



GOVEDARTSI – Rila Mountains Adventures

Introduction:

The Rila Mountains range is not only the tallest in the Balkan Peninsula, but also within southeast Europe. The highest peak is Musala (standing at 2,925 m, or 9,596 ft). Many of the summits here are close to 3,000 m, or 9,842 ft, high. Rila (an old Slavic word, meaning "Water Mountain") looks like a rough sea of mountain ridges and peaks, and boasts deep gorges with no less than 150 crystal clear lakes. Generally speaking, the Rila Mountains comprise two parts: west Rila with Maljovitsa Peak, the Rila Monastery and the Seven Rila Lakes; and east Rila, housing the ski resort of Borovets and Musala Peak. The Seven Rila Lakes, lying like pearls on a thread, are the main reason for Rila's attraction to alpine trekkers and wanderers. Thanks to mild winds from the Mediterranean Sea, the mountains have an entirely unique vegetation. A big part of the National Park is also under the protection of UNESCO. The village of Govedartsi (1,200 m, or 3,937 ft) lies in the Cherni Iskar River valley. It is a perfect starting point for trekking tours to west or east Rila.

Special highlights:

Rila Mountains are the highest mountains in Bulgaria and on the whole Balkan Peninsula with Mount Musala - 2925 m a.s.l.

Govedartsi village (1200 m a.s.l.) is situated some 73 km to the southeast of Sofia. It is a mountain resort, primarily used during winter.

Borovets (1350 m a.s.l.) is the oldest international and most popular mountain resort in Bulgaria.

The Seven Rila Lakes The circus of "Seven Rila Lakes" is the most beautiful one in Bulgaria. They bear the following names: Salzata (The Tear), Okoto (The Eye), Babreka (The Kidney), Bliznaka (The Twin), Botanicheskoto or Trilistnika (The Botanical), Ribnoto (The Fish lake), and Dolnoto (The Lower Lake).

Maliovitza resort is a famous place of the Bulgarian alpinism and mountaineering.

Strashnoto lake (The Scary lake) (2465m a.s.l.) is the biggest and highest situated in the circus of the Prekorechki lakes.

Musala (2925m/9,596ft) is the highest peak in Bulgaria and the entire Balkan Peninsula. The peak is situated within the Rila National Park. All the major mountains in Bulgaria can be seen from the summit.

Itinerary:

Day 1. Arrive at Sofia or Plovdiv Airport and transfer to Govedartsi village in the foothill Rila Mountains (1,20 hrs from Sofia; 2 hrs from Plovdiv).
/dinner/

Day 2. We walk to The Seven Rila Lakes – probably the most eminent area of Rila Mountains. The path climbs up to the first lake on a ridge through dense dwarf pin, offering fine views of both the Vitosha and Verila mountains. We pass through all the 7 Rila lakes, the highest being at 2500m and descend on the panoramic Green ridge with views to the majestic Maljovitsa range. The trek ends again at Vada hut.

Walking time: 6-7 hrs; uphill walk: 1,050 m (3,444 ft); downhill walk: 850 m (2,788 ft);

/breakfast; dinner/

Day 3. Short transfer to Maliovitza resort. From there the path weaves up along the valley to the wide circus of Prekorechki Lakes, enclosed by the steep slopes and rocky walls of several peaks exceeding 2700m (Popova Kapa, Kuppenite, Iglite etc.). We visit also The Scary Lake before walking downhill on a steep rocky slope to the west coast of Yonchevo Lake (more than 200m long) and further to Maliovitza resort.

Walking time: about 6.30 hrs; uphill walk: 850m (2,788 ft); downhill walk: 850m (2,788 ft);

/breakfast; dinner/

Day 4. Today we climb the highest peak on the Balkans – Musala (2925 m a.s.l.). Short transfer brings us to Borovets ski resort, where we take the lift to Yastrebets Peak (2369 m a.s.l.). Enjoyable walk along Dwarf Pine massifs with the jagged form of Mount

Musala at the background leads us to Musalenski Lakes, lying at the foot of the peak. The view from the top is truly breath-taking – you can make out the remaining peaks of Rila Mountains; the marble edges of the Pirin Mountains; Mount Vitoshka and the Sredna Gora Mountains; the green summits of the Rodopi Mountains; and last, but not least, the long body of the Balkan range. *Walking time: about 6.30 hrs; uphill walk: 650 m (2,132 ft); downhill walk: 650 m (2,132 ft);*

/breakfast; dinner/

Day 5: Transfer to Sofia or Plovdiv
/breakfast/

*** All walks in the original program could be adjusted by the guide on spot depending on the physical condition of the hikers (there is a diversity of hiking trails in the mountains, varying in difficulty grade).**

The tour provides the opportunity more days to be added to the program if purchased in advance. These could be spent on self-guided walking in the area, more guided walks, guided sightseeing tours to famous places nearby (Sofia, Rila Monastery, Melnik and Rozhen Monastery, Kovachevitsa etc.) etc. Please ask for quotation for any of these possibilities.

Accommodation:

You will stay 4 nights in a family run hotel (3 stars), with rooms with private bath/toilet on halfboard (breakfast & dinner included). In case you decide to stay in a mountain hut as a part of a customized tour, which can be requested in advance, please note that you may have to stay in a dorm where shower/toilet are shared with few other rooms. Blankets and linen are provided in the huts – no need to bring such with you.

Tour type: GT

Difficulty grade: B/C

Best period: June – September

Weather:

Temperatures expected for this period are between +10 and +25°C. Rainfalls or short but heavy showers are possible, being a bit prolonged during spring and late autumn.

Equipment and clothing:

Necessary items: daypack (35 l); 3-season walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); sunscreen lotion; trekking sticks. For the full list with recommended items see "General".

Group size: Min 2 persons

The price includes: accommodation and boarding as mentioned above; transfer to/from Sofia and Plovdiv airport to Govedarts; transfers for the trekking days (day 2: to and from Vada hut; day 3: to and from Maliovitsa; day 4: to and from Borovets; pick up/drop off at Sofia or Plovdiv airport; lift tickets (day 4); English-speaking guide; VAT and all local taxes.

The price does not include: map (could be requested in advance when booking the tour); tips; entrance fees; alcohol drinks; cigarettes and other personal expenses.

Joining instructions:

Low-cost flights to Bulgaria: please

check: Wizz Air - <http://wizzair.com/>; ;

Easy Jet - <http://www.easyjet.com/>;

Germanwings -

<http://www.germanwings.com/>; My Air -

<http://www.myair.com/>; Penguin Travel –

<http://www.flybulgarien.dk/>; Norwegian Air Shuttle - <http://www.norwegian.no/>.

Joining the tour: in recent days there are loads of opportunities to book a cheap flight to Bourgas or Varna airports instead of landing at Sofia Airport. We can arrange for you a bus or train ticket to Sofia or Plovdiv, where most of the tours start. Here are some approximate prices for transfers:

By bus: Bourgas or Varna to Sofia – appr. 20 Euro/person one way (appr. 5-7 hrs drive)

By train: Bourgas or Varna to Sofia – appr. 15 Euro/person one way (sleeping compartments +10 Euro). For train schedules please check:

<http://bdz.creato.biz/en> (appr. 7-8 hrs drive)

By plane: Bourgas or Varna to Sofia – appr. 100 Euro/person one way (for schedules and prices please check:

<http://www.air.bg/en>) (appr. 1 hr flight)

Private transfers: Bourgas airport – Sofia (appr. 4 hrs drive): 150 Euro/car (1-3 pax); 190 Euro/bus (4-7 pax); Varna airport – Sofia (appr. 6 hrs drive): 170 Euro/car (1-3 pax); 210 Euro/bus (4-7 pax)

This is a unique proposal, which gives you the opportunity to stay in Bulgaria for one week more at the incredibly low price! We can offer a great variety of means of accommodation - from home stays (no meals) to 2, 3 and 4-star hotels (BB or HB) on the Southern Bulgarian Black Sea Coast:

- Sunny Beach - a big modern resort with hundreds of hotels, cafes, pubs, casinos, water-sports facilities etc.
 - Sozopol, Nessebar - small towns (founded by the ancient Greeks) with picturesque old quarters and a specific atmosphere.

- Lozenets - a peaceful small village with a beautiful beach. Only 4-5 km from the forests of the Strandzha Mountains where you can go walking, biking or riding horses.

Equipment and clothing:

You should always remember that you must try to keep the weight of your hiking equipment down to a minimum. Your packed daypack should weigh no more than 10-15 kilograms.

Recommended items: waterproof rucksack (60 l) & daypack (35 l); walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; light casual shoes/sandals for walking and/or for travelling; gaiters; loose, casual trousers for trekking; waterproof trousers; fleece windstopper jacket; windproof, waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); hat for sun protection; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm; water bottle; torch (headlamp); mobile phone; underwear (not cotton); mosquito repellent; trekking sticks.

Vaccination:

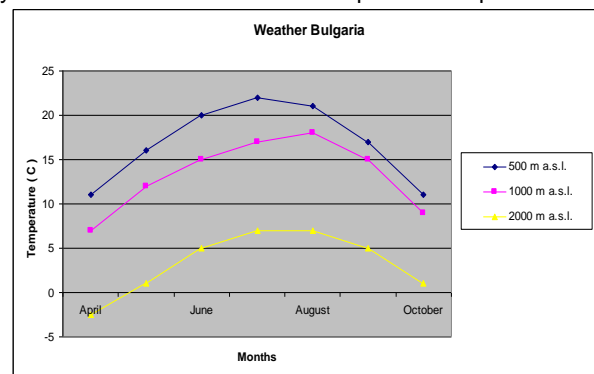
Tick-borne encephalitis, Marselle fever and Crimea haemorrhagic fever is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure.

Money and personal expenses

You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks and extra trips not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and personal things could also be spent. That is why it is always necessary to have Bulgarian money in cash.

The payments in Bulgaria are usually made in "LEV" (BGN), which is the official currency. The exchange rate with EU and USD is quite changing sometimes, but approximately it is: BGN:EU - 2:1; BGN:USD - 1,6-1. Credit Cards could be used primarily in some supermarkets and restaurants in the biggest cities as well as in the petrol stations. Usually it is marked on their front doors if Credit Cards are accepted. ATMs ("bankomates") are more frequent (again in the biggest towns only!). Traveler's cheques take quite a lot of time to handle and not each bank deals with them (in many cases it takes even few days since their deposition in the bank!) - thus they are not recommended!

Here are some examples of comparative



costs in Bulgaria (NB: prices in mid-range restaurants!):

- Coffee – 0,3 Euro
- Tea – 0,3 Euro
- Beer (0,5 l) – 0,5-1 Euro
- Soft drink (0,5 l) - 0,4-0,5 Euro
- Bottle of water (0,5 l) - 0,3-0,4 Euro
- Bottle of mark red wine (0,75 l) - 5-10 Euro
- Three-course lunch - 4-10 Euro
- Lunch pack - 2-3 Euro

Cell phone coverage

Currently the whole territory of Bulgaria is covered with a mobile connection. However the trekking & cycling tours are done in mountainous areas where the signal could be weak or even lacking from time to time. In such a situation you just need to change your location a bit in order to find available network.

Electricity

In Bulgaria two-pin sockets are normal. Voltage is 220 watts. If you come from the U.S. or UK you need to purchase an adapter, which is available only in Bulgarian cities and biggest winter and sea resorts.

Brief about Bulgaria

- Territory - 110 912 sq. km.
- Population - 7 538 000 (2003) (83,9 % ethnic Bulgarians; 9,4% Turks; 4,7% Roma; rest – smaller minorities Russians, Armenians, Vlachs, Jews, Karakachans etc.)
- Religion – 82,6% Orthodox, 12,2% Islam, 0,7% Protestant, 0,5% Catholics, 4,1% Others.
- Capital city - Sofia (1 377 531 people in 2006)
- Biggest towns - Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas, Rouse, Stara Zagora, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven
- Mountains - 37 (biggest - Balkan Mountain: length - ~ 550 km.; width ~ 30-60 km.); (highest - Rila Mountain - peak Musala - 2 925 m.a.s.l.)
- Boundaries - North - Romania; East - Black Sea (coastline 378 km.); West - Serbia, Macedonia; South - Greece, Turkey;
- Distribution of the lands - 0 - 400 m.a.s.l. - 59,8 %; 400 - 1000 m.a.s.l. - 27,6 %; 1000 - 2000 m.a.s.l. - 11,9 %; over 2000 m.a.s.l. - 0,7 %
- Protected areas - 3 national parks, 10 nature parks, 55 reserves, 35 managed

GENERAL

TOUR TYPES & GRADES

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades! Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Tour types

Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

GT: Group tours

There is a guide accompanying you throughout the whole trip, meeting you at the airport upon arrival and leaving you at the airport again for departure. We use well-trained and experienced local people with good knowledge of English. The group size is normally 6-12 people, if not specially mentioned.

Difficulty grades

To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

B: Moderate

Most of you, who are used to walking during a long weekend, will be in condition to cope with a tour of this level. You should be in good health condition and not too bad physical condition. We have successive days of longer and more difficult walking and days of lighter walking. Some parts of the day routes are done at a higher altitude. The paths are in good condition. We walk for 5-7h a day. You are free to skip some walks and have a rest.

C: Difficult

These tours include trekking which is a little harder, normally on a challenging terrain. We take it for granted that you are in good condition and fit. You should be physically prepared at home to get the maximum of the tour. Most of the trekking is done at a greater height (max 3000 m). As on other tours you are free to skip some treks and have a rest.

Extensions: Yes, Black Sea

Penguin Travel DMC-Bulgaria

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Weather

Mean year temperature - + 10,5 °C (Abs. Min. - -38,3 °C ; Abs. Max. - + 45,2 °C)

Mean rainfall per year - 416 - 650 mm. in the lowlands; 650 - 1193 mm. in the highlands

Rainy days per month – May – 7; June – 8; July – 6; August – 3; September – 6; (number may be higher in the mountains)

Mean daily/night temperatures (up to 1000 m a.s.l.) - May + 22/12 °C; June + 26/16 °C; July + 28/17 °C; August + 26/15 °C; September + 23/13 °C;

Altitudinal distribution of annual temperatures in Bulgaria