

Essence of Bulgaria**6 days – 5 nights****Sofia, Rila Monastery, Plovdiv, Bachkovo Monastery, Kazanlak, Etara, Sokolsi Monastery, Veliko Tarnovo, Arbanassi, Transfiguration Monastery
Discovery, Culture, History**

**This program may be operated for individuals or for groups
This is a suggested itinerary**

Over the centuries, Bulgaria has been successively influenced by Byzantine, Greek, Russian cultures, and that of Western countries. In the Middle Ages (particularly in the 10th and 11th centuries), Bulgaria was the center of Slavic culture. This was practically destroyed during the centuries of Turkish domination. The revival of Bulgarian literature in the 18th century marked the revival of nationalism.

Day 1: Sofia

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met by our representative and driven to your hotel for check-in. The rest of the morning is free for you to rest and relax. In the afternoon take a walking tour of the city to visit the main landmarks including the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Holy Sophia Church, The Russian Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle Maker, St. George's Rotunda, St. Nedelya Church, the Presidential Office Building, Parliament Square, the Ivan Vazov National Theatre, Borisova Gardens and the National Palace of Culture. In the evening your guide will take you to a local restaurant for a typical meal. Overnight at your hotel. [D]

Day 2: Sofia, Rila Monastery, Plovdiv

Rila Monastery is the largest and most prestigious monastery in Bulgaria and one of nine sites in Bulgaria under UNESCO protection. The complex includes an adjoining church and kitchen and is a beacon of Bulgarian architecture. After visiting the monastery continue to Plovdiv, the second-largest city in Bulgaria, known as a former stronghold of ancient Rome with several monuments from this period, such as the Roman Theatre and Stadium and the Aqueduct. We also visit St. Marina Church and the Ethnographic Museum before checking in at your hotel for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 3: Plovdiv, Bachkovo Monastery, Kazanlak

This morning we drive to Bachkovo Monastery, the second-largest in the country, renowned for its collection of old icons, coins and metal plates. A 2-hour drive to Kazanlak where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon, visit the Thracian tombs discovered in 1944 and rebuilt 30 years later. Witness the precision of the tomb walls decorated with paintings of battle scenes. Other points of interest are the Museum of Roses - that depicts the history of rose oil production in Bulgaria - and the Ethnographic Complex of Kulata. Its rich exhibition presents the traditional culture of Thrace, the Rhodopes and Sredna gora from the Bulgarian Renewal period. The museum's works of art include more than 100 paintings, icons, statuettes, panels, wood and metal sculptures by artists of the 19th and 20th centuries. Continue to the hotel for dinner and overnight. [B/L/D]

Day 4: Kazanlak, Etara, Sokolsi Monastery, Veliko Tarnovo

A busy day in prospect as first you visit the Etara openair museum of arts and crafts before touring the Sokolski Monastery. Then, take a 1-hour drive to Veliko Tarnovo, a town symbolic of the reign of the Second Bulgarian Empire as proven by the fortress of Tsarevets. It is steeped in regality as the former home of several Bulgarian Emperors with its palaces, marketplace and patriarchal cathedral among the points of interest. In the central part of the fortress is the palace: several buildings surrounded by an interior stone wall, two defensive towers and two entrances. It houses the Throne Room, the Court Church and the Tsar's home. The ascent of the bell tower, accessible to visitors, offers an exceptional view of the city. Rest of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

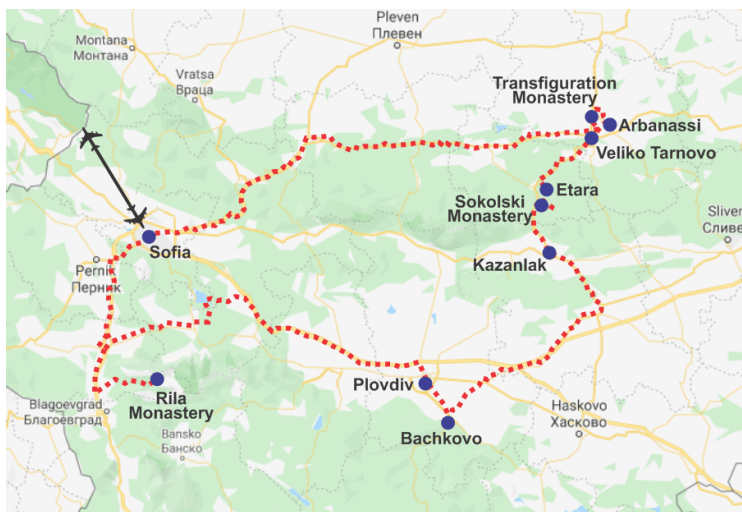
Signature option: Tsarevets Fortress Sound & Light Show

This evening you may attend the Sound and Light show, a unique attraction which, thanks to hundreds of multicolored lights and lasers, accompanied by music and the sound of bells, represents

important moments of Bulgarian history.

Day 5: Veliko Tarnovo, Arbanassi, Transfiguration Monastery, Sofia

Your quick tour of northern Bulgaria continues in the village of Arbanassi, a small, quiet village overlooking the valley and the town of Veliko Tarnovo, where the oldest houses look like fortresses, with their walls pierced by loopholes, with some them classified as Historical and Cultural Monuments. The Konstantsaliev house is one of the large houses with rich decoration preserved until today. Made in the 17th century, it was later bought by Atanas Konstantsaliev and still bears his name today. In 1913, it was ruined by an earthquake and later bought, restored and donated to the museum. In 1958, an exhibition was organized to show the way of life of the 19th century. Note the Church of the Nativity, the oldest church in Arbanassi, without a bell tower so as not to shock the Ottoman occupier. Its interior, is lined with over 3,500 images from the New Testament, is popular. Later in the day, you will take in the Preobrazhensky (Transfiguration) Monastery, one of the former Bulgarian monasteries. It is the largest of the monasteries located in the vicinity of Véliko Tarnovo and ranks fourth after the monasteries of Rila, Batchkovo and Troyan. The Preobrazhensky Monastery was founded during the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, between the 13th and 14th centuries. At first it functioned as a monastery for sisters, attached to the monastery of Vatopède of Mount Athos but in 1360 it gained its autonomy and the right to manage its affairs independently. After lunch at a local restaurant start your 3-hour drive to Sofia for dinner and overnight. [B/D]



Day 6: Sofia, USA

Breakfast at the hotel before your transfer to Sofia airport to board your flight back home. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [D] = Dinner | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner | [B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Your Tour includes:

- Round-trip airfare USA-Sofia
- Roundtrip Transfers
- Assistance at airport
- 5 nights' accommodation:
 - Sofia 2 nights
 - Plovdiv 1 night
 - Kazanlak 1 night
 - Veliko Tarnovo 1 night
- Meals
 - Buffet breakfast daily
 - 2 lunches
 - 5 dinners
- Walking tour of Sofia
- Visit to the Rila Monastery
- Tour the Roman ruins of Plovdiv
- Visit Bachkovo Monastery and Icon collection
- Witness the Thracian tombs in Kazanlak

- Tour the medieval town of Veliko Tarnovo
- Visit the Transfiguration Monastery and Nativity Church
- English-speaking driver/guide
- Entrance fees for sites visited
- Porterage service at airport and hotels
- Transportation by A/C vehicles
- All local taxes

Tour does not include:

- Taxes or surcharges related to airline tickets
- Cities tax
- Travel insurance
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Other meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Extras and gratuities
- Early check-in, late check-out
- Expenses of personal nature

Recommended hotels in your Tour:

City	Hotel Name	Tripadvisor
Tourist Class		
Sofia	Hotel Budapest	4.5
Plovdiv	Best Western Plovdiv Premier Hills	5
Kazanlak	Hotel Diamond	4
Veliko Tarnovo	Hotel Gurko	4.5
First Class		
Sofia	Crystal Palace Boutique Hotel	4.5
Plovdiv	Landmark Creek Hotel	4.5
Kazanlak	Hotel Diamond*	4
Veliko Tarnovo	Meridian Hotel Bolyarski*	4
Deluxe		
Sofia	Sense Hotel	4,5
Plovdiv	Hotel Residence City Garden	4.5
Kazanlak	Hotel Diamond*	4
Veliko Tarnovo	Meridian Hotel Bolyarski	4

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

* Best hotel in town.

Tour Prices:

From: \$999 including airfare

Add-ons available from all US gateways.

Prices are per person and may change without notice

These programs can be customized for individuals and for groups

Changes to this program may be requested by phone (1855-55-TOURS) or using the web FIT Quote Request

• **Airfare**

We also be glad to add the necessary airfare from your gateway so you take advantage of our special discounted leisure fares

• **Program**

You may add or remove;

- o Trip days
- o Cities and sites
- o Meals

• **Other options**

- o The program was designed with private services, however, we may substitute shared sightseeing where available
- o If you prefer deluxe services we may operate this program including private driver, private guide and concierge service.

• **Quotation**

Once we have designed the program the way you want we'll give you a quote within 2 business days.

Tour Code: BG02SOF20TB

Options:

- Lunches and dinners can be arranged for individuals, families and groups at top restaurants or any restaurant requested by you.

- We can revise the itinerary to spend more time and provide more depth in those areas that you are interested on.
- Any other changes to the itinerary will be accommodated depending on the facilities available in the area.

Group Quotations

- If you wish to use these programs for your group or as the basis for a customized journey please either call us (1-855-55-TOURS or use the web Group Quote Request.
- In either case our specialists will work with to refine all the details and they will get you a quote with 2 business days. Quotes may be obtained for the air and land portions of just for the land journey.
- Booking both air and land with us will represent savings for you because of our buying power and longtime relationship with the airlines.
- We will also may have the choice between regular fares and special leisure fares not available to the public.