

VALENTINE AND VINE TOUR

10 - 15 February 2017 (Tour Code: TZ) **Price: £800**

(Based on a group of 8 or more, a smaller group will incur a supplement).



The Bulgarians have uniquely combined in their festive traditions St. Valentine's Day with the indigenous vine-growers' festival of Trifon Zarezan, marking the first pruning of the vines. The craft of wine making and the enjoyment of wine drinking has always been an integral part of the lifestyle of the Bulgarians.

The tour visits the fertile Thracian Plain, lively cities and little villages, ancient monuments on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list, modern wineries and home cellars. We join the village festival in Brestovitsa, which aspires to a Guinness world record for the largest number of wine cellars per head of the population.

First we visit the capital city, Sofia, with some sightseeing and a first chance to sample Bulgarian food and wine. Then for the rest of the time we shall be based in beautiful Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second city. These are the ancient lands of the God of Wine Dionysus and the legendary heroes Orpheus and Spartacus.

Our tour takes place during the Sveti (St.) Trifon festival of vine-growers. By coincidence this celebration falls on the same day as St. Valentine's Day, 14th February.

The British-Bulgarian Society has been organising a variety of cultural tours to Bulgaria for nearly forty years. We shall be happy to introduce you to the country's friendly people, and excellent wine and food. For your financial protection our tour operators for the last 20 years, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL 4465 and bonded by the International Air Transport Association, IATA number 91-2 7839.

Outline Programme (which may be subject to adjustments)

Friday 10 February Scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia, check-in for a two night stay. Walking tour near your hotel. Dinner with wine for your first "Taste of Bulgaria".

Saturday 11 February Visit Sofia's centre and find history and traditions spanning over 20 centuries at your finger-tips. See the remains of the Roman city of Serdika walls at the "Largo" and the magnificent Alexander Nevski memorial church. Time at leisure, before dinner with wine.

Sunday 12 February Drive to Plovdiv for a three night stay. Afternoon sightseeing walk in the Old Town. Explore the steep cobbled streets, admire the picturesque timber-framed buildings and take the stage at the spectacular Roman Theatre! Later, maybe join the *dvizhenieto* (like the Italian *corso*), a traditional early evening stroll, before dinner in the Old Town.

Monday 13 February Morning drive into the foothills of the Rhodope Mountains to visit Bachkovo Monastery, dating from the 11th century, with its wonderful internal and external frescoes. Visit to Todoroff winery, home of the famous indigenous variety Mavrud. Tour, tasting and hear the centuries old legend of Mavrud. Return to Plovdiv.

Tuesday 14 February Today is not only Valentine's day, but also the Bulgarian day of Sveti Trifon Zarezan, a major date for vine-growers and wine-makers. There are many rituals and festivities in which you can share at Brestovitsa, including home-made wine, music, and maybe some impromptu dancing! Farewell dinner in Plovdiv.

Wednesday 15 February Morning transfer to Sofia for your early afternoon flight to Heathrow.

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia with all taxes and charges.
- 5 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels in Plovdiv and Sofia on half board basis; wine with lunches/dinners
- Visits to two wineries with wine-tastings, St.Trifon Zarezan Festival attendance.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Bulgarian guide/interpreter.
- All museum entrance fees.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches or light suppers, where not included (about £4 - 5).
- Travel Insurance (Compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks (where not included) and other personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement £90.

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