



# Tour Information



## Alpine Wildflowers of Bulgaria





## Passports

You may need to renew your British Passport if you are travelling to an EU country. **Please ensure your passport is less than 10 years old (even if it has 3 months or more left on it) and has at least 3 months validity remaining from the date of travel.**

For more information, please visit: [passport checker](#)

## Visas

As a tourist visiting from the UK, you do not need a visa for short trips to most EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. You will be able to stay for up to 90 days in any 180-day period.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy. Different rules apply to Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania. If you visit these countries, visits to other EU countries do not count towards the 90-day total.

For further information, please check here: [travel to the EU](#)

Bulgarian embassy: 186-188 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5HL.

Tel: (0)20 7581 3144.

<http://bulgarianembassy-london.org>

For visa information: email

[consular@bulgarianembassy.org.uk](mailto:consular@bulgarianembassy.org.uk)

Open Mon-Fri 0930-1330.



## Tickets

### British Airways

As this flight is booked on a group reference, you are not able to check-in online and can only check-in at the airport. The flight reference, which you will need to show at check-in, will be sent to you with your joining information.

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



## Baggage Allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With British Airways your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus one cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45 x 25cm including handles, pockets and wheels, and a personal bag (handbag or computer case) no bigger than 45 x 36 x 20cm including handles, pockets and wheels.

For more information, please visit

[www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)

## Border Control

At border control, you may need to show a return or onward ticket, show you have enough money for your stay, use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queuing.

## Transfers

On arrival at Sofia Airport, please look for someone holding a Travel Editions.

## Special Requests

If you haven't done so already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

## Taking food into EU countries

Please note you are not able to take meat, milk or any products containing them into EU countries.



## Accommodation

### Crystal Palace Hotel, Sofia

#### Four-star Crystal Palace Hotel, Sofia

The four-star Crystal Palace Hotel is centrally located in the capital, Sofia, with easy access on foot to restaurants, historic sites and other facilities. The hotel offers comfortable rooms with all modern amenities, including air-conditioning, TV, fridge, coffee machine, Wi-Fi and safety deposit box. The standard rooms do not have balconies but do have openable windows. The bathrooms include baths with a shower over the bath. Other facilities at the hotel include the newly renovated La Branche Restaurant with a garden terrace, and a lobby bar. The hotel is situated close to the 'Doctor's Garden', a lovely little park with a monument dedicated to the medics who died in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78).

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.crystalpalace-sofia.com/crystal-palace-boutique-hotel-sofia>

### Dumaov Hotel, Bansko

Situated at the foot of the Pirin Mountains, the three-star Dumanov Hotel has been built in a style typical of Bansko during the Renaissance era. Well-located just 1km from the centre of Bansko means everything is easily accessible on foot, including the picturesque old town, restaurants and cafes. Simply designed, the rooms are comfortable and have all modern amenities, including TV, minibar/fridge, electric kettle and Wi-Fi. All rooms have a balcony and a bathroom with shower and hair dryer. Other facilities include a restaurant, steam bath and hot tub.

For more information, please visit:

<https://dumanov.com/?lang=en>

### Musala Hotel, Borovets

Built in a typically mountain chalet style the Musala Hotel is well situated amid the surrounding forest of spruce and fir just 300 metres from Borovets main street. Rooms are bright with wood furnishings, balcony or terrace TV, minibar/fridge and wifi. Bathrooms include baths with a shower over the bath.

Other facilities at the hotel include a restaurant and lobby bar, spa facilities (extra charge) sauna, hot tub, hammam and an indoor pool.

For more information, please visit:

<https://hotel-musala.com/en/>



## Dining

Bulgarian cuisine is representative of the cuisine of Eastern Europe and shares characteristics with other Balkans cuisines. Bulgarian cooking traditions are diverse because of geographical factors such as climatic conditions and location, with influences from places such as Persia, Turkey, and Greece.

Bulgarian cuisine is noted for the prominence of dairy products, as well as meat. Soups are also a popular part of a menu, including a cold soup, tarator. Pastries also feature, such as the filo based banitsa, and various types of börek.

Main courses are very typically water-based stews, either vegetarian or with lamb, goat meat, veal, chicken or pork. Deep-frying is not common, but grilling - especially different kinds of sausages - is very prominent. Pork is common, often mixed with veal or lamb, although fish and chicken are also widely used. While most cattle are bred for milk production rather than meat, veal is popular for grilling meat appetizers (meze) and for some main courses. As a substantial exporter of lamb, Bulgaria's own consumption is notable, especially in the spring.

Bulgaria has more than six hundred mineral springs, so the quality of Bulgarian traditional drinks is considered high. A yogurt called "ayrian" and a millet ale called "boza" are two traditional non-alcoholic beverages in the Balkans. Rakia is the Bulgarian national drink and is served neat, usually at the beginning of a meal.

Bulgaria has several well-known local wine varieties and local lagers like Zagorka and Shumensko are good and inexpensive.



## Meals included in the holiday.

Breakfast daily, two dinners, one lunch and one picnic





## Destination

A fascinating exploration of south-western Bulgaria, during which you have the opportunity to get to know more about the incredible diversity of the country's mountain flora, and seek out a beautiful assortment of local, Bulgarian and Balkan endemics. This 8-day tour not only enables us to observe and photograph a large variety of rare flowers, it also gives a good opportunity to enjoy some of the country's most stunning scenery, as well as visit the Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Bulgaria's most important cultural monuments.

### Places and sites of interest included in the tour:

#### Sofia

The city is located at a strategic crossroads. The route from Western Europe to Istanbul passes through Sofia via Beograd and Skopje, then through Plovdiv to Turkey. Sofia also connects The Near East and The Middle East, lying between the banks of The Danube and the shores of The White Sea on the one hand, and between The Black Sea and The Adriatic on the other. Sofia preserves many valuable monuments from its long and storied past. Sofia is full of delightful surprises offering a thriving and diverse street life, including open-air cafés and busy markets as well as many lovely parks and gardens to relax in.

For more information about Sofia, visit:

<http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/234/sofia>.

#### Golobardo Mountains

Although not far from the Bulgarian capital, this region is one of the lesser-known and less frequented ranges of the country, and while exploring here we have the exciting feeling that we are venturing off the beaten track where we may have the chance of making some interesting botanic discoveries! Dominated by a sub-Mediterranean flora, we will visit various locations in the mountain to seek out wildflowers in a variety of different habitats. Species we will look out for include

Some of the species we will be looking out for include: *Acer tataricum*, *Allium albidum*, *Asyneuma* sp., *Astragalus angustifolius*, *Onosma* sp., *Anthemis* sp., *Centaurea salonitana*, *Cersatium*

*arvense*, *Dianthus cruentus* ssp. *turcicus*, *Centaurea immanuelis-loewii*, *Anthyllis aurea*, *Echium russicum*, *Himantoglossum jankae*, *Lilium martagon*, *Paronychia kapela*, *Saponaria glutinosa*, *Tragopogon balcanicum*, *Verbascum urumovii*, *Satureja montana*, *Scabiosa triniifolia*, *Stipa capillata*, *Xeranthemum annuum*.

#### Vitosha Mountains

Vitosha, which has the outlines of an enormous dome, is the fourth largest mountain in Bulgaria and is one of the symbols of Sofia being situated on the outskirts of the capital, which makes it a popular site for hiking, alpinism and skiing. The territory of the mountain includes Vitosha nature park. Here we will encounter a mix of habitats including coniferous forest, peaty sub-alpine pastures, and rocky biotopes looking for species such as: *Lilium jankae*, *Lilium martagon*, *Jovibarba heuffelii*, *Doronicum austriacum*, *Leuchorchis alba*, *Gymnadenia frivaldii*, *Gentiana punctata*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Aquilegia aurea*, *Geranium coerullatum*, *Silene roemerii*, *Cirsium appendiculatum*, *Primula farinosa*, *Dactylorhiza cordigera*, *Bruckentalia spiculifolia*, *Senecio pancicii*, *Anemone narcissiflora*, *Ranunculus platanifolius*, *Scleranthus neglectus*, *Campanula moesiaca*, *Campanula alpina*, *Campanula patula* ssp. *abietina*.

#### Dobarsko and The Church of Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates

Dobarsko is a village in southwestern Bulgaria, situated on the southern slopes of Rila near the valley of the Mesta River. In this small village there is a unique medieval church; **The Church of Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates** which is included in the list of one hundred national tourist sites. It is a small three-naved stone basilica half dug into the ground. It was constructed no later than 1614 (with some sources claiming as early as 1122) and painted in 1672. The church donors, Bogdan, Hasiya and his son, as well as the builders Spas, Stanko and Smilen, are depicted in a donor's fresco left of the door. The church is noted for its abundance of original frescoes and icons, some of which are interpreted as portraying Jesus in a spacecraft.

For more information, visit:

[https://differentjourney.eu/places/church\\_dobarsko/](https://differentjourney.eu/places/church_dobarsko/)

## Bansko

Zagorohoria Bansko is situated at the foot of the Pirin Mountain, 925 metres above sea level, rising to 2746 metres at the top of Todorka, the highest peak. Bansko functions as a ski resort in winter, and the town is designed as such. The old town centre still preserves its charm, with a beautiful church and belltower, some photogenic vernacular architecture, including several houses that have been turned into interesting museums, and plenty of traditional inns. This scenic centre is even more impressive having the Pirin Mountains as its backdrop.

For more information, visit: <https://visit-bansko.bg/en/summer>

## Pirin National Park

Pirin National Park was established in 1962. At that time it covered 6,212 decares (1 decare equals 1000 sqm), and comprised the highest points of the Demyanishka and Vihren regions. Over the years, the territory of the park was increased many times over, and it now covers 40,000 decares. Since 1983, the park has been protected as a UNESCO Heritage Site. The park includes one of the oldest reserves in Bulgaria – Bayuvi Dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa. The area was granted this status in 1934 to protect the endangered black and white fir (*Pinus peuce*) and the habitats of many other plants and animals. In 1977, this reserve was included by UNESCO on its list of reserves as part of the “Man and Biosphere” program, as was the park’s Yulen Reserve. Within the park, there are more than 182 species of medicinal plants and 1,315 other plant species – roughly 1/3 of Bulgaria’s total. The park also harbors roughly 320 kinds of moss and lichen and 165 varieties of algae. The wide variety of plant life supports many kinds of animals – more than 2,000 invertebrate species and more than 200 vertebrate species. Among them are the European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) and the Eastern Hermann’s tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), both of which are included in The Red Book, an international list of endangered species. Within the boundaries of the park, 159 species of birds have been recorded, amounting to some 40% of all bird species in Bulgaria.

For more information, visit: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/225/>

## Rila Monastery

The Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila, better known as the Rila Monastery is the largest and most famous Eastern Orthodox monastery in Bulgaria. It is situated in the southwestern Rila Mountains, in the deep valley of the Rilska River. The monastery is named after its founder, the hermit Ivan of Rila (876 - 946 AD), and houses around 60 monks. The monastery is depicted on the reverse of the 1 lev banknote, issued in 1999.

For more information about The Rila Monastery, visit:

<https://rilskimanastir.org/bg/about/>

## Rila National Park

Spanning 800 sq km in the expanses of Bulgaria’s Rodopi Mountains, Rila National Park is the Balkans’ top destination for both outdoor adventures and snow sports. It is also a conservation reserve for some of Europe’s rarest wildlife. Thanks to the park’s efforts to keep Rila’s spectacular nature clean and sustainable, these two worlds can exist next to each other. The forests, lakes and mountains in Rila are clean and unspoiled because they are fiercely protected by the park’s management. Hiking and mountain-climbing are supported with an EU grant to help develop sustainable tourism in Rila National Park. Swimming, hunting and fishing are forbidden almost everywhere, and camping is very carefully controlled.

Next to the ski slopes, the pine forests of Rila National Park are home to 48 species of mammal, including brown bears, grey wolves and wild boar, as well as nearly 100 species of birds, among them the protected little owl and capercaillie.

Incredibly, more than 110 plant species in the nature park territory are survivors of past geological ages. These species have sustained very few visible alterations as a result of changing environmental circumstances. This makes the Park one of the most valuable territories in the Balkan Peninsula for the conservation of relict flora. Over 100 plants of extremely high conservation significance can also be encountered in the park, and it is home to 90 plant and six animal species that can only be found here and in a few other isolated spots throughout the Balkan Peninsula.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.nature-experience-bulgaria.com/nature-parks/rila-monastery-nature-park/>



## The Basics

**Climate** – The weather in Bulgaria at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

**Time** – GMT +2 hours (Summertime Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

**Language** – Bulgarian.

**Religion** – Bulgarian Orthodox.

**Currency** – Lev. Лв1 = 100 stotinki. Notes are in denominations of Лв 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1, Coins are in denominations of Лв 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 stotinki. The exchange rate is tied to the Euro at a fixed rate 1 Euro = Лв1.955.

**Banks** – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are in all towns and cities, as well as airports and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

**Credit cards** – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you. Varying amounts of commission can be charged for credit card payments.

**Electricity** – 230 volt, two-pin continental plug.

**Drinking water** – Tap water is safe to drink, (although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too).

**Shopping** – Shops are open Mon-Sat 1000-2000. Supermarkets are open all day, every day. Outside main areas, some shops may close at lunchtime.

**Telephones/mobiles** – The guarantee of free mobile phone roaming throughout the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway has ended. Check with your phone operator to find out about any roaming charges that might be applied after 1st January 2021. A new law means that you are protected from getting mobile data charges above

£45 without you knowing. Once you reach £45, you need to opt in to spend more so that you can continue using the internet while you are abroad. Your phone operator will tell how you can do this.

**Tipping** –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that, when receiving a good service, one awards with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services.

## Grading

This tour has been graded as **moderate**: Walking between sites and lots of standing for viewing.

## Useful information for packing

As the days of this tour are spent in nature where the ground can be uneven at times, we highly recommend bringing walking poles, which are very useful for maintaining balance on uneven ground. It is also important to have good shoes suitable for rough ground.

It is essential that you carry water with you when you are out on the day trips. You can buy bottled water locally or you can bring a water bottle that you can fill up daily.

A small day sack that you carry on your back is the most useful bag to have with you to carry whatever you need on the days out.

Although it is likely to be reasonably warm in July, especially in lowland areas, altitude temperatures may be a little cooler and evening temperatures might be around 10 to 15 degrees.

## Tour Manager

Your tour manager will be on hand during the tour to ensure that everything operates according to plan. If you have any problems or questions, please see him or her immediately and they will do their utmost to resolve any issues.



## Health

### Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager/guide if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor. There is normally a charge for calling out a doctor.

**Keep any receipts for insurance claims.**



### Hospital

Your Tour Manager/hotel reception will assist if you need to visit a hospital during your stay.

**Keep any receipts for insurance claims.**

### General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed, or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit for Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

### Inoculations

No compulsory vaccinations are required for travel in Bulgaria.

### Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.



## Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

### Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)

Before you travel, make sure you've got a valid UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or travel insurance with health cover.

You may not have access to free emergency medical treatment and could be charged for your healthcare if you do not have an EHIC or GHIC when visiting an EU country, or travel insurance with full healthcare cover when visiting Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. If you have an EHIC it will still be valid while it remains in date. Your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) will be valid if you're travelling to an EU country.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For further information about the GHIC please visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>



**Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:**

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7841 023807 or 00 44 7441 343850

**PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.**

If you find that you need consular assistance during your holiday:

British Embassy, Sofia, Bulgaria

9 Moskovska Street

Sofia 1000

Bulgaria

Tel: +359 933 9222

[britembinf@mail.orbitel.bg](mailto:britembinf@mail.orbitel.bg)

[BritishEmbassySofia@fco.gov.uk](mailto:BritishEmbassySofia@fco.gov.uk)

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Travel Editions

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Email: [tours@traveleditions.co.uk](mailto:tours@traveleditions.co.uk) [www.traveleditions.co.uk](http://www.traveleditions.co.uk)

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