



25 Crescent Avenue, Sausalito, CA 94965
Phone: 415-381-5861 ♦ 888-367-6147
inquire@originalworld.com ♦ www.originalworld.com
CST Permit #2057026-40

Bulgaria

Pre-Tour Extension for Romania Group Tour OR Join by Itself

Guaranteed Departures 2012- dates of arrival in Sofia
April 14, May 4, May 22, May 29, Jun 9, Jul 6,
Sep 1, Sep 15, Oct 5

May 29 tour includes Rose Festival

Experience Bulgarian traditions and culture in the unique rhythm, melody and harmony of the Bulgarian folk songs and chants; in the merry and healthy joie-de-vivre atmosphere of the rites and celebrations; the beauty of the handicrafts, finely woven in the ceramic vignettes and wood carvings, colorful rugs and hammered copper-ware; in the exquisite taste of Bulgarian cuisine and in the fine aroma of Bulgarian wines.

Nestling at the heart of Central Europe and occupying the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria is a land of unspoiled natural beauty, where time has been known to stand still. To the north it borders Romania, to the west the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to the east the Black Sea, to the south Greece and to the southeast Turkey. The topography is extremely varied: large plains and lowlands, low and high mountains, valleys and lovely gorges.



Rila Monastery Mural

Highlights of Bulgaria

- unique and living folklore
- cultural and historic monuments
- museums, art galleries, classical concerts
- Bulgarian icon-painting heritage
- Bulgarian arts and crafts
- folkloric music and dance
- colorful traditional clothing
- the gaiety and vivacity of Bulgarian festivals and customs
- the piquant taste of Bulgarian cuisine
- the delicate fragrance of Bulgarian wines
- the natural beauty of the mountains

UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites included on our tour:

- Boyana Church
- Rila Monastery
- Kazanluk Tomb
- Ivanovo Rock Churches

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Arrival in Sofia. Transfer to the hotel, 10 km – 30 min.

Day 2 Sofia (B,D)

Morning: walking city tour, including the 4th century St. George Rotunda-- a fine monument of Roman architecture, the St. Sophia early Christian basilica, 6th century, which gave the city its name, and the Alexander Nevsky Memorial Cathedral with its golden domes, impressive interior, exquisite murals, icons and colorful mosaics. We also visit the Spanish-Moresque style synagogue and Jewish Museum, as well as the memorial commemorating the "Saving of the Bulgarian Jews." The synagogue, the church Sveta Nedelya, and the only surviving active mosque in town - are all facing each other.

Afternoon: Mountain Vitosha tour with a visit to the 13th century Boyana Church, included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. Afterwards, a visit to the National History Museum, which houses an excellent collection of Bulgarian artifacts. Folklore-style dinner in a tavern with a live dance program and wine. Overnight Sofia

Day 3 Rila Monastery-Rozhen Monastery-Melnick (B,D)

Drive 2 hrs to the 10th century colorfully-painted Rila Monastery, including the 14th century Hreljo Tower, the five-domed Birth of the Blessed Virgin Church and the original monastery kitchens from the 19th century. The monastery also houses a rich museum collection of valuable old manuscripts and documents, charters and icons, an ethnographic exhibition of fabrics, jewelry, carpets and wrought iron objects, and a library containing more than 16,000 books. The monastery is also included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. Four to five monks still live here.

Drive to 12-13th century Rozhen Monastery (1.5 hrs), with its Blessed Virgin Church, decorated with over 150 biblical scenes.

Afterwards, we drive about 30 minutes to the charming museum town of Melnik, surrounded by strangely-shaped sandstone rocks. We visit the Manolev's wine-cellar, dug into sandstone rocks on top of a hill above town, where several types of wines can be tasted and bought-sit outside for a fine view! Overnight Bolyarka or Despot Slav Hotel, 3 star

Day 4 Bansko-Plodiv (B, D)

Morning visit to Kordopulova House, a local historical museum and some time to walk about town. The Kordopulova House was built in 1758 and it is named after the wine merchant Manolis Kordopulov to whom it once belonged. The curious fact about the house is that it is supposed to be the biggest residential building on the Balkan Peninsula from the Revival Period. The pearl of the house is the reception room, having twenty-four windows with Venetian stained glass facing the four directions of the world. What can also be seen is fine wood carvings and drawn ornaments on cupboards and ceilings. Another notable part of the Kordopulova House is the enormous wine cellar, equipped with special canals and ventilation. At present, the house is a museum that is open daily from 8:00 am - 8:00 pm.

Drive to the museum town of Bansko (1.5 hrs) to experience Bulgarian culture and ancient architecture. We'll stroll the cobblestone streets and visit the Holy Trinity Church built in the 19th century and known for its interior wood carvings and murals painted by local artists. Lunch stop at a traditional family owned restaurant, enroute (pay direc).

Drive to Plovdiv (2.5 hrs), famous for its Old Town with distinctive revival architecture popular among 18th-19th century merchants. Enroute we will view from the road the Bachkovo Monastery, rising amidst the green slopes of the Rhodopes Mountains. We will visit it tomorrow.

Overnight in Plovdiv at Hotel Bulgaria, Seven Hills or Dafi, all 3 star, charming hotels in the heart of Old Town. We will confirm the hotel based on availability. Dinner at Hebros, excellent cuisine, service and ambiance; they often have jazz in evenings.

Day 5 Full day in and around Plodiv. (B, L)

Morning city sightseeing includes the old town, the 2nd century Roman Theater, Ethnographic Museum, The Holy Virgin Church and others. A walk around the Three Hills is like traveling back in time. We will also have an excursion outside the city to the Bachkovo Monastery. Founded in 1083 by Grigorii Bacuriani, a military commander in the Byzantine Empire, it boasts a rich museum collection and a library containing valuable manuscripts in a lovely setting.

Lunch in the garden of a traditional restaurant called Puldih, built from the Roman fortified wall in Old Town. After lunch, we will visit workshops of local artisans to learn about Bulgarian crafts, especially pottery. Afterwards, a special lecture about the different religions in Bulgaria - and visits to Orthodox churches (the St. Constantine and Helena Church), the Catholic church and the Mosque. The rest of the day is independent time to stroll the quaint town.

In the evening, there are often special events at the amphitheatre from late May though September-October. You may elect to attend such an event optionally (extra fee) should there be one during your visit.

Day 6 Koprivshtitsa-Valley of Roses-Veliko Turnovo (B,L) June 3 is Rose Festival

Drive north (approx 1.5 hrs) to the village Koprivshtitsa, known for its international folklore festival which occurs once every five years, bringing together over 12,000 performers from all over Bulgaria, making it one of the biggest festivals in Europe!

During the Rose Festival, the visit to Koprivshtitsa will be offered on the afternoon of day 5 to allow the time to attend the Rose Festival events. We will depart at 6:30 am to reach the rose fields for the rose picking ritual at 8:30 am. We drive through the Valley of the Roses, along the Balkan Range to Banya and Kazanlak (approx 1.5 hr). We will participate in rose picking. There will be a folkloric show with music in the rose fields. Young girls dressed in traditional attire decorate each guest with rose garlands that they plaited the previous night so they are very fresh. You can join the "horo" dance. We then go to the main square in Kazanlak where at 12:00 noon the Rose Queen Parade will start. We have reserved seats and will mix with the local crowd, see the carnival and enjoy the spirit of the festival. We will enjoy a picnic lunch with wine and another folkloric show. **NOTE:** often in June the weather is rainy here- great for the roses, but we pray for sun for you!

Sightseeing tour in Kazanlak includes: the Tyulbe (small 15th century Islamic mausoleum), Museum of the Rose and the replica of Kazanlak Tomb from the late 4th – early 3rd century B.C. which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List of Sites. The funeral objects and frescoes depicting hunting scenes and the funeral suggest that a Thracian king was probably buried here. The frescoes here are the finest masterpieces of Thracian art discovered to date. The original tomb is housed in a special building and not available for tourists' viewing.

Continue on to Etar (30 min) in the town of Gabrovo to visit the Ethnographic Open-air Village Museum. Everything surrounding the visitor brings him or her back to the period of the Bulgarian Revival with numerous workshops where even today the craftsmen work, using the same instruments and techniques as the past. You can talk to the craftsmen, watch them work and can even try to make something yourself.

Drive onward to Veliko Turnovo (50 min), the capital city of the second Bulgarian Kingdom (12-14th c.). Optional-Based on operation/additional cost: Attend evening Sound and Light show, starts after sunset, approx 9:30 pm. Overnight in Veliko Turnovo.

Day 7 Full day sightseeing Veliko Turnovo, Tsarevets and Arbanassi. (B)

Tsarevets, the place of the patriarchal church and Tzar's royal palaces, the hill where Baldwin's Tower still rises. (Bulgarian Tzar Kaloyan defeated the army of the Latin Emperor Baldwin of Flanders, who was taken prisoner and kept in the tower until his death.)

Arbanassi, a charming medieval village rich with 17th century architecture, was the summer residence of boyars (nobility) of the medieval capital city of Tarnovo. The 300 years old houses from the period of the Bulgarian Renaissance together with the five magnificent churches dating back to 17th century, decorated with unique paintings and wood carving are of great interest.

We will view Trapezitsa from Tsarevets Hill - where the foundations of 17 medieval churches were discovered and the original Samovodene Market stood. This market has been brought back to life and, as in olden times, skillful craftsmen fashion and sell exquisite objects in the small restored workshops.

Day 8 Sofia or on to Bucharest (B)

[Drive to Sofia \(3 hrs\) for flight home .](#)

Following breakfast, drive back to Sofia. Optional visits en route (time permitting): the National Crafts and Arts Exhibition in the village of Oreshak and/or Troyan Monastery.

[OR continue to Romania.](#) We will drive 1.5 hr to Rouse, enroute visit another UNESCO site - Ivanovo Rock churches near Rouse. We will have a short stop for lunch in Ruse. Continue 100 km (approx 2 hrs, depending on traffic and border crossing time) to Bucharest. We plan to arrive in Bucharest by about 4 pm.

Price: \$1980 per person based on min 6 people, single room \$250, supplement \$90 for Rose Festival-includes special seating for the parade, folklore show, BBQ lunch with wine, rose picking, rose garlands. If you continue to Romania tour, additional supplement for transport to Bucharest depending on the number of people (approx \$20 per person).

Includes: airport transfers, all transportation during the program, escorted throughout the tour, entrance fees, accommodations in 3-4 star hotels (we use 3 star hotels only when that is the best available), seven breakfasts, two lunches, three dinners- as indicated in itinerary; bottled water during drives (1 litre bottle per person per day).

Does Not Include: international flight, tips, personal expenses such as drinks, laundry, phone calls, insurance

Hotels As listed or similar: Location of all hotels are within easy walking distance of the city centers.

Sofia: Hotel Arte, charming boutique hotel in mid town on the fashionable Dondukov Blvd. The hotel is full of paintings by Bulgarian artists. <http://www.artehotelbg.com> OR Hotel Downtown 4* centrally located. 62 elegantly appointed, bright rooms and suites. All are equipped with direct dial telephone, individually controlled A/C, cable channels, free Internet access, in room safe, mini-bar, hair dryer in bathroom. Facilities include fitness room and sauna. <http://www.hotel-downtown.net>

Melnick: Bolyarka & Despot Slav Hotel are quaint, traditional hotels near each other. The ambiance is warm/ homey.

Plodiv: Dafi hotel is located in the Old Town of Plovdiv. A very good 3 star boutique-style hotel. We have booked the larger studio rooms.

Veliko Turnovo: Gurko Hotel and Millenium hotel are small, 3-star hotels located just a 5 minute walk from the city center.

During the summer the days are longer, so we can pack more activities into each day's schedule; in October, some activities will be "time-permitting."