including 3 trekking days: acclimatization walks at the foothills of the Pirin mountains, and walks in an alpine relief above the tree line, including ascent to Vihren peak. Choice of walks can vary depending on physical condition of participants, weather conditions. **Day 8.** Transport to the airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

We live in a family run hotel, with rooms with private bath/toilet. The hotel has its own tavern a real culinary experience. Breakfast and dinner are included in the price.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2
Local guide:	Yes, for 3 days
Difficulty grade:	B / C (trekking days)
Tour type:	IT+



Walking Holidays in the Rodopi Mountains, Trigrad



The green and 225 km long mountain ridge of the Rodopi mountains is situated in South Bulgaria, 20% of the mountains being a part of Greece. The highest peak is around 2000m high and the average height is around 800m. Combined with the quite pleasant climate, the Rodopi mountains is a perfect place for walking in a rolling landscape with caves from pre-historic times, ancient Roman roads and bridges, fortresses and churches. There are not many tourists, who have been along all the many walking paths and little villages where goats are not a part of the scenery but part of everyday life of the local people, a source of milk, meat and leather. Well helped by our local guide, we expect experiences in the mountains for the whole family. We go where the way ends and get closer to nature and the virgin mountains.

Trigrad is a small village in the central part of the Rodopi mountains - 230 km from Sofia and 160 km from Plovdiv and only 20 km from the Greek border. Being a border area, Trigrad has been closed for tourists for many years. Characteristic in the street picture is the mosque and the little church which is an example of how Christians and Moslem live together. We stay in a private house, whose trademarks are a very warm welcome and excellent home cooking. This is where we live and this is where our tours start. As a place, Trigrad is famous for The Trigrad Gorge and the nearby limestone caves Jagodina and The Devil's Throat.



Trekking possibilities:

There are 3 one-day trips included in the program: Jagodina and The Devil's Throat caves, Trigrad Gorge, Trigrad - 3 hours of walking; Trigrad - Vodni pad - Kesten - Trigrad - 5 hours of walking; Trigrad - Chairski Lakes - Mougla - Gela/Shiroka Luka - 7 hours of walking

Excursions:

Devin 25 km - spa centre, and the nearest big town
Shiroka Luka 30 km, school for folklore music, ethnographic museum. Picturesque and colorful village
Optional possibilities in Trigrad: horse riding, mountain bike rentals, fishing, caving.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Trigrad, hotel overnight. **Day 2-7.** Trigrad incl. 3 trekking days. **Day 8.** Transport to airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

We live in a little private house on HB.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2
Local guide:	Yes, for 3 days
Difficulty grade:	A/B (trekking days)
Tour type:	IT+





Chiiflik in the Balkans and Transbalkan Trekking

The Balkan mountains which run through Bulgaria are more than 700 km long and nearly divide Bulgaria into two parts. Chiflik is a cozy, little mountain village situated in the central part of the Balkans ca. 160 km from Sofia and 120 km from Plovdiv. The village which is known in Bulgaria for its hot springs and pools is situated in the outer part of Kozjata Stena (goat wall) National Reserve which covers 970 ha and has many exciting and rare plants. For example, the totally protected and extinction threatened Edelweiss.

Walking trips in the Balkan Mountains with a local guide:

The Balkans around Chiflik offer a lot of possibilities for one-day walking trips. There are 3 days of walking with a local guide. From Chiflik to Vasiljov hut (1390m) ca 5 h 30 min.; From Chiflik to Kozjata Stena hut (1560m) and further to Hajdushka Pesen hut (870m) - 5h walking; From Chiflik to Vidima hut (550 m) through Pleven hut (1594m) and further to the little town of Apriltsi. Overall, 4h trekking of average difficulty.

Excursions:

Trojan 15 km and Trojan Monastery 25 km. Trojan Monastery from the 15th century is the 3rd biggest in Bulgaria. **Etara**. An open-air ethnographic museum 70km. Exciting collection of beautifully renovated buildings from 17th and 18th century. Working craftsmen's shops. **Veliko Turnovo** 120km. The capital of The Second Bulgarian Kingdom (12th century), beautifully situated in the windings of the Jantra river with plenty of medieval churches, the „Tsarevets“ fortress, etc.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Chiflik hotel overnight. **Day 2-7.** Chiflik including 3 walking days with a local guide. Possibilities for excursions - individual or with a guide. **Day 8.** Transport to the airport for departure



Accommodation and Boarding:

We stay at a small hotel (altitude of 800m) with hot mineral water swimming pool. All rooms have satellite TV, bath/



toilet. There is a little health center at the hotel offering massage, Jacuzzi, sauna, a little fitness centre and bicycles for rent. HB incl. in the price.

Transbalkan trek

This trip combines trekking in the two most exciting Natural Reserves in the Balkan mountains: Kozjata Stena and Severen Dzhendem, as well as Trojan Monastery. We climb Mt. Botev - the highest peak of the Balkan mountains (2376m) and enjoy the imposing view of the low-lying mountain of Sredna Gora and the fertile Thracian Valley. After descending the extremely steep southern slope of the Balkan („Tarzan's walkway“) we visit the little town of Kalofer. The huts in the mountains lie like pearls on a thread and there are walking paths in between. We use these huts (Pleven and Rai) for 2 overnights (FB) on our Transbalkan Trek. High-trained English-speaking mountain guide all the time.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Chiflik, hotel overnight. **Day 2.** 5h trekking to Vasiljov hut. **Day 3.** 5h trekking to Kozjata Stena and Hajdushka Pesen huts. **Day 4.** Rest day **Day 5.** Transport to Trojan Monastery/Cherni Osam, 1h30min trekking to Pleven hut. Overnight. **Day 6.** Along the ridge to Mt. Botev (2376m) and further to Raj hut 7h. Overnight. **Day 7.** Descent to Panicite 3h, where the bus is expecting us. Drive via Kalofer to Plovdiv ca. 70km. Overnight. **Day 8.** Transport to airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Hotel in Chiflik (4nt) and hotel in Plovdiv (1nt) - HB, mountain huts (2nt) - FB, transport, English-speaking guide.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group Size Chiflik:	Min. 4
Group Size Trekking:	Min. 5 / max. 12
Local guide Chiflik:	Yes, 3 days
Local guide Trekking:	Yes, English-speaking
Difficulty:	B / C (trekking)
Tour type:	IT+ / GT



Trekking in the Rila Mountains, Mala Tsarkva



The Rila Mountains are the highest ones on The Balkan Peninsula in South East Europe. The highest peak is Musala 2925m. Many of the tops are close to 3000m. Rila (an old Slavic word, meaning water mountain) looks like a rough sea of mountain ridges and peaks, deep gorges and 150 crystal clear lakes. The Rila Mountains consist of two parts: West Rila with Maljovitsa Peak, Rila Monastery and the 7 Rila lakes and East Rila with the ski centre Borovets and Musala Peak. The 7 Rila lakes lying like pearls in a thread are the reason for Rila to be a desired destination for trekkers and wanderers who are fond of alpine challenges. Thanks to the mild winds from the Mediterranean Sea, the mountains have an entirely unique vegetation. A big part of the National Park is under the protection of UNESCO. The village Mala Tsurkva 1190m. lies in the Levi Iskar valley. It is a perfect starting point for trekking tours both in West and East Rila. We live in a family owned pension, all rooms with private facilities.

Trekking opportunities:

Mala Tsarkva - Mechit hut (1650 m) - Govedartsi - 4 h;
From Borovets with gondollift to Jastrebets (2350 m), climbing Musala (2925m) - 5h;
Bus to Vada hut (1410m) - Seven lakes hut (2190m) - Rilski Lakes hut (2100m) - 6h;
Bus to Maljovitsa 1720m. Climbing up to Maljovitsa peak 2729 5h. Possible Extension to Rila Monastery 3h.

Excursions:

Sofia 80km, Shopping, markets, opera, concerts.
Rila Monastery 120 km. Bulgaria's biggest tourist attraction with more than

1200 wall paintings. Can be reached by 8 hours walking.
Rila Monastery is nestled in a deep valley on the western flanks of the Rila mountains. Parts of the monastery, which was included in the World Heritage list in 1983, date back to the 14th century though a large portion of the monastery was reconstructed in the 19th century after a devastating fire. The monastery's five-domed Sveta Borgoroditsa church dates from 1834 and is dedicated to the birth of the Virgin; the walls and domed ceilings of its external gallery are decorated with brilliant frescoes that will take your breath away! For a unique experience, you can choose to overnight in one of the old monastic cells.



Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transfer to Mala Tzarkva, overnight. **Day 2-7.** Mala Tsarkva incl. 3 trekking days. **Day 8.** Transport to airport for departure

Accommodation and Boarding:

HB, rooms with private facilities.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2
Local guide:	Yes, for 3 days
Difficulty grade:	C
Tour type:	IT+





The Pirin-Rila trek

This trek is in two mountain chains with Balkan Peninsula's highest peaks, enormous national parks, rare vegetation and rich animal life. The trip is made in such a way as to bring the participants out in remote regions with beautiful and unspoiled natural sceneries and waste landscapes. If you do not have the time for trekking in the world's biggest mountain chains, this tour is warmly recommended to you. Here you can enjoy elements of physical challenge in alpine landscapes above the tree border, as well as the cultural treasures of Bulgaria and the warm hospitality of the local people.

The Pirin Mountains

The wild Pirin Mountains which are named after the Thunder God Perun are the second highest in Bulgaria with no less than 79 peaks over 2500m. Within a 3 hour drive south of Sofia is situated Bansko, which is the base for this trekking holiday. The local houses built of stones and resembling very much Orthodox monasteries in miniature are in



harmony with the modern centre of the town. Thanks to the warm winds from the Mediterranean, there are unique plants, including some endemic species. Much of the territory of the Pirin Mountains is part of a National Park under UNESCO's protection.

The Rila Mountains

Some of you might know the Rila Mountains from the ski-centre Borovets and the highest peak of South East Europe Musala 2925m. The mountains are like a rough sea of ridges, peaks, deep gorges and 189 crystal-clear lakes, which often are described as „The Blue Eyes of Rila“. The great variety of lakes and the springs of some of Bulgaria's biggest rivers (Maritza, Iskar, Mesta) is where the name of this 83km long mountain chain comes from, for „Rila“ in old Slavonic language has the meaning of „water rich mountain“. A big part of the Rila Mountains is also a protected area - Natural Reserves. A well-developed network of walking paths and huts of varying standard are available. Deep in the heart of the Rila Mountains, at the height of 1150m and behind 20m high

walls is situated Rila Monastery - the biggest and most popular Orthodox symbol of Bulgaria with more than 1200 murals.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Bansko, hotel overnight. **Day 2.** Bus to Vihren hut (1950 m). Climbing Mt. Vihren (2914 m) and to Sinanitsa hut (2200 m) - 7h. **Day 3.** Trekking to Tevno ezero hut (2512 m) - 6h. **Day 4.** Trekking to Bezbog hut (2240 m.) - 3h. Down on the lift to Gotse Delchev hut and by bus and the rest of the luggage a drive to Rila Monastery in the Rila Mountains. Overnight in hotel. **Day 5.** By bus/4WD to Tiha Rila. trekking via Ribni Ezera to Grunchar hut (2185 m.) - 6h. **Day 6.** Climbing Mt. Musala (2925 m.) - the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula. Further to Musala hut (2380 m.). Overnight. **Day 7.** Trekking to Borovets - 3h. Overnight in hotel. **Day 8.** Transport to the airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Hotels (4n), huts (3n) FB.

Baggage Transportation:

You must carry personal luggage (clothing but not sleeping bag) on days 3-5 and 6-8. A 35-40l rucksack will be enough for the trekking days.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 4 / Max. 12
Local guide:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	D
Tour type:	GT



The Pirin-Rodopi Trek

This is a lighter edition of the Pirin-Rila trek which combines the high and challenging Pirin mountains' beauty with the serenity of the Rodopi mountains. During the trek, you explore some of Bulgaria's remote and forgotten regions. Mountain villages which in the near past had been closed for foreign visitors, enable the tourists to experience a part of the original Bulgarian culture and life in the countryside. Throughout the tour we also visit caves and the 2nd biggest Bulgarian Monastery.

The Pirin Mountains

The first day we come to the village of Bansko (930m). Here you can enjoy Bulgarian cuisine in plenty of local taverns. Sitting in a cafe for example, you can enjoy the exotic sight of locals with house animals and carts on their way to the market place to sell or buy fruits and vegetables. Bansko is placed in a high field, surrounded by the steep slopes of the Pirin Mountains on one side and the Rila Mountains on the other. The region is an ideal starting-point for our trekking trips in the wild and majestic Pirin Mountains.

The Rodopi Mountains

The village of Kovachevitsa is situated in the beautiful Rodopi mountains, some 80 km from Bansko. It is a kind of outdoor museum known for its original houses, built of stones. The village is nearly depopulated but the houses and the beautiful surroundings make it a tourist attraction. On our way, we pass through lots of mountain villages, each with a specific atmosphere of its own. We have a lot of time to explore these villages. Shiroka Luka is one of the highlights of the tour where we have the possibility to visit the museum and the Folklore Music School. The daily treks are easy to cope with and give a real experience of how the locals have lived for centuries and are still living in harmony with nature.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria. Transfer to Bansko. Hotel overnight. **Day 2.** Sightseeing Bansko, walking trip at the foothills of the Pirin Mountains - 3h. **Day 3.** Bus to Demjanitsa, 5h walk to Bezbog hut . Lift down to Dobrinishte, Visit to Ognjanovo - a spa resort with hot mineral water pool. Overnight in a private house in Kovachevitsa. **Day 4.** Bus to Jagodina Cave, walking to Trigrad Gorge 3h. Overnight in Trigrad. **Day 5.** Trigrad - Vodni Pad - Along the Greek Border - Kesten - Trigrad with picnic 6h. **Day 6.** Trekking to Chairsky lakes and further to Mougla village where the bus waits. Overnight in Shiroka Luka. **Day 7.** On the chairlift to Snezhanka Peak (1926m), 3h walk to Rozhen pass. Bus to Plovdiv. On the way we visit



Bachkovo Monastery. Overnight in Plovdiv. **Day 8.** Transport to the airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Private houses with breakfast and lunchpack (6n), rooms with private bath/toilet. Hotel BB (1n) in Plovdiv. Traditional Bulgarian evening with Bulgarian cuisine and folklore.

Bagage Transportation:

Luggage is taken care of throughout the whole trip. A small rucksack for carrying personal items during the daywalks is necessary. It is possible to skip some of the walks and to take the bus with the luggage instead.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 6 / Max. 18
Local guide:	Yes, English-speaking
Difficulty grade:	B
Tour type:	GT





Rock-Climbing in the Rila Mountains



Rock climbing and mountaineering have old traditions in Bulgaria. The beginning was nearly a century ago, when the real exploration of the Alpine-type mountains started. Since then, Bulgarian mountaineers have climbed all peaks in the world, exceeding 8000 m., including The Top of The World - Mount Everest. The best natural conditions for acquiring perfect skills are combined with the excellent tradition and reputation of the Bulgarian mountaineering school. The skills of Bulgarian climbing instructors guarantee excellent results and complete safety to the participants in the climbing courses. The Rila Mountains are the highest mountain in The Balkans, the highest peak Mussala being 2925m above the sea. It is situated in the South-West part of Bulgaria and occupies a territory of 2629 sq. km with an average altitude of 1487 m. At the moment, there exist about 120 trekking and climbing routes, 106 of which are concentrated in the Maljovitsa Ridge (Granite Paradise) and 14 in the Eastern Ridge of the mountain. For this reason, the Alpine & Mountaineering School is located in the Maljovitsa Ridge of the Rila mountains - some 90 km from the Bulgarian capital Sofia. It is fully equipped for the course, including an indoor artificial climbing wall. The instructors are high-professionals, most of them are lecturers at the Sport's Academy in Sofia. Duration of course - 6 full days, 4 hours daily. Approximate time necessary to reach the climbing sites - about 45 min. from the hotel.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Transfer from Sofia Apt to Maljovitsa. Accommodation. Sightseeing of the region. **Day 2-6.** Tuition and instructor- guided rock climbing - 4 hours daily. **Day 7.** Climbing of Maljovitsa Peak. **Day 8.** Transfer to the airport for departure.



For advanced climbers we recommend 2 overnights at Orlovets or Strashnoto Ezero refuges - very close to Rila's best climbing sites. Sleeping bag is necessary.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Hotel accommodation sharing dbl. room, FB, 7 nights.

Available dates:

Every week from April till October. Iceclimbing courses can be arranged from February till April.

Equipment:

All equipment included, bring your own climbing shoes.

Extension:	Yes, Trekking in Rila, Pirin.
Group size:	Min. 2 / Max. 6
Instructor:	Yes, for 7 days. English-speaking.
Difficulty grade:	From A to D
Tour type:	IT+



Riding in the Rila Mountains, Iskar Ranch



Iskar Ranch, which lies 60 km south from Sofia spreads over 4000 ha with big open meadows, fields, a forest and lakes. The ranch itself is like a big playing ground for riders - no cars, nearly no asphalt, lots of natural paths and plenty of nice horses. Enjoy yourself with big nature experiences in a large, wild and nice riding world. It is just like riding your own horse.



Family Holidays

Do you dream of a vacation, being taken care of you from the arrival to the departure and your biggest worry is whether you have a little bit of extra space for the dessert? Here the whole family is together with the horses and nature. At Iskar Ranch, there are many possibilities to explore the big area either on horseback or horsecart. Experience the animal life at the closest touch or just relax on the dam's coastline, while the kids amuse themselves in the calm water. Housing at Iskar Ranch is first class and the same is valid for the typical Bulgarian village cuisine. A stay at Iskar ranch is a real family vacation even if some family members are not enthusiastic about horse-riding, but are more fond of a photo safari or simply prefer walking to riding.

Excursions:

Sofia 60 km. sightseeing, shopping, market, opera, theater.
Rila Monastery 150km. The biggest and most popular Orthodox monastery in

Bulgaria
Plovdiv 200km, 2nd biggest city and cultural centre.
Borovets 30 km. Ski sport centre in the Rila Mountains with cable lift up to 2500 m.

Horses and Equipment:

Iskar Ranch has more than 40 horses - well-trained, patient and calm. East-Bulgarian half-breeds, Hanover and Arabic horses. Saddling is Western and military type.

Accommodation and Boarding:

The Iskar Ranch 7 nights FB.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2 / Max. 14
Riding instructor:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	1-2-3
Tour type:	IT+ / GT





Riding Trek in The Rila Mountains



Are you a fan of challenging mountains, wild and untouched forests, overnights in mountain huts? If so, this trip is just for you. The Rila Mountains are the highest on the Balkan Peninsula, with lots of peaks almost 3000m. They are like a rough sea of mountain peaks, gorges and more than 189 lakes. During this trip we pass The Seven Rila lakes, which lie just like pearls on a thread.

Our tour starts from the Iskar hunting estate where you'll ride at all three paces along the Iskar Lake, past the popular ski resort of Borovets, where you will visit the hunting residence of the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand with a big trophy collection. The ride continues at an elevation between 1900 and 2500m past several remote mountain lakes offering breathtaking views. One of the highlights of the tour is the visit to the biggest and most important Orthodox symbol of Bulgaria - Rila Monastery (1100m). It was founded in the 9th century and has more than 1200 murals. If you wish, you can also peek into the monastery kitchen or a monk's cell. Riding goes on through highlands and lowlands with traditional Bulgarian agriculture. It ends at the Iskar hunting estate.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival to Bulgaria, transfer to Iskar Ranch. Overnight. **Day 2.** Riding to Borovets. The horses stay here while we



drive back to the ranch for overnight.

Day 3. Back to Borovets by bus, from where we start riding to the Tsar's hunting lodge of Bistrica. After lunch further to Kraishte and up to Metchit hut 1670m. Overnight. **Day 4.** At more than 2000m altitude we continue to Rila Monastery. Overnight at a little hotel beside the monastery wall. **Day 5.** We continue the riding at 2600m height along the famous Seven Rila Lakes. Over meadows and rivers we continue to Vada hut. Overnight. **Day 6.** From Vada hut we continue to Belchinski Bani. Overnight. **Day 7.** The tour ends where we started - at Iskar Ranch. **Day 8.** Transport to the airport for departure.

Horses and Equipment:

The tour is carried out in cooperation with the Iskar Ranch. The horses are East-Bulgarian half-breeds, Hanover and Arabic. Western and English type saddles. The Riding guides know the mountains perfectly. Baggage transportation is included.

Housing and Boarding:

Iskar Ranch and huts 7nights FB.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2 / Max. 10
Riding instructor:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	2-3
Tour type:	IG



Riding in the Strandza Mountains



In the southeast part of Bulgaria, close to the border with Turkey lies the one and only natural beauty the Strandzha Mountains. Being a border area, it had been closed for both Bulgarian and foreign visitors for more than 45 years until the early 90's of the last century. The eastmost slopes of the Strandza Mountains merge with the Black Sea coast. This is the best preserved part of Bulgaria's Black Sea coast with the finest beaches, still unspoiled by mass tourism.

Small Villages, Hospitable People

The Strandzha mountains are sparsely populated. The villages, scattered over the hills have 500-1000 inhabitants in average and are known for the old ritual „nestinarstvo“ (a fire dance), where the participants, while in trance, dance over live burning embers. While watching live (why not trying yourselves!) this traditional folk dance, we will get in touch with the traditional Bulgarian hospitality of the locals. The tour starts at the cozy village of Lozenetz.

Therefrom, we ride south into the heights and follow a small river in the Strandza Mountains and in the end, we return to Lozenets.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival to Burgas, transfer to Loznets. Overnight. **Day 2.** Riding from Loznets along the coast to Varvara village. Bathing. Overnight. **Day 3.** Riding from Varvara to Sinemorets along the coastline or through the forest. **Day 4.** From Sinemorets we follow up the Veleka river. The ride goes through hundred years old deciduous forest and we reach the small village of Brodilovo. **Day 5.** From Brodilovo to Kosti, a stop beside a little monastery. **Day 6.** From Kosti we ride through a Natural Reserve where with some luck we can see both deer and wild boars. Overnight in a tent in the open air. **Day 7.** After 5h trek we come back to Lozenets and the beautiful beaches. **Day 8.** Transport to Burgas airport for departure.

Housing and Boarding:

Private accommodation, and tent, FB. Baggage transportation is included.

Horses and Equipment:

East-Bulgarian horses. All horses are well trained and reliable. All-round saddling.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 6 / Max. 10
Riding instructor:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	1-2
Tour type:	IT+





Riding in the Balkan Mountains



The Balkan Mountains stretch west-east for 700 km and divide the country into two parts - North and South Bulgaria. The starting point for our two ridetrekks in the Balkans is the small town of Apriltsi tucked away in the Northern slopes of the central part of the mountain range, where the highest peaks are located too. Here you can find unspoiled nature with fertile valleys, green hills, murmuring waterfalls and mountain meadows full of cattle. Apriltsi is known for its picturesque houses built in the traditional Bulgarian style with cozy canapés and colorful ornaments. In the region you can find unique ceramics, icon paintings and woodcarving workshops where the process of creating pieces of art has not been changed for the last few centuries. We offer two programmes:

Riding Camp

Our riding instructor Bobby - a charming young lady, will train you on fascinating varied terrain in the meadows and deep forests with wild animals which are used for riding every day. There is no riding in fenced training areas. The final program for the week-long tour is decided on the spot after group wishes and capabilities. The variety of possibilities is really great - i.e. a visit to old monasteries, waterfalls, high mountain pastures. You can expect a lot of exciting impressions and experiences in a fantastic mountainous terrain.

Sample Riding Tour Options

- 18km. Riding and sightseeing on horseback around the village which is 12 km long
- 25km. Over the peaks Pozdeli, Rankovzi, Scolai. Lunch at a nunnery. Back over „The Black pig“ rock (1500m)
- 26km. Mountain trip to the highest pastures. The trip is at an altitude of more than 1000m
- 20km. Through Vidima to Bulgaria's highest waterfall „Praskaloto“ (125m), situated at 1350m above the sea

Itinerary Riding Camp:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Apriltsi, overnight. Day 2-7. Riding tours with a riding instructor or with a riding guide. See sample riding-tour options. Day 8. Transport to the airport for departure

Accommodation and Boarding:

Private accommodation in Apriltsi. FB.

Horsetrek Over Two Mountains

The tour goes over the saddle of Mt. Botev (2376m) - the Balkan Mountains highest peak and a big National Reserve „Central Balkan“. Then through the cozy town of Kalofer with monasteries and watermills. Further, over the totally untouched Sredna Gora Mountains to Svezen hut, which lies on a hill with a splendid view. During the trek we ride through a deep and old forest, along blueberry and raspberry fields, through little villages up in the mountains and experience the nature in its complexity. The tour is recommended to people,

wishing to explore pristine nature and the everyday life of the locals in the one of Bulgaria's picturesque mountains.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport Apriltsi, overnight. Day 2. Chosing of horses and riding. See tour proposals. Day 3. Early departure from Apriltsi through Mt. Botev to Panicite. Day 4. Continue riding in Sredna Gora Mountain till Svezen hut (1400m) Day 5. The day is spent in the village of Svezen. Riding to the village and to a lake. Day 6. From Svezen we ride through Sredna Gora Mountains to Tuzha hut. Day 7. From Tuzha to Apriltsi. Day 8. From Apriltsi transportation to the airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Privatie accommodation / Huts. FB.



Horses and Equipment:

There are 8-10 horses of a famous Bulgarian breed, which in their early age have gone through ground training. There are pedigree Arab and English horses and half-breeds English and East Bulgarian horses. All riding horses are well-trained and easy to control. Western and English type saddles.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 4 / Max. 7
Riding instructor:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	1-2-3 Riding camp 2-3 Over two mountains
Tour type:	IT+



Balkan Riding Adventure, Magliz



Nature, history, horses, mountains, folk traditions in the center of The Balkan Mountains. This tour is much more different compared to the others, just because the people who conduct it live in perfect harmony with nature and pay homage to animal life. Raicho Ganchev is your riding instructor for the whole trek. He is an extremely unaffected person and probably the best expert with profound knowledge of the animal life in the Balkan Mountains. He has a Ph. D and has specialized in brown bear studies, which also live in the Balkan Mountains. Throughout most of the year he lives up in the mountains and his practical knowledge of Nature and wild animals he has obtained out of his own experience, an experience he will share with you during the trek.

Magliz and the Balkan Mountains

The little town of Magliz lies at the foothills of The Balkan Mountains on the southern side of the central part of the mountains ridge. The Balkan Mountains divide the country into two parts - South and North Bulgaria and give the name to the whole peninsula. to The Bulgarian name of the Balkan Mountains - „Stara Planina“ („The Old Mountains“) really gets its meaning in this region. The century-old forests, steep cliffs, numerous waterfalls go together with hidden and nearly forgotten ruins - witnesses of a history which goes back to the crusaders. The National Park which is situated a little bit north of Magliz has an abundance of animals and species. Raicho Genchev knows all parts of the mountains like the palm of his hand. With some luck you could watch eagles and falcons.

Accommodation and Boarding:

The 3-storeyed house where we are accommodated is like a little pearl. It is built on top of a hill and the horses are in the backyard. There is one apartment and three double rooms and common facilities (bath/toilet). The dining room is of a typical Bulgarian design and decoration. Flowers, fruits and vegetables grow in the big garden, spread around the house.



It is a real pleasure to relax after a day of riding in the shade of the trellis vine.

The Tours and the Terrain

The riding trips go to the hills outside the paths and ways giving the most fantastic panoramas with views over the lower mountain and the Thracian plain. You ride through a pass in parallel to the railway, by the hundred years old monasteries, rock formations, old villages. If you prefer riding in the plains, it can be arranged on the spot. It is possible to stay overnight in the open air. Magliz Monastery lies quite hidden on a rocky hill and is one of the less visited monasteries. This convent was created in the 12th century.

Excursions:

During the tour (day 5 or 6) Raicho will offer you a day trip by car to see something of the country. The trip goes over Shipka pass to the Open Air Ethnographic Museum Etara and the beautiful town of Trjavna.

Horses and Equipment:

There are 6-8 horses of a known Bulgarian breed and have in their early years been through ground training. All the horses are well trained and easy to control. The equipment is not completely new but pretty much OK. The saddles are allround or Western.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Flight to Bulgaria, transport to Magliz. Overnight. Day 2-7 See Tour proposal. Day 8. Transport to the airport for departure.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Private accommodation with FB 7 nights. Lunch or dinner in the open air. Details are arranged on the spot.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2 / Max. 6
Riding instructor:	Yes
Difficulty grade:	1-2-3
Tour type:	IT+



Cycling in Bulgaria



Cycling in the Rodopi Mountains

In comparison to our tour in the Balkan Mountains, the cycling tour in the Rodopi is more strenuous, reaching an altitude of 1600m. These mountains spread out over numerous hills. Their flora and fauna contains species that have become extinct in other European countries. In ancient times, a number of poets came here for inspiration. Orpheus, the great poet and singer after whom the mountains are named, is believed to have tamed wild animals here; his voice was so strong that it could crack stones. The biking routes are quite varied, starting from the flat valley at Plovdiv and winding up to the high mountain passes. Most of the mileage goes along main, asphalt roads that are well-suited for biking. There is relatively little motor traffic here which makes the roads safer than in other European countries. The mountain roads and paths are a different matter. They can be unpredictable with sharp turns and often without pavement. Along them bikers can see some old-time transportation means: wooden carts pulled by a horse, a donkey or a cow.

Highlights

Velingrad. A famous spa resort, situated at 800m among beautiful pine forest, 70 mineral springs with temperature of the water from 22C to 88C. **Yagodinska Cave.** The longest cave in Bulgaria - 12 km with a wonderful formations. There is a unique prehistoric settlement dating back from the late eneolithic. The „Trigradskoto zhdrelo“/Trigrads gorge/. Along steep cliffs a narrow road winds leading to the „Dyavolskoto garlo“ cave which has a huge waterfall underground.



Take the bicycle with you and experience Bulgaria in your own tempo. We have prepared 2 tours - one in the southern part of the country and one in the northern. These tours go through beautiful and exciting routes and we have arranged the hotel overnights, baggage transport and guide assistance.

Biking in Bulgaria is an adventurous experience which gives you the chance of visiting the least known corners of this Balkan country with pristine nature - something which is impossible to make on a bus trip. Make a stop by the roads to buy fruits and vegetables or stop in the village where the baker has just made fresh and delicious loaves of bread. The personal contacts with the locals during the day, as well as the evenings spent in family-run hotels bring you in close direct touch with Bulgarian hospitality and traditional, unspoiled way of life.

The village of **Shiroka Luka** is an ethnographic and architectural reserve. Sights of interest - the old school St. Panteleimon (1888) and the Church of the Holy Virgin (1834). There is a musical school teaching national instruments. **Bachkovo Monastery:** Founded in 1083. Bulgarian religious and literary centre. The murals, old icons from different periods, the manuscripts, as well as the objects linked with church crafts, turned Bachkovo Monastery into one of the richest galleries of old Bulgaria.

Plovdiv: The second largest city of Bulgaria, situated along the Maritza River. Here Thracians, Romans, Byzantines, Ottoman Turks and Bulgarians have all made an architectural impression. Ancient (2AD) amphitheatre seating 3000, Roman Stadium, National Revival style houses, churches and six magnificent hills.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival in Bulgaria, transport to Plovdiv, overnight. **Day 2.** Cycling starts from Plovdiv via the village of Varvara to Velingrad -80km. **Day 3.** From Velingrad via Sarnitsa to Dospat - 70km. **Day 4.** To Teshel and further through Trigrad gorge to the village of Trigrad - 40km. **Day 5.** Via Teshel to Devin - 40km. **Day 6.** To Shiroka Luka. Sightseeing. Further to Pamporovo - 40km. **Day 7.** Via Bachkovo Monastery to Plovdiv - 90km. **Day 8.** Transfer to the airport for departure.

Difficulty:

Moderate. Biking 4-6 h daily, climbing max. 12%. Max height 1600m. 30-50km cycling/day is highly recommended for some time before the start.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Hotel/Private accommodation BB (7 nights).

Cycling in North Bulgaria

This tour is easier than the tour in the Rodopi Mountains (shorter distances). We bike mostly in Veliko Turnovo region, on the north side of the Balkan mountains, famous for their unspoiled nature, green

valleys with sheep peacefully grazing on lush grass, precipitous cliffs and gentle, rolling hills offering plenty of unique biking opportunities. The narrow roads meander through picturesque villages that look as though they have been unchanged for the past 200 years. Some of Bulgaria's most important Orthodox monasteries are situated in the dales or woods here. Churches with centuries-old icons and colourful murals are spread across a wide range of villages and small towns.

Highlights

Our tour starts in **Veliko Turnovo**, Bulgaria's medieval capital, that is world renowned for its steep white cliffs with houses built on them, for the Tzarevets Fortress and for the river Yantra which mirrors the imposing splendour of the town's architecture. In **Arbanassi** we visit the church with unique frescoes and **Arbanassi Monastery (1860)**. Some of the monasteries included in the tour **Kilifarevo (1349)**, **Kipilovo (1272)**, **Dryanovo(12C)** were founded during the period of The Second Bulgarian State, close to the royal city of V.Tarnovo and turned into centers of most significant cultural and artistic undertakings. Others - **Sokolovo (1833)**, **Batoshevo (14C)** and especially **Troyan (re-erected 1835)** - reveal outstanding works of the Bulgarian church monumental painting from the Revival period. The late 18th and early 19th century witnessed an unheard-of revival of the art of woodcarving - iconostases, bishop's thrones, pulpits, etc. **Etara** is an open-air ethnographic reserve, **Troyan** - the town of Bulgarian pottery and **Oreshaka** - a permanent arts and crafts exhibition.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival in Bulgaria, transfer to hotel in Sofia, overnight. **Day 2.** By car/bus to Veliko Turnovo - 230 km. Cycling to Arbanassi, visit to two local monasteries. Back to Veliko Turnovo - 20km. **Day 3.** Sightseeing in Veliko Turnovo, cycling to Kapinovo and Kilifarevo monastery, overnight in Drianovo - 30km. **Day 4.** Cycling from Drianovo through Drjanovo Monastery to Trjavna, overnight - 30km. **Day 5.** Cycling to Sokolski Monastery, visit to Etara open air museum, overnight - 35



km. **Day 6.** To Batoshevo monastery and further to Apriltsi, overnight - 65km. **Day 7.** Cycling to Trojan Monastery, visit to Oreshaka - 35km. By car/bus to Sofia, overnight in hotel. **Day 8.** Transfer to the airport for departure.

Difficulty

An easier one with max 65 km cycling per day. The terrain is hilly but not so steep as in the Rodopi Mountains. All people used to cycling should be able to make this tour.

Accommodation and Boarding:

Hotels BB (7 nights).

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2
Group leader:	Yes, English-speaking
Tour type:	IT+ / GT

Cycling Holidays on Your Own!

You are used to cycling individually and you want just to be sure that there is a bed booked for you at the end of the day! If so, you should choose these tours without a guide and baggage transport. It might be even more exciting when you try it individually!

These are just a pair of examples for routes in Bulgaria. If you wish to cycle longer/shorter or in other regions, just let us know. Send us your requirements and we will arrange a tour specially for you!



Roundtrip Bulgaria

Even the uninitiated know that the most significant cultural sights and historic monuments lie in the mountains of the Central and South-Western parts of Bulgaria. The sightseeing tour we offer you differs from the other tours at the tourist market: in order to save the long drive to and from the Black Sea coast, we have chosen to fly to Sofia. We have traveled widely and have found good two and three star hotels with bath/toilet in beautiful historical towns. The group includes maximum 18 persons, which gives a better chance of coming closer to the local people and their everyday life. On the way, we visit some large cities: Sofia, Plovdiv, Veliko Turnovo. Bulgaria is known as the land of magnificent monasteries. Our tour takes us up in the Rila, the Pirin, the Rhodopi, the Balkan Mountains and to some of Bulgaria's most interesting monasteries: Rila Monastery, Bachkovo Monastery, Rozhen Monastery.



Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival at Sofia Airport. Transfer. Hotel accommodation. **Day 2.** Sightseeing in Sofia by bus and on foot, including the magnificent Alexander Nevski Cathedral, erected in memory of the Russian soldiers who died for the liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish domination (1877-1878); the crypt which houses a fine collection of icons; St Sofia Church dating from the 5th-6th c. after which the capital is named; Sofia's oldest building - St George Rotunda from the 3rd c.; the National Museum of History. **Day 3.** We drive south from Sofia to Sandanski. On the way we visit Rila Monastery situated in the Rila Mountains at a height of 1150 meters. Behind the 20-metre high walls lie impressive monastery buildings, a church and a chapel with valuable murals. It is the biggest and most important symbol of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. We continue to Sandanski where we stay overnight. **Day 4.** From Sandanski we drive to the old town of Melnik and there we visit the tradesman Kordopulov's house of 1754. We drive further south to the picturesque Rozhen Monastery dating from the 13th c. - the only Bulgarian monastery which remained unharmed during the Turkish domination. Then we drive north to Bansko and visit St Teodor Tironund Stratilat Church from 1614 with valuable murals. We stay overnight in Bansko. **Day 5.** We drive northwest to Plovdiv situated in a large valley in Central Bulgaria with a stop in the historic town of Batak. Visit to the church where we can see the bones of the victims, massacred by the Turks during an uprising in 1876. Plovdiv - the second largest city in Bulgaria, is also one of the oldest on the Balkan Peninsula - it was the capital of Ancient Thrace and a big trade centre in the Middle Ages. In the historic quarter of the city, you will see beautifully decorated period houses, the

ancient fortress-wall, the Roman forum and stadium, and magnificent churches. Near Plovdiv we shall visit the second largest monastery in Bulgaria - Bachkovo Monastery (11th c.) situated at the foot of the Rhodope Mountains. Dinner at a traditional restaurant in the old quarter of Plovdiv. We stay overnight in Plovdiv. **Day 6.** We drive northeast from Plovdiv. We stop in the town of Kazanluk in the Valley of Roses and then drive north, up in the Balkan Mountains to the Shipka Pass. In 1877 this pass was the site of the most important battle in the liberation war against the Turks. Further to the north we visit the Etar Ethnographic Heritage Park, near the town of Gabrovo, with houses from the Bulgarian National Revival period and workshops for ceramics, copper and other handicrafts. We drive on to Veliko Turnovo. Overnight hotel accommodation. **Day 7.** Sightseeing round Veliko Turnovo - the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (13th c.). Remains of the medieval fortifications, churches and the palace still stand on Tsarevets Hill (the King's Hill). Visit to the museum-town of Arbanassi with houses looking like fortresses, and to Kilifarevo Monastery (14th c.) where St Theodosius of Turnovo founded a Church-Slavonic school of literature. Late afternoon departure to Sofia. Overnight. **Day 8.** Transfer to Sofia airport for departure.

Accommodation and boarding:

Hotels, 7 nights HB sharing dbl room.

Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 6 / Max 18
Local guide:	Yes, English-speaking
Tour type:	GT



Roundtrip Bulgaria with Public Transport

We have arranged this tour, offering you to make use of local public transport, between the exciting small, bigger and biggest towns. This type of tour gives you a possibility to explore Bulgaria according to your own personal wishes. You will visit almost the same places of interest, included in our standard version of the roundtrip, but there is no personal guide assistance. Of course, you can take local guides (normally English, German or French speaking) in the museums, monasteries, ethnographic and historic reserves. It is important to consider transport as a means of transportation from point A to point B. This is more time-taking and at the same time, you should bear in mind that not everything can be foreseen. A timetable can be changed for instance, a route can be closed or opened, for transport infrastructure in Bulgaria is not so well developed as it is in West Europe. That's why we expect you to be used to traveling and speaking some English or German. If something happens on the way, you should be prepared to handle the problems yourselves. But all this is part of the experience!!!

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrival to Sofia, Hotel overnight in Sofia if the flight comes too late, or by bus to Bansko. Overnight in hotel. **Day 2.** Free time for sightseeing or a walking trip in the mountains around Bansko. **Day 3.** After breakfast by bus to Plovdiv (about 4h) with several stops on the way. Hotel accommodation the centre of Plovdiv, free time. **Day 4.** Breakfast in the hotel. You can explore the old part of the city. Or make a trip to Bachkovo Monastery ca. 30 km south from the city. **Day 5.** Breakfast at the hotel and departure by bus to Veliko Turnovo. The journey takes about 5-6 hours. Accommodation at hotel in Veliko Turnovo or Elena. **Day 6.** Breakfast at the hotel, sightseeing or a trip to the little village of Arbanassi (ca.8km from V.Turnovo) or to one of the monasteries around V.Turnovo. **Day 7.** After breakfast by bus to Sofia. The route goes along the northern slopes of the Balkan Mountains. Hotel accommodation in Sofia. **Day 8.** Breakfast at the hotel and free time until departure. **Price includes:** Tickets for public bus transport: Sofia-Bansko, Bansko-Plovdiv, Plovdiv-Veliko Turnovo, Veliko Turnovo-Sofia, 7 nights at hotels BB sharing dbl room. **Not included:** transfers from/to bus-stations/hotels(except for arrival at Sofia airport on day 1). Everything not mentioned above **Bansko:** The description of this small town you can find on page 4. Visit to local museums and a walk in the mountains suggested. A trip by taxi to

Rila Monastery (ca.100km,70 EUR) can be organized by our representative on the spot.

Plovdiv: Bulgaria's second biggest city and the cultural center of the country. We suggest a walking tour in the Old Town with the Roman Amphitheatre and shopping in the main street. Both places offer a great variety of shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes. Or a trip to Bachkovo monastery (ca. 30 km) by taxi. **Veliko Turnovo:** The capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Visit to the historic hill of Tsarevets and Samovodska Charshia with many craftsmen's shops. A trip to the nearby village of Arbanassi (ca.8km) with typical architecture from the Bulgarian Revival period and precious murals in the church. Plenty of medieval monasteries are located in the area around Veliko Turnovo: Preobrazhenski (4km), Kilifarevo (17km), Plakovo (24km), Kapinovo (26km).

General Info on Traveling by Bus in Bulgaria

As a rule the trip from one place to another in Bulgaria is measured by time and not by distance. Buses are a faster means of transport than the train. The Inter-city buses start from Bus stations (avtogara in Bulgarian). There are fast buses which stop only in those cities which are written on the bus sign. The buses are private and every company has its own regulations and fares. For example booking and paying tickets in advance. With some destinations and companies that is possible, but most often one can purchase the ticket from the driver only when boarding the bus. Some companies have fixed timetables some do not, some busses have AC, others do not have. For the roundtrip described above, bus tickets are provided by us and are included in the price !!!



Extension:	Yes, Black Sea
Group size:	Min. 2
Local guide:	Not included
Tour type:	IT

