

British-Bulgarian Society Special Interest Tours

2018

WINE TOUR AND MORE

A Luxury Long Weekend Combining Wine Tour and Spa
7 - 11 FEBRUARY (Tour Code: TZ) Price: £990

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

EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT: £50 PER PERSON IF BOOKED BY 30 SEPTEMBER 2017



The Bulgarians, with their centuries-old tradition of wine making, have their own indigenous festival of Trifon Zarezan, which marks the first pruning of the vines. It takes place towards the end of the stark winter season in anticipation of the Spring awakening of Nature.



Balkania Travel



In modern times the festival tends to flow and merge into St.Valentine's day. The craft of wine making and the enjoyment of wine drinking have always been an integral part of the lifestyle of the Bulgarians.

On our tour we visit lively cities, including the capital Sofia, and little villages, ancient monuments on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list, modern wineries and mineral water spas. These are the lands of the mythical God of Wine Dionysus and the legendary Thracian heroes Orpheus and Spartacus. Wine and spa have centuries old traditions in Bulgaria and in modern times huge investments have been poured into both to update them to the best 21st Century standards. We aim to let you taste and enjoy some of the best you can expect to find anywhere.

We arrive at the capital city for a first chance to sample some of Bulgaria's delights, including its tasty food and wine. The rest of the time we explore the Struma River Valley, which cuts south through imposing snow-clad mountains to meet the mild Aegean influence. We visit three modern wineries of this main wine region and stop longest at Sandanski, a favourite spa hot spot for relaxation, health and wellness seekers.

The British-Bulgarian Society has been organising a variety of cultural tours to Bulgaria for 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 21 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 minor adjustments).

Wednesday 7 February

Scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia, check-in for one night in a luxury hotel. Walking tour in the city centre around the excavations of the 4th Century ruins of Roman Emperor Constantine's city of Serdika and a visit to the magnificent gold-domed Patriarchal church Alexander Nevski. Dinner with wine for your first "Taste of Bulgaria".

Thursday 8 February

After breakfast leave Sofia for a visit to Rila Monastery, a major Christian pilgrimage centre during the Ottoman rule (XIV-XIX C). Continue to the village of Smochevo to visit Medi Valley Winery for a tour and tasting with light lunch. The winery, named after the ancient Thracian tribe of Medi, has won the highest awards for its popular series “A Good Year” and its top range “Incanto”. Continue to Sandanski to check in for 3 nights at the luxurious Pirin Park Hotel. ***** You can dip into the mineral water pool or jacuzzi, or try some of the sauna park which has Finnish sauna, bio-sauna, steam baths, emotion showers, or just stop in the relax zone, all available to you to enjoy at any time during your stay at no extra charge. Dinner and overnight.

Friday 9 February

In the morning, drive to Melnik, Bulgaria’s smallest town, and universally accepted as the symbol of the region, huddled amongst the surrounding huge weathered limestone cliffs. Visit the Museum of Wine. This is the home to the local indigenous Melnik variety wine, famed in legends as “so thick you can chew it or carry it in a towel and so dark that you can see how it passes down the throats of the elegant white-skinned ladies”. Continue to Villa Melnik winery in the village of Hursovo. The winery’s founder and owner, Nikola Zakatanov’s main aim from its conception in early 2000 was to concentrate in planting its own new vineyards and making wine from local varieties, such as Melnik, Mavrud, Sandanski Misket, Keratsuda and Tamyanka, in addition to the international varieties. Its ranges “AplauZ” and “Melnik Family Tradition” soon won prizes. Tour the winery, tasting and late lunch. Return to Sandanski for a relaxing evening.

Saturday 10 February

After breakfast depart to the village of Kromidovo to visit the young Orbelus Organic Winery, which started in mid 2010 and by 2014 the striking barrel-like building was completed. The ambition of its founders, led by Blagoy Roussev, was to match their new varieties’ planting to best suit the soil and terroir’s conditions. The strictest standards of organic vine-growing and wine-making are observed. Tour the winery and taste its produce. Then attend the Trifon Zarezan Festival, organised locally. There are many rituals and festivities, some starting in the vineyards, in which you can participate, including tasting wines, including home-made and from other local wineries, the famous (or infamous) Rakiya brandy, enjoy the folk music, and maybe some impromptu dancing! Return to Sandanski for some relaxation. Farewell dinner and overnight.

Sunday 11 February

Morning transfer to Sofia for your early afternoon flight to Heathrow.

Bulgaria 2018

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia with all taxes and charges.
- 4 nights' accommodation in luxury 4 & 5-star hotels in Sofia and Sandanski on half board basis; wine with lunches/dinners
- Visits to three 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 £180.

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Further Information from Dr Annie Kay, B-BS Tours Organiser,
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