

TOUR DISCOVER BULGARIA

(8 days)

Day 1: SOFIA

Arrival in Sofia, meeting with the English speaking guide who will accompany the group throughout the tour in addition to step on guides where required. Visit the **centre of the capital**: the Church "St. Sofia", the Memorial Cathedral "Aleksandar Nevski ", a Bulgarian Orthodox cathedral in Sofia, built in Neo-Byzantine style, which serves as the cathedral church of the Patriarch of Bulgaria and it is one of the largest Eastern Orthodox cathedrals in the world, as well as one of Sofia's symbols and primary tourist attractions. Visit the Church "St. Nedelia", the old Mosque, the Synagogue, which are considered for the most important in the Balkans. Accommodation in a hotel. Half board.

Day 2: SOFIA – TROYAN - VELIKO TARNOVO (270 km)

Breakfast. Departure to Troyan. Visit of **Troyan Monastery**, the third largest monastery in Bulgaria. It is located in the northern part of the country and it was founded no later than the end of the 16th century. The main church of the monastery was reconstructed near the end of Ottoman rule during the Bulgarian National Revival period by a master-builder called Konstantin in 1835. The ornate interior and exterior of the church were painted between 1847 and 1849 by Zahari Zograf, a popular Bulgarian painter of the time, who also painted the central church of the Rila Monastery, the largest monastery in Bulgaria. The iconostasis in the central church is a wood carving and dates from 1839. The Troyan Monastery is also from the 17 century and it is the home of one of the holiest icons in Bulgarian Orthodoxy, the Three-Handed Virgin. Many people make a pilgrimage to this monastery on St. George's Day because of an icon of St. George in the main church. Departure to **Veliko Tarnovo**. Visit the old town: Tzarevets Architectural and Museum Reserve. This is a medieval stronghold located on a hill with the same name. It served as the Second Bulgarian Empire's primary fortress and strongest bulwark from 1185 to 1393, housing the royal and the patriarchal palaces, and it is a popular tourist attraction. Visit the market-place Samovodska Charshiya. Accommodation in a hotel. Full board.

Day 3: VELIKO TARNOVO - SCHUMEN - VARNA (120 km)

Breakfast. Visit the village of **Arbanassi**: old house Kostantsaliev and the Church of the Nativity. Departure for **Shumen**. Visit the Tombul (Djamia) Mosque. It is the largest mosque in Bulgaria and among the largest on the Balkans. Built between 1740 and 1744, it was initially located in the northeastern Bulgarian (then Ottoman) town centre, but is now in Shumen's southwest parts as the town centre shifted. The mosque's name comes from the shape of its dome. Departure for Madara and visit the famous rock relief of **Madara Horseman (UNESCO)**. The relief depicts a majestic horseman 23 m above ground level in an almost vertical 100-metre-high cliff. The horseman, facing right, is thrusting a spear into a lion lying at his horse's feet. An eagle is flying in front of the horseman and a dog is running after him. The scene symbolically depicts a military triumph. The monument dates back from 710 AD and it is being in UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979. Visit the Stone Forest "**Pobitite kamani**". This consists of several groups of natural rock formations on a total area of 70 km². The formations are mainly stone columns between 5 and 7 metres high and from 0.3 to 3 metres thick. The columns do not have solid foundations, but instead are hollow and filled with sand, and look as they stuck into the surrounding sands, which gives the phenomenon's name. Arrival in **Varna**, the largest city on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast, third-largest in Bulgaria after Sofia and Plovdiv. Accommodation in a hotel. Full board.

Day 4: VARNA – NESSEBAR – KAZANLAK (280 km)

Breakfast. Visit the **Cathedral of Varna** and the **Museum of History**. Departure for **Nessebar**. Nessebar is a major tourist attraction and became in a popular area with several large resorts—the largest one is Sunny Beach, which is situated immediately to the north of Nessebar. Nessebar has found itself on the frontier of an empire several times

and because of it, it is a town with a rich history. The ancient part of the town is situated on a peninsula (previously an island) connected to the mainland by a narrow man-made isthmus, and it bears evidence of occupation by different civilisations over the course of its existence. The abundance of historic buildings prompted UNESCO to include Nessebar in its list of World Heritage Sites in 1983. **Visit the old churches and the old centre (UNESCO)**. In the late afternoon arrival in **Kazanlak**, the capital of the Roses's valley. The region around Kazanlak has been inhabited for thousands years and they are traces of civilization dating back from 2000 BC. Accommodation in a hotel. Full board.

** In the period from the middle of May to the beginning of June, it could be organized visiting of the blooming fields, accompanied by folklore program, played by local dancers*

Day 5: KAZANLAK – BACHKOVO – PLOVDIV (160 km)

Breakfast. Visit the important **Thracian Burial (UNESCO)**. In the 4th century BC, near the ancient Thracian capital of Seuthopolis and close to the city, a magnificent Thracian tomb was built. Consisting of a vaulted brickwork "beehive" tomb, it contains, among other things, painted murals representing a Thracian couple at a ritual funeral feast. The tomb was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. Visit the laboratory of oil of rouses. Visit the Church of the Nativity of Shipka. Departure for the **Bachkovo Monastery**, the second of importance in Bulgaria. It is an important monument of Christian architecture and one of the largest and oldest Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Europe. It is located on the right bank of the Chepelare River, 189 km from Sofia and 10 km south from Asenovgrad, and it is directly subordinate to the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The monastery is known and appreciated for the unique combination of Byzantine, Georgian and Bulgarian culture, united by the common faith. Departure for **Plovdiv**. In the afternoon visit the town: the Ethnographic Museum, the "Nebet Tepe" hill, the Church of St.St. Costantin and Elena, the old Theatre, the old Mosque. Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It is a contemporary of Troy and Mycenae and it is older than Rome, Athens, Carthage or Istanbul (Constantinople). Plovdiv has more than 200 known archaeological sites, 30 of which are of national importance. Some of the most famous sites include the Roman Theatre (early 2nd century AD) and Stadium (late 2nd century AD), the Nebet Tepe archaeological complex and the noted samples of Bulgarian National Revival architecture, such as the Balabanov House, the Lamartine House, and the houses of Georgiadi, Nedkovich, and Hindian. The Old Town of Plovdiv is a historic preservation site known for its unique Bulgarian Renaissance architectural style. Almost every house in the Old Town is characteristically impressive in its exterior and interior decoration. Accommodation in a hotel. Full board.

Day 6: PLOVDIV – KOPRIVSHTIZA – SOFIA (220 km)

Breakfast and departure to **Koprivshtiza**, one of the centres of the April Uprising in 1876. The first shot of the April Uprising against the Ottoman occupation was here. It is known for its authentic Bulgarian architecture and with its folk music, festivals, make it a very popular tourist destination. Koprivshtitsa is one of the characteristic Bulgarian towns, still preserving the atmosphere of the Bulgarian National Revival period of the 19th century. The town boasts a large number of architectural monuments from the period, 383 as whole most of which have been restored to their original appearance. Visit 2 old houses. Continuing to Sofia. Before arriving, stop to visit the **Monastery of Kremikovtzi**, which was founded in the 14th century during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander. During this time there were about 14 new monasteries in Sofia. Destroyed in 1332, it was rebuilt in 1493 and built the church of San George, which interior contains paintings of extraordinary value (the color is a solemn and harmonious, elegant plastic figurines), like a gallery of artwork created by the artists from the great school of Tarnovo. Accommodation in a hotel. Full board.

Day 7: SOFIA – RILA – SOFIA (240 km)

Breakfast. Departure to **Rila Monastery (UNESCO)**. Founded in the 10th century, the Rila Monastery is regarded as one of Bulgaria's most important cultural, historical and architectural monuments. It is also a key tourist attraction in Bulgaria and Southern Europe as a whole. It is traditionally thought that the monastery was founded by the hermit Ivan Rilski, whose name it bears, during the rule of Tsar Peter I (927-968). The monastery complex, regarded as one of the foremost masterpieces of Bulgarian National Revival architecture was declared a National Historical Monument in 1976 and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983. Since 1991 it has been entirely subordinate to the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In the afternoon return to Sofia. Visit the **National Museum of History** and the **Boyana Church (UNESCO)**. The small church is an unique example of the

medieval church architecture in the Balkans. The building was erected and then three times repaired in different historical periods, in fact it is constructed at the end of X century, but it undergoes its first change in XIII and the second in XIX century. What really make it special are its frescos on the interior. Because the technique by which are made the oldest ones (XIII century) and especially because of the sketch form of the perspective are considered to be predecessors of the stylistic innovative thematic of the large Italian painting. Full board.

Day 8: SOFIA

Breakfast and departure from Sofia.

TOUR OF BULGARIA net quote valid until October 2013						
	Min. 35 pax	Min. 30 pax	Min. 28 pax	Min. 24 pax	Min. 20 pax	Min. 15 pax
Per person in a DBL	635 €	645 €	655 €	670 €	685 €	725 €
Supplement for SGL	155 €					
Free	1 for minimum 24 paying tourists in a double room 1 for minimum 34 paying tourists in a single room					
The price includes	English speaking guide who will accompany the group throughout the tour; Transport by air-conditioned bus; Full board including 1\2 l. mineral water; Overnight stays in hotel of the class indicated, 1 folklore evening; entrance fees, meals and accommodation for the guides and driver; customs fees and tolls;					
The price does not includes	Flight and airport taxes, insurance, other drinks, tips, portorage, extras and anything not specifically mentioned in "The price included"					
Planned visits	SOFIA: Rotunda of "St. George", church " St. Sofia", Cathedral "Alexander Nevski", Boyana Church (UNESCO), National Museum of History, Mosque, Synagogue MADARA: The Knight of the scale (UNESCO) VARNA: The Historical Museum NESEBAR: Old Town (UNESCO) PLOVDIV: Ethnographic Museum, Church "St. St. Constantine and Helen", the Old Town, the Roman Theatre (outside) VELIKO TARNOVO: The hill Tsarevets, The artisans' quarter ARBANASSI: The House-Museum Kostanzaliev, the church "Nativity" KAZANLAK: The Thracian Tomb (UNESCO) KOPRIVSHTICA: 2 houses- museum, the church "Uspenie Bogirodichno" MONASTERIES: Rila Monastery (UNESCO), Bachkovo Monastery, Troyan Monastery					
Planned hotels	SOFIA: Dedeman Princess 4* (or sim.) www.dedeman.com VELIKO TARNOVO: Yantra 4* (or sim.) http://www.yantrabg.com/ VARNA: Panorama 4* (or sim.) www.panoramabg.com KAZANLAK: Hotel Palace 3+* (or sim.) http://www.hotel-palas.com/ PLOVDIV: Dedeman Trimonzium 4+* (or sim.) www.dedeman.com					
Supplement for optional services	Hotel Arena di Serdica 5* http://www.arenadiserdica.com/ 22 € p.p. For night Hotel Radisson Blue Sas 5* 25 € p.p. For nigh Drinks: 3 € per person per meal (1\4 l. wine or beer or soft drink) Cathedral "Alexander Nevski" Crypt: 3 € per person Museum of the Rila Monastery: 3 € per person Folklore program and visiting of the blooming fields: 20 € p.p. for min. 16 pax					
Note	The order of the excursions can be variations for technical reasons					