

## Brown Bear viewing tour in Rodopi Mountains



### Introduction:

An exciting tour dedicated to observing wild Brown Bears in their hunting territories, without fences, without human interference and what is most important - in the heart of the most virgin area of the Rodopi Mountains... Viewing Brown Bears is rather thrilling experience as there is no guarantee in nature what will happen and if being on the Bears track would be successful. However for this tour we use local rangers that are fully aware of the behaviour of the Brown Bears and the wildlife in their territory in general. We give 90% guarantee of observing wild Brown Bear if you come during the best period for that: April 15th-June 15th (after the winter hibernation) and August 20<sup>th</sup>-October (before the winter hibernation).

And last but not least this tour gives 100% guarantee of watching the Balkans subspecies of the Chamois - the Balkan Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra balcanica*). Tracking bears at daytime could also bring Wolf, Capercaillie, Hazel Grouse, Wallcreeper, Wild Boar, variety of woodpeckers and many other interesting birds.

**The Brown Bear viewing is not just a touch to real nature but a lifetime experience!**

### Daytime activities included in the package:

- Bear tracking (observation of bear footprints, scratches on trees, food remains etc.)
- Wildlife viewing – treks in hidden parts of the mountains for observations of other wildlife
- Visits to Trigrad Gorge (with 250m high cliffs) and the Devil's Throat Cave as well as to one of the most beautiful gorges in Bulgaria – Yagodina Cave
- Swimming (Devin is a famous SPA centre)
- Hikes to picturesque places in the area (easy to moderate walks depending on the clients fitness)

### Optional activities (subject to extra payment on spot):

- Horseriding (appr. 50 Euro/person/day)
- Sightseeing (trips to Shiroka Lyka (architectural monument), Bachkovo Monastery (the second largest in Bulgaria), Plovdiv (the second biggest

Bulgarian city with old quarters still housing the spirit of the Revival Period) etc.



### Itinerary:

**Day 1.** Arrival at Sofia Airport and transfer to the lodge in Rodopi Mountains (about 2,5-3 hrs drive). For transfers from other airports please ask for separate quotation.

**/dinner/**

**Days 2-4.** The program during the day includes Bear tracking, wildlife viewing hikes and walks in the nature (to caves, gorges etc.). Attempts to spot Brown Bears are devoted for the evenings or early morning (or throughout the night if you wish so).

**/breakfast/**

**Day 5.** Transfer to Sofia Airport for departure.

**/breakfast/**



**Accommodation:**

Family-run pension, en-suite rooms; accommodation is based on bed and breakfast (depending on timing packed lunches and dinners could be used as well, purchased on spot)

**Hides:**

We use hides that are specially arranged for watching Brown Bears, which can accommodate up to 6 people (normally 4-5) with chemical toilets inside. Wooden beds are also available if you wish to stay all night. The hides are some 30-40min drive from the town of Devin. We use 4WD and then we have to walk some 15-20min to get there (not possible to get there by car as this would affect the chance of seeing something at dusk and dawn). This is where we spend few hours after sunset and before sunrise or a whole night waiting for the bear to appear, keeping silence all the time. If lucky we may enjoy a mother with cubs or solitary males and other nocturnal wildlife too. The bears are usually seen from 30-50 meters. However a close-up view is not excluded and this is really something that remains for life.

**Equipment and timing:**

The best time for booking the tour is around full Moon (+/- 3 days). Following this rule in 2009 the best periods would be as follows: 07-11/04; 07-11/05; 05-09/-6; 04-08/08; 02-



06/09; 02-06/10.

Although night vision optics is available in the hides it will be best if you manage to spot the animals using just the natural light (even through normal bins). Bringing binoculars is also recommended as some of the animals (e.g. Balkan Chamois, some birds etc.) are seen from a long distance. Noiseless clothing is essential (no plastic jackets or pants). Please do consider the low temperatures at night while standing at one place in the hides for a long time and be prepared with warm clothes.

**Weather:**

The temperature expected during the tour is between 0 and 25°C (or even below zero at night in April or October-November). Remains of snow patches may be available in early April or even later depending on the winter. Generally the weather is rather good and stable but still some rain could be expected in spring and autumn.

**Price: 590 Euro/person**

(Sgl. supplement 60 Euro; Min. group size : 2 pax)

**The price includes:**

accommodation, boarding and transfers as mentioned above; activities as mentioned above, transfer to/from Sofia airport; English-speaking guide & local ranger; VAT and all local taxes.

**The price does not include:**

maps (could be requested in advance when booking the tour), additional excursions during the days, entrance fees for caves etc., tips, alcohol drinks, cigarettes and other personal expenses.

