



The nature and culture heritage of the Balkan and Transylvania Mountains

14 days/ 13 nights

In the first part of this 14 days long guided discovery adventure, you will see the Central Balkan National Park which is one of the largest and most valuable protected areas of Europe. It is covered with primeval beech forests which are unique in Europe. In the second part of your adventure, you will also discover the Romanian Carpathians, starting the Piatra Craiului and Bucegi Mountains which are the most popular and appreciated Romanian mountains. During this trip, you will witness the Balkan's wonderful diversity of flora and fauna so make sure you sign up to be amazed! You will also visit medieval fortresses and scattered traditional villages. Add the visit of two eastern capitals, Sofia and Bucharest, that will charm you with their mix of cultures and you have the recipe for an unforgettable trip.

YOUR PROGRAM

Day 1 - Arrival in Sofia

Arrival in Sofia. The Bulgarian capital has a rich heritage dated back from Roman times to present.

A must see in Sofia is The Crypt Icon Museum in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (1904) which holds the largest collection of Orthodox icons in Europe, a total of 200 icons dating from the 10th to 19th Century. This impressive basilica, one of the largest Eastern Orthodox cathedral in the world, can hold up to 6,000 people and its showcase is a beautiful gold plated dome. Lot to explore on your own: pedestrian streets, museums, art galleries, music halls, nice parks, cycling alee, shopping centers, excellent restaurants and nightlife. It is a world destination for contemporary and classic and jazz music and art performances. Orientation meeting at the hotel DITER/ BUDAPEST at 15h30. Guided visit of Sofia downtown on foot Dinner not included On request transfer Airport to hotel: 30 min (optional)



Day 2 - Sofia – Vitosha Nature park – Yustina wine cellar – Plovdiv

After breakfast we head to Vitosha nature Park for a pleasant walk by the famous stone rivers of Vitosha (giant boulders). Lunch in restaurant near Boyana church

The Boyana church (1259, UNESCO world heritage site) is considered to be one of the best example of the European



pre-Renaissance, 50 years before Giotto's Scravena church at Padova.

En route to Plovdiv we stop at Villa Yustina wine cellar (26km from Plovdiv) by the name of the great Roman/ Byzantine Emperor Justinian 1 the Great, an old Roman bridge still remaining in the center of the village! We experience both wine tasting and making our own coupage wine (blend) assisted by a professional winemaker from the cellar.

After lunch we head to Plovdiv. Plovdiv – the most beautiful and culturally rich Bulgarian city!

The city is famous for its Roman amphitheater and Roman Stadium, built 2nd c. AD. But part of Plovdiv charm comes from its Old Revival-style town with cobble stoned streets and beautifully restored Ottoman Baroque houses. The city is voted to be the European capital of culture in 2019 with Matera (Italy)

We stay in small hotel, walking distance from the center and the Old city.

B.L. Dinner not included

Walk 3-4 hrs, +/-600m

Transfer time 3:15 h



Day 3 - Roman Plovdiv – Central Balkan National Park – Dobrila Hut

In the morning we spend another 2h visiting the highlights of Plovdiv.

Today we hike on the main ridge of the Central Balkan chain (a national park, the deeply impressive beech forest is a UNESCO world nature heritage site since 2017).

Transfer (1h) to the Beklemeto Pass (at 1520m) on the central Balkan Mountain Range. The Central Balkans National Park is one of the largest and most valuable protected areas in Europe due to its wonderful ecosystem. Our walk today takes us through the park and we'll head up East via the big memorial Arch celebrating a Russian military campaign (1877/78 Russian-Turkish War) to Dobrila hut. (1804 m above sea level). Easy walking experience on a panoramic dirty mountain route and path.

NB Luggage is not going to be transferred that day for overnight, so take some essentials as additional clothes, towel No need of sleeping bags! Comfortable rooms, taking a shower is possible.

B.L.D

Walk 4h30-5h, +600/-200m

Transfer time 2.5h to Beklemeto pass



Day 4 - Central Balkan National Park – Dobrila hut – Ambaritsa hut – Tcherny Ossum - Ostrets

Dobrila hut has a very central location, near the ridge. Our way is to the North. (Option we can climb Vasiil Levski peak 2166 m). We go through a large area of pastures to Ambaritsa hut and later we take the path that goes down through the forest towards Tcherny Ossum river. We meet our bus.

On transfer we pay a visit to the Great Troyan monastery (17th century) the third in size in Bulgaria. The most significant architectural and cultural monument is the main church “The Assumption of Virgin Mary”. The church is with a cross dome, built by stones with belts of two lines of bricks. The wall-paintings in the church are a rich gallery of the art of Zahari Zograf (1810 – 1853), a top of his art.

In the late afternoon we arrive at our final destination – Ostrets hamlet (Apriltsi area). Our hotel offers a nice view to the mountain, and a small outdoor swimming pool. We stay there for two overnights.

B.L.D

Walk 6hrs, +200/-1100m

Transfer time 1.5h



Day 5 - Another day walking in the Central Balkan National Park – Vidima waterfall

We discover on walk the neighborhood of our hotel. Several options – Ostrets peak (1000m) or the eco-path to Vidima



waterfall into the Northern Djendem reserve.

Option: In the afternoon if interested people it is worth visit the incredible Orechaka Traditional craft and art Exhibition – the best place in Bulgaria to buy at fair price ceramics, wood carving, textile and many more, Bulgarian traditional plumb brandy (Rakia)

The rest of afternoon will be at leisure.

B.L.D

Walk 3-4hrs, +480/-480m

Transfer time 30 min.- 1.5h



Day 6 - Head to Veliko Tarnovo - the city of Bulgarian Tsars and Transfiguration monastery

Today we leave the Bulgarian mountains and head to VelikoTarnovo - the Bulgarian City of Tsars.

VelikoTarnovo was a medieval kingdom and rival to Constantinople with a fascinating citadel and Old town. As one of Bulgaria's oldest towns, we'll explore the magnificent restored fortress, meandering cobbled streets and the little hidden 18th Century Eastern Orthodox Transfiguration Monastery nestled in a gorge on the Yantra River. The monastery is located a mere 3km from Veliko Tarnovo so we'll first walk to the town before we set off on a walking tour of the highlights. Ulitsa Gurko is the town's oldest street and a wonderful place to wander because of the ancient houses that are full of colour.

After our walking tour the rest of the afternoon will be at leisure for you to stroll and enjoy the town. Once the former seat of medieval tsars, you'll visit the scenic Tsarevets Museum hill Reserve on the hill which overlooks the town.

Overnight at small central hotel at V.Tarnovo or Arbanassi depending occupancy.

B.L.D

Walk 3-4hrs, +400/-300m

Transfer time 2h



Day 7 - Making our way to Romania

We start early. After six days in Bulgaria we are heading to Romania. This the day with the longest transfer (nearly 6h) Before crossing the greatest European River - the Danube River, we visit the medieval Ivanovo Rock-hewn church (UNESCO heritage site, 14th century) on foot.

After we cross the border at Ruse we head for Bucharest for well-deserved lunch. Our final destination is the small resort city of Sinaia, at the foot of Bucegi Mountains National Park. In the late afternoon 30 min walk around the gardens of the Peles Castle, to relax after 1 day of bus. Longer walk possible on the forests above the castle, depending on the arrival time.

Walk 30-40min (in Bulgaria) and up to 2 h (in the area of Peles castle)

Transfer time in Bulgaria 2 hrs

Transfer time in Romania 3.5 hrs

Dinner: at the hotel



Day 8 - Arrival in Brasov

After breakfast we head up to the Bucegi Mountain by cable car. We'll have a 3h walk on the plateau and we'll see some of Romania's most interesting natural tractions: The Sphinx and the Old ladies (Babele) – 2 rocks carved by the weather along the years. In the second part of the day, we'll visit the beautiful town of Brasov – the Crown city, as known from its German colonist's name. Besides its charming medieval buildings (the Black Church is the most important), we'll go up to the old tower



from the old square for mesmerizing views of the city. Here you'll also find the first Romanian school, cobble streets, shops and many more. You'll be enchanted by the different feeling from Bucharest and the landscape around it. We'll end the day in a cozy small hotel in the center.

B.L

Walk 3 hrs, +200m

Transfer time: ~1h



Day 9 - Varghis Keys & Viscri

We'll start the day with a short transfer from Brasov to Covasna county. Once there we'll have a 2-3h walk through the Varghis Keys: hundreds of caves formed ever since the Glacial Age, limestone cliffs and crisp fresh air will surely relax you and make you enjoy the unspoiled nature. After this natural cure and a hearty lunch, we'll go to the village of Viscri with its UNESCO fortified church. The village regained its beauty after a massive renovation done by Prince Charles foundation. The construction of the fortified church in the village center began in 1100 A.D., a fact confirmed by the tombstone inscription in the cemetery that surrounds the church. In 1185, Saxons colonized the area settling in the south-east of Transylvania. The Viscri settlement was officially named in 1400 – it was given the Latin title of Alba Ecclesia, or "White Church." We'll also visit a local brick-maker and forger, who contribute to the villager's needs. You'll experience the old Saxon way of living, surrounded by green hills and history.

We'll have dinner and spend the night at one of the local guesthouses.

B.L.D

Walk 2-3 hrs

Transfer time: ~1.5h+1.5h



Day 10 - Piatra Craiului National Park

Today we arrive before lunch time in Vulcan village, in the courtyard of a fortified church. This is a unique occasion for talking about medieval heritage of Saxons villages in Romania. Here we'll also enjoy a tasty home-made lunch, in the church yard if the weather allows us.

Then we'll go to Zarnesti, to start our first trekking in the National Park of Piatra Craiului. Piatra Craiului Natural Park features the longest and highest limestone ridge in the country (over 15 miles long and 6560 ft. high). Bordered by glacial lakes, the ridge is regarded as one of the most beautiful sights in the Carpathians. We'll be impressed by the Zarnesti gorges, canyons with rock walls reaching 200m height.

In the evening we'll arrive in the village of Magura, where Mrs. Lucia we'll wait to accommodate us and serve a delicious dinner. Nice landscapes around the guesthouse.

B.L.D

Walk 2-3 hrs

Transfer time: ~2h



Day 11 - Romanian meadows and cheese

We roam the meadows, walk to meet the shepherds and their beautiful flocks, traversing forests and scattered villages. We



reach the foot of the main ridge and we enter a big traditional sheepfold to see the shepherds' way of life during the summer. We'll enjoy the picnic at the sheepfold and also have the opportunity to taste some fresh Romanian cheese. From here we'll move to the village of Moieciu de Sus, where we'll enjoy a dinner consisting of award-winning "sarmale" (stuffed cabbage rolls) and spend the next 2 nights.

B.L.D

Walk 5 hrs, +500 / -700 m



Day 12 - Bucegi mountains

Climb into the Bucegi's mountains. The Bucegi is believed to be the Dacian holy mountain Kogainon, on which the God Zalmoxis resided in a cave. This National Park has been proposed for protection in 1936, due to peerless landscapes and great diversity of plant and animal species. A longer walk is possible along the meadow of Gutanu and the vertical walls of the Bucegi's ridge, who will offer you beautiful landscape and view over Piatra Craiului ridge. Night back at the guesthouse. We can be sure that all our meals here are made with their bio products.

B.L.D

Walk 4-6 hrs, + / -750 m



Day 13 - Transfer to Bucharest

Trekking in the heart of worthy landscapes detached from the fairy tales are in the program. We walk across scattered houses and observe the life of shepherds. All this area has a deep history and tradition in making the cheese, which is still today well preserved. A tasting break is a must for those who are fond of good food, because we pass through Fundatica, a small mountain village with very old houses and famous for its smoked cheese. We enter to visit one of the oldest houses in this village and we will be impressed by the people who lives in it, their collection of old objects, and their warm smiles. Transfer back to Bucharest in the evening.

Night in a central 3* hotel.

B.L

Walk 3 hrs, +350 / -450 m

Transfer time: 3.5h



Day 14 - End of the trip

After the breakfast and depending on your flight schedule, possibility to freely discover the Romanian capital. Transfer to the airport.



Breakfast

Additional information

TARIFFS

1545 euros per person.

5 pax departure supplement: price /person : 195 euros per person.

Extra night in Sofia (pre-tour) single : 60 euros per person.

Extra night in Sofia (pre-tour) double : 75 euros per person.

Transfer Sofia airport - hotel (if extra-night in Sofia): 2 people

: 30 euros per person.

Transfer Sofia airport - hotel (if extra-night in Sofia): 3-4 people : 40 euros per person.

Extra night in Bucharest (post-tour) single : 60 euros per person.

Extra night in Bucharest (post-tour) double : 70 euros per person.

Transfer Bucharest hotel – airport (1-3 pax) : 30 euros per person.

Transfer Bucharest hotel – airport (4-7 pax) : 40 euros per person.

INCLUDED

English-speaking guide, Bulgarian guide until day 7, Romanian guide Day 7-Day 13

Accommodations

Meals: according to the given meals plan

All transfers by private bus (the bus cross the bridge and stop in front the Romanian Customs and border check.

NOT INCLUDED

Transfers Day 1 (from Airport to hotel) and D14 (from hotel to Airport)

Entrances to museums, personal expenses,

Other drinks (except glass of wine or traditional local brandy – rakia or what is specified in the tour).

No bottled water

Photo taxes

Entry fees into monuments except the ones in the tour program

Items of personal nature & tips

CARRYING

All transfers by private bus (the bus cross the bridge and stop in front the Romanian Customs and border check

ACCOMMODATION



Accommodation, base in double room.

D 1: Sofia, 3* hotel in the Sofia downtown (Diter, Budapest or similar)

D 2 Plovdiv – 3* small central hotel

D 3 Central Balkan – Dobrila hut

D 4-5: Ostrets 3* convenient and friendly hotel, stunning view

D 6: Veliko Tarnovo - 3* central family hotel viewing the meandres of Yantra river

D 7: Sinaia, guesthouse, private bathroom

D 8: Brasov, 2* hotel in the center

D 9: Viscri village, guesthouse

D 10: Magura village, guesthouse, private bathroom

D 11, 12: Moieciu de Sus village, guesthouse, private bathroom

D 13: Bucharest, hotel 3* in the center

SIZE OF GROUP

From 6 people

DEPARTURE

Sofia, Bulgaria

DISPERSION

Bucharest, Romania

EQUIPMENT TO TAKE

- Walking Boots Should be sturdy and of good quality to handle all types of terrain. Ankle support is important. Leather, with a good durable sole, is the most suitable or, for people who prefer a more lightweight boot, Cordura/leather boots which have Gore-Tex or sympatex waterproofing. They should be well broken in and be of correct fit. Proof your boots before you leave home. Waxing your boots regularly prolongs their life.
- Lightweight walking shoes/sneakers For wear around towns & villages. They can also be a backup pair for your walk.
- Socks & Underwear Take only good quality socks with wicking and insulating qualities. Road test them before you go on the trip to be sure they are comfortable with your boots. Take a suitable quantity of underwear (washing facilities are limited).
- Several Shirts and Walking Trousers T-shirts preferably with collar and at least 1 long-sleeved shirt for sun protection. If you sweat a lot it is a good idea to purchase at least one t-shirt in a breathable material. These are fast drying, keep moisture away from your skin and are available from outdoor stores. The quick-drying loose-fitting trousers are popular. You should bring one pair of the loose-fitting type trousers to wear in cities and for evenings etc. Shorts for warmer weather.
- Warm jacket Fleece Polartec or warm wool shirt for evenings. This will be worn a great deal; be sure it is totally suitable for your needs. A fleeced jacket which blocks the wind (Windstopper) is the most preferable.
- Waterproof Jacket & Pants Must be waterproof, not shower proof, Gore-Tex is best. It must fit comfortably whilst wearing warm clothing and wearing your rucksack. It must have a proper hood, zipper flap and storm cuffs and come down over hips.



Pants should have a zip on the side of the leg to make it easier to get them on quickly over boots.

-Daypack 24-35 liter rucksack is sufficient – make sure that it can hold all of your daily requirements such as water bottle or bladder, camera, warm clothes, and waterproofs.

Mandatory equipment

- Waterproof tracksuits (breathable Gore tex type jacket and possibly trousers)
- Warm fleece jacket
- High walking shoes (preferably already worn)
- Backpack for hiking large enough to carry all the business
- Food
- Water bottle (allow at least 1,5l of water at the beginning of the day)

Optional equipment

- Camping stove
- Cutlery and pans for picnics
- Hiking Battles
- Lamp (frontal preferably)
- Toilet paper or tissues for the day
- Solar cream
- Safety glasses with protection number 4
- Personal pharmacy
- Tent
- Sleeping bag

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

In order to avoid plastic use, please bring your own bottle to refill and boxes for some packed lunches