



Trip Dossier for Active Bulgaria

Trip Code: FBLG Issue date: 24 August 2009 Valid from: 01 January 2010

Bulgaria is a short-haul escape to family adventures. Hot and dry in the summer, the Rhodope Mountains in the south offer unspoilt vistas, caving, rock climbing and horse-riding. This is an active holiday in the Land of the Gods. With careful supervision from experienced guides, the whole family will learn skills in orienteering, caving and rock climbing among beautiful limestone gorges and peaks. Inhale the fresh clean mountain air of the Rhodope Mountains and listen to the legends of the mythical singer Orpheus. At the end there is free time to wander the intriguing streets of Plovdiv and Sofia.

Day 1 Fly to Sofia; drive to Devin

Fly to Sofia from London. On arrival you will be met and transferred to Devin, situated in the heart of the Rhodope Mountains. The three-hour drive to the mountains takes you past stunning scenes of pine forests and rocky outcrops on higher ground. You'll head through tiny villages where time seems to have stood still; passing colourful monasteries and fields where farmers still plough the fields using traditional manual methods. Our first day will be spent in Devin, a spa town with several natural springs and popular with visitors due to their high mineral content and curative properties.

The Rhodope mountain range runs from Bulgaria to Greece; its highest peak, Golyam Perelik (2,191 metres), is the seventh highest mountain in Bulgaria. These mountains are linked with the legend of the mythical singer Orpheus. Legend has it that the music of the Orpheus could move mountains and stop streams running. Orpheus, son of the Gods Apollo and Calliope, enchanted the Gods with his poetry and song while playing a lyre. On still, calm days they say you can hear his music across the mountains. During your stay you'll visit areas of beautiful limestone karst scenery, with its deep river gorges and large caves – such as 'Trigrad Gorge' and the 'Devil's Throat' cave. **Hotel (dinner)**

Day 2 Learn to climb

After breakfast, you'll make your way into the Rhodope Mountains. Where, under the guidance of our experienced team, you'll be taught the first steps in mountain climbing. There is nothing quite like the challenge of climbing, but as well as conquering fears, it's a really fun day, with plenty of exercise and fresh air to invigorate and replenish tired adults and children. **Guesthouse for 2 nights (breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner)**

Day 3 Horse – riding in Trigrad

This morning you'll set off from the local riding stables in the village of Trigrad. The riding is ideal for all abilities and ages, with horses matched to novice and experienced riders alike. If you've never tried before, we recommend you have a go. It's not as hard as it might look and certainly doesn't have to be the elite sport which is sometimes portrayed. Once again, there's an element of challenge involved but it's also great fun and a really enjoyable way of enjoying the surrounding countryside.

Day 4 Walk to Nature Reserve Chairite

Today we set off at a leisurely pace through woodlands and along high ridges to the nature reserve of 'Chairite'. Here you'll discover the natural phenomenon, 'Pianata gora' – the 'Topsy Forest'. These meadows and lakes are preserved from the Quaternary period. The beautiful crystal clear lakes are teeming with trout and wrapped in mystery. One of the lakes, 'Magicheskoto ezero' (the Magical Lake), is often veiled in mist and vapour and surrounded by strange shaped trees along the shore. According to legend, this lake is inhabited by fairies who attract and charm the shepherds with their songs and dances. Your journey continues a little further towards the edge of the forest where we'll make camp. After a hearty meal, you'll have a chance to relax around the camp fire and listen to the legends and folk tales of the area.

Camp (breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner)

Day 5 Return to Trigrad; free

This morning we'll pack up camp and head back to Trigrad village. The rest of the day is at leisure for you to take a walk around the lakeshore, travel into Devin to visit the local swimming baths and hot mineral springs, or take a trip in an old Russian 4WD and visit the local villages of Vodni Pat and Kesten. These optional trips are at your own expense. **Guesthouse for 2 nights (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 6 Climbing and caving in Trigrad Canyon

Trigrad is famous for its spectacular gorge and caves and Trigrad Gorge is the deepest in Bulgaria. Its impressive rock walls are more than 350 metres high and the sheer sides soar above you. In ancient times, river erosion created numerous caves, the most popular being the 'The Devil's Throat', with a breathtaking 60-metre-high underground waterfall. Today we'll explore the height and depths of this striking canyon as we climb 15 metres to

the entrance of Haramiyska Cave and then delve deep into the Devil's Throat, where the river is literally 'swallowed up' by the cave, never to reappear. **(breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner)**

Day 7 Visit Plovdiv and Sofia

Today you'll leave the mountains behind as you head towards Plovdiv and Sofia. With a history dating back to 400BC, Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city, is said to mark the ancient crossroads of East and West. It is a fascinating city to walk around - highlights include the Amphitheatre of Philip II of Macedonia, the Antique Theatre, basilicas, churches and mosques. En route you'll pass the 'Bachkovo Monastery', built in 1083 and famous for its beautiful murals, icons and ancient manuscripts - it is one of the richest galleries of old Bulgarian art and masterpieces.

You continue to Sofia, capital of Bulgaria and the one with the highest altitude in Europe, situated at the foot of the Vitosha Mountain. The Thracian Serdi tribe founded the city in the 7th Century BC and named it 'Serдика'. The Byzantines called it 'Triaditsa' and the Slavs called it 'Sredets'. The town was named Sofia (meaning 'wisdom') in the 14th Century after the basilica 'St. Sofia'. Centuries of diverse religion, culture and architecture have shaped this city and more than 250 historic, archaeological and architectural monuments have been preserved in the modern city. It is a delightful place, with winding alleyways and cobbled streets. There are numerous churches of varying religions magnificently built amidst the city centre. Colourful houses, friendly locals, interesting curio and artefact stalls lining the streets all add to the ambience of Sofia. You'll have plenty of opportunity to soak up the atmosphere and there are numerous cafes and restaurants where you can just relax and watch the world go by. **Hotel (breakfast and lunch)**

Day 8 Fly to London

Your morning is at leisure so you can explore the city further or to do some last-minute souvenir shopping. Finally, you transfer to the airport for your flight to London.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.

Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Optional Extras

These excursions, if available, can be arranged through your tour leader (per person cost shown below):

Swimming and spa pools at Devin	£12.00
Visit the villages of Vodni Pat and Kesten in old-fashioned Russian vehicles	£20.00

These prices are a guideline and may be subject to change

Is this right for your family? A great mixture of outdoor, summer activities for families with an adventurous spirit. Anyone can take part in the activities – no previous experience is required – but the minimum age recommended for children is seven. Accommodation is clean and comfortable with delicious traditional cuisine. There is also a night's camping in the mountains under the stars!

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Climate Bulgaria is situated in the southern part of the temperate climatic zone of Europe. The territory of the country is influenced by the Atlantic Ocean from the West, and by the continental part of Central and Eastern

Europe from the north-west and the north-east. In spring the climate is changeable continental. Summer temperatures in Southern Bulgaria are usually moderate, about 26°C - 28°C with a refreshing mountain breeze. Autumn is generally mild and pleasant, with occasional autumn showers. Naturally in the high mountains the temperatures are lower due to their altitude.

Average monthly climate in Sofia

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	2	4	10	16	21	24	27	26	22	17	9	4
Min °C	-4	-3	1	5	10	14	16	15	11	8	3	-2
Rainfall (mm)	36	28	41	61	87	73	68	64	41	65	48	49

Accommodation Comfortable family run three-star hotel in the centre of Sofia. While in Trigrad you will be staying in a family pension (a local guest house) where you'll enjoy many traditional home-cooked delicacies. On our night in the forest tents and camping equipment is provided, but please bring your own sleeping bag and mat. Luggage can be stored in the hotel while camping in the forest.

Food Bulgarian breakfast is typically Continental in style and lunches are often picnics. Dinner is a three-course meal (salad, main dish and desert). Bulgarians usually drinks strong alcohol at the beginning of dinners with the salad. During your visit we recommend you taste the delicious Bulgarian yoghurt, cheese and wine! Vegetarians are also catered for, but please let us know in advance. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled water on your trip.

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.30
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.50
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.45
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£0.40
A bottle of local beer	£0.70
A two course meal – excluding drinks	£3.50
A three course meal – excluding drinks	£5.00

**Based on a mid-range tourist restaurant.*

Currency The unit of currency in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Lev (BGL). The exchange rate at the time of writing (Aug 09) is BGL/Lev 2.24 = UK£1 / BGL or Lev 1.95 = Euro 1. We recommend that you change money at the airport. Credit cards are accepted in restaurants and some souvenir shops.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each person should allow £2 per day to cover tips for local staff.

Language The official language is Bulgarian. English, German, French and Russian are spoken in the country's resorts, hotels and restaurants. Bulgaria uses the Cyrillic alphabet. Signs along international motorways, in airports and resorts are also spelt in Roman letters.

Time Bulgaria is GMT +2 hours in winter and GMT +3 hours in summer.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.



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Packing List Please see our “packing list” below.

Clothing & Equipment List for Active Bulgaria

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend. Please pack trainers as well as active, comfortable and casual clothing. We recommend you pack a couple of smart-casual outfits for the evenings. We recommend you bring your own riding or cycle hat/helmet.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair (optional)		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Trainers or sandals	1 pair		Daypack - 25 litres	
Waterproof jacket	1 – lightweight		Sleeping bag 3 - 4 seasons	
T-Shirts	3		Sleeping mat (for camping)	
Shorts	2		Sunglasses	
Long trousers	2		Riding hat / cycle helmet (optional)	
Fleece or sweatshirt	1		Personal First Aid Kit	
Hat / Baseball Cap	1		Torch and batteries	
Casual wear	For evenings		Camera, film and accessories	
Swimwear	1		Washing kit – antibacterial handwash and wet wipes are very useful	
Towel/Sarong				

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Binoculars	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Guidebook & Map	
Cash / Credit Card		Notebook/diary/pen	
Insurance Documents		Sunscreen	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Insect repellent	
Money Security Belt/Pouch			
Universal travelling adapter		Sweets & snacks for the journey	

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com