

**BULGARIA - Monasteries and Churches  
(Sofia, Bansko, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, Troyan)  
8 - Day Itinerary**



**The program includes 7 nights – 2 nights in Sofia, 1 night near the Rila Monastery, 1 night in Bansko, 1 night in Plovdiv, 1 night in Veliko Tarnovo, and 1 night near Troyan Monastery.**

### **Day 1 – Arrival at the Sofia Airport**

Transfer to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay in Sofia.

### **Day 2 – Sightseeing Tour of Sofia**

St. Nedelya Cathedral, St. George Rotunda, Russian Church of St. Nicolas, St. Sophia Church, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Ivan Vazov National Theater. Lunch. In the afternoon – depart for the Rila Monastery. The Rila Monastery is the biggest monastery in Bulgaria, founded in the 10th century by the monk and hermit St. John of Rila, patron and protector of Bulgaria. The monastery served as the center of cultural and spiritual life of the Bulgarian people, during the centuries of foreign enslavement. The tour includes a visit to the monastery, the main church and the monastery museum. Dinner and overnight stay near Rila Monastery.

### **Day 3 – Depart for Melnik**

A picturesque town at the foot of the Pirin Mountain. Melnik is famous for its wine cellars. A visit to the Kordopulov's House, a monument of the Bulgarian Revival architectural style, built in 1754. On the ground floor there are wine cellars, where the famous wine of Melnik is kept. Lunch in Melnik combined with wine tasting. Visit to Rozhen Monastery – the biggest cloister in the Pirin area, founded in the 13th century. Depart for Bansko – the centre of the Bulgarian way of life from the Revival period and today a famous ski resort . Visit to the Holy Trinity Church, whose frescoes are the work of artists from the famous Debar Art School, visit Velyanov's House – the best-preserved house from the Revival Period and see the exhibition of icons from the Bansko Art School. Dinner and overnight stay in Bansko.

### **Day 4 – Depart for Plovdiv**

One of Europe's most ancient cities, older than Athens, Rome and Constantinople. On the way – will make a stop at the Bachkovo Monastery. Situated at the foot of the Rhodope Mountains. It is the second largest Bulgarian monastery, founded in the 11th century, proudly displaying frescoes from 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the legendary wonder-working icon of Virgin Mary Eleusa from 1310. Lunch. Depart for Plovdiv. Sightseeing tour of Plovdiv. Tour the old town which consists of one of the most

spectacular ensembles of town houses from the period of the Bulgarian National Revival. Visit to the Saints Constantine and Helena Church, the Roman Theatre and the Regional Ethnographic Museum. Dinner. Overnight stay in Plovdiv.

#### **Day 5 – Depart for Veliko Tarnovo**

The capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1187-1396). Visit to Dryanovo Monastery, established in the 13th century and situated in the picturesque gorge of Dryanovo River. Lunch. A visit to the historical village of Arbanasi, the Konstantsaliev's House and one of the biggest and most lavishly decorated houses of the Bulgarian National Revival. At the Church of the Nativity of Christ, the oldest church in Arbanasi, see the unique frescoes. Return to Veliko Tarnovo. Dinner. Depending on the season, there may be a possibility to attend the "Sound and Light" show on Tsarevets Hill (additional payment required). Overnight stay in Veliko Tarnovo.

#### **Day 6 – Sightseeing Tour of Veliko Tarnovo**

Visit Tsarevets Hill and Samovodska Charshia followed by lunch. Depart for the Troyan Monastery - the third biggest monastery in Bulgaria, founded in the 16th century. In 1847 the monks requested that the famous Bulgarian artist Zahari Zograf work on the decoration of the monastery. Dinner. Overnight stay near the Troyan Monastery.

#### **Day 7 – Depart for Sofia**

Visit to the Boyana Church, which is included in the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage. It has preserved frescoes of an unknown artist, which date back to the year 1259. The frescoes impress with the spirituality and expressiveness of their images, and were created 7 years before the birth of Giotto di Bondone, who is considered as the first Renaissance artist. Lunch. Free time in Sofia. Dinner in a typical Bulgarian restaurant with a folklore program. Overnight stay in Sofia.

#### **Day 8 – Sofia and Departure**

Check out and transfer to the Airport for your onward journey.