

SAMPLE WALKING TOUR

Bulgaria Personalized for Butterfield and Robinson

Duration: 6 nights / 7 days

Activity level: EASY to MODERATE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Active Orthodox monasteries including Rila – a UNESCO site
- Bulgarian National Revival architecture
- Melnik – ancient vineyards and sandstone formations
- Trigrad - breathtaking gorge and several caves
- Historic Plovdiv and its Roman theater
- Well-preserved arts and crafts in authentic villages
- Bagpipe concert and folklore close-ups
- Walks in lush, rolling countryside
- Fresh local cuisine - gourmet and home-made
- Unexpected pleasant surprises

ITINERARY

Day 1 Rila monastery

We start in Sofia - the capital of Bulgaria and head to the country's most celebrated cultural heritage and one of the most picturesque orthodox structures, the Rila Monastery, which played a major role in preserving Bulgarian culture and Orthodoxy alive during the Ottoman occupation. Today's walk leads us to the cave of St Ivan Rilski - the hermit founder of the monastery community. According to the legend, anyone who is able to pass through the hole in the cave's roof proves himself as a righteous person. That's how we decide who is worthy to continue the tour ;)



Day 2 The town of Melnik

We are in the smallest town in Bulgaria - Melnik and take a picturesque trail twisting through an acacia forest and reaching the highest part of the intriguing natural rock formations known as the "sand pyramids". Our walk's destination is the 13th century Rozhen monastery. Afterwards we visit the home of one of the area's wealthiest wine merchants, fully restored to its 19th century appearance. Our visit ends in the caves lying right beneath the building. This is a natural wine cellar perfect for storing barrels of the house's wine, which is also available for us to taste.



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Day 3 The village of Kovachevitsa

Today's walk starts through green and rolling countryside in the Gotse Delcev district. We have homemade lunch in a local's house together with the family, who prepared it. Then we spend the afternoon in the architectural reserve of Kovatchevitsa. The style of the houses here is adapted to rural and farming life and the village appears never to have been reached by modernity. This sense of timelessness is reinforced by the afternoon participation in the traditional local customs. We are introduced to double voice singing, and the "horo" dance!



Day 4 The Trigrad Gorge and the Devil throat's cave

After passing through the breathtaking Trigrad gorge and Devil's throat cave, our walk begins up over the hills. We follow a trail to the Chairski lakes, a protected area of seven glacial lakes. The sweeping views make it a perfect setting for our picnic lunch, and we can easily imagine the enchanting wood-nymphs said to be singing and dancing for the local shepherds.



Day 5 In the bagpipe land

Our walk starts in the village of Gela. We are surrounded by open meadows filled with wildflowers, grazing cows and century-old, untouched villages where life still follows the rhythm of the seasons. After a bagpipe concert, in the middle of a huge highland meadow a gently descending path winds us through all the way to the town of Shiroka Lûka, known across the country for its famous folklore music academy.



Day 6 Plovdiv

Today is dedicated to Plovdiv, the second largest city in Bulgaria. The geographical position of the city made it a glorious trade center between Europe and the Orient over the centuries. Its wealthy merchant family homes were crafted by the most skilled artists and present finest display of 19th century architecture in the Balkans. In the afternoon we head to the Roman amphitheater dating from the second century A.D. followed by many other attractions, museums, galleries, and shops before we reunite for another sumptuous dinner, accompanied by a jazz quartet.

