

SPA INDULGENCE AND WINE FESTIVAL

A luxury short break combining Wine Trail, Spa and Festival
13 - 17 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 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018



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 in eager anticipation of the Spring awakening of Nature. In modern times the festival tends to merge with St.Valentine's day. The craft of wine making, the enjoyment of wine drinking and entertaining guests have always been an integral part of the lifestyle of the Bulgarians. Experience these pleasures from your luxurious spa environment!



Balkania Travel



On our tour we visit the capital Sofia and little villages, ancient monuments on the 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 arrive at the capital city to sample some of its delights, including the excavations of ancient Serdika, the favourite spa city of Roman Emperor Constantine. Its remains were recently uncovered and tastefully exposed in the modern city centre in its underpasses, Metro stations and even the basement of your hotel! Your first taste of delicious Bulgarian specialities and its magnificent wines.

The rest of the time we explore the Struma River valley, which cuts south through imposing snow-clad mountains carrying through the mild Mediterranean climate. We visit three modern wineries of this major wine region, staying at Sandanski's 5 star spa hotel, a favourite hot spot for relaxation, health and wellness seekers.

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

Wednesday 13 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 14 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 15 February

In the morning, drive to Melnik, Bulgaria’s smallest town, and universally accepted as the symbol of the region, huddled among 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. Independent dinner.

Saturday 16 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, some home-made and from other local wineries, the famous (or infamous) Rakiya brandy, enjoy the folk music, and maybe a bit of impromptu dancing! Return to Sandanski for some relaxation. Farewell dinner and overnight.

Sunday 17 February

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

BULGARIA 2019

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 Spa 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 £5 - 6).
- 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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