

**Surva Festival 2023**  
**4 days – 3 nights**  
**Sofia, Rila, Boyana, Pernik**  
**Fun, Folklore, Relaxation, Culture, History**

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

*You will be touched by the magic of the masquerade tradition that still survives in the region of Pernik. Everything here is for real! You will surrender to the appeal of Bulgarian folklore reinforced with healthy helpings of food and drinks. You will feel the creative presence of generations of exponents of the tradition. An incandescent fiery spectacle, bonfires and light shows will envelop you in the festival's mystery.*

### **Day 1 – Fri, TBA: Sofia**

Transfer from Sofia airport to the hotel and check-in. Morning at leisure. In the afternoon a short drive to the city center for a walking tour in the capital. Sofia is a city with a 7000-year history, which makes it a unique phenomenon in Europe, and places it among the settlements dating back to most distant antiquity. It has the hectic atmosphere of a big capital city and a compact center where all main sites can be visited on foot. Roads from all parts of the world have been meeting here - peoples have come and gone, civilizations have advanced and declined, but the city has remained. Our walking tour includes: Alexander Nevski Memorial Cathedral, St. Sofia Church, Parliament Square, the monument of King Liberator, Russian Church, National Theatre, The Ethnographic Museum, The National art Gallery outside, Archeological Museum outside, the Presidency, St. George`s Rotunda and St. Nedelya square. Some time to rest and relax before dinner at a local restaurant. Return to the hotel for overnight. [B/D]

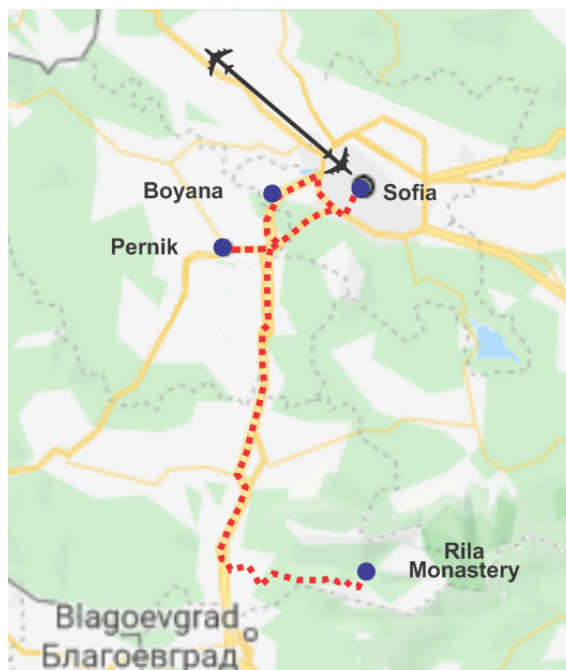
### **Day 2 – Sat, TBA: Sofia (Rila Monastery & Boyana Church)**

After breakfast we drive around 1:30 hours to Rila Monastery, a UNESCO site, the most famous and fascinating monastery in Bulgaria. The entire complex is quite impressive for its size. The 4-floor residential part consists of no less than 300 monks' cells, 4 chapels, an abbot's room, kitchen, library and guestrooms for donors. The kitchen is particularly interesting for its really huge cooking vessels. The exterior of the monastery is no less intriguing for its high and severe stone walls (reaching 4 floors and even more at some places) cut through by small windows – reminding of a military fort rather than a monastery. Once in the complex, it is worth visiting the monastery's museum, which hosts a unique work of art, namely The Raphael's Cross. The cross is made of a whole piece of wood (32" x 17") and is named after its creator. After the visit your guide will take you to a typical fish restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon we drive back another 90 minutes to visit Boyana Church, a one-floor building dating from the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century, a site not to be missed during a visit to Sofia. The church is so precious because its frescoes are considered one of the earliest traces of the Renaissance in Europe. The faces of the saints, as well as their general representation, are just as particular, all different from each other and emerging from any established canon of representation. The frescoes have a total of 240 drawings, most of which date from the year 1259. After the visit a 20-minute drive to the center of Sofia to enjoy dinner at a local restaurant before returning to the hotel for overnight. [B/L/D]

### **Day 3 – Sun, TBA: Sofia (Pernik Surva Festival)**

Today we take a short drive to Pernik to spend the day of the Surva International Festival of Masquerade Games, which is the oldest festival of its kind in Bulgaria. Once a year, during the last weekend in January, this small industrial town becomes awash with color as it has done since the festival's inauguration in 1966. In 2015, UNESCO designated the festival as being a site of intangible cultural heritage, as it is a unique event that is unlike anything else held worldwide and displays traditions that were almost entirely lost during Bulgaria's years of communist rule. It is a celebration of ancient folklore and pagan traditions, which is little known by Western tourists. Participants dress

in a wonderfully weird array of elaborate costumes and masks including fluffy outfits that resemble large mythical beasts designed to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck for the upcoming spring harvest. Outfits are typically made from sheep skin and wool and decorated with colorful beads, ribbons, wood, fabrics, papier maché and animal horns, and are accessorized with floral headdresses and bell-laden belts. About 100 groups from every folklore region of Bulgaria attend, as well as a few international participants, and usually there are about 6,000 visitors at the event. The masks vary depending on the region the participants are from and those taking part in the festivities are known as Kukeri. Originally all the Kukeri would have been single men trying to attract a wife, but nowadays more women and children are also becoming involved. During the parades we'll get to experience a variety of colorful customs, folk songs and dances, as well as seeing a number of outdoor exhibitions around the town. After dinner at a local restaurant we return to Sofia for overnight. [B/D]



**Day 4 – Mon, TBA: Sofia, Departure**

Breakfast and departure transfer Sofia’s airport or continuation of stay in Bulgaria if you decide to join another tour. [B]

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

**Your Tour includes**

- Round-trip airfare USA-Sofia
- Arrival and departure transfers
- 3 nights’ accommodation in Sofia
- Meals
  - Breakfast daily
  - 1 lunch
  - 3 dinner
- Walking sightseeing of Sofia
- Excursion to Rila Monastery
- Visit Boyana Church
- Attendance to Surva Festival
- Transportation by deluxe vehicle

- English- speaking guide for the whole program (days 1-3)
- Entrance fees for sites visited
- All local taxes

**Tour does not include:**

- Taxes or surcharges related to airline tickets
- 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
<b>Tourist Class</b>		
Sofia	Hotel Budapest	4.5
	Magic Castle	4.5
<b>First Class</b>		
Sofia	Crystal Palace Boutique Hotel	4.5
	Novotel Sofia	4.5
<b>Deluxe</b>		
Sofia	Sense Hotel	4,5
	Hilton Sofia	4.5

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

**Tour Prices:**

**From: \$1,149 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;

- Trip days
- Cities and sites
- Meals

• **Other options**

- The program was designed with private services, however, we may substitute shared sightseeing where available
- 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:** BG01SOF20TB

**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.