

BULGARIA: THE LAND OF ORPHEUS

8 day / 7-night Self-guided walking holiday.



The Rodope Mountains are the birthplace of the mythical hero Orpheus, who with his lyre made animals and beasts docile, and trees dance. Most famously he took part in the journey with the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece.

These ancient lands are known as the 'green heart of Europe' for their vast pinewoods, reputedly the largest in the Balkans. The people of these mountains, who care for their roots and make their living by working on the land, are very hospitable. The paths take you through unspoiled nature and on the way you will meet local people in their villages like Sitovo and Shiroka Laka. You will eat delicious meals prepared with organic food. Discover unique architecture in one of the country's largest monasteries at Bachkovo, and Plovdiv's old town, a melting pot of different cultures. Rapidly changing Sofia has a history of some 7000 years.

DEPARTS: Daily on demand from mid May to the end of October

COST: AU\$1250 per person twin share (single rooms on request)

INCLUDED: All transfers and transportation within the programme in Bulgaria, accommodation in a pension, family hotel and 3-star hotel with half board basis except in Sofia (breakfast only), walking maps and route notes of the Rodopes

NOT INCLUDED: Flights, lunch, dinner in Sofia on day 7, tips and personal expenses, drinks, entrance fees

GETTING THERE: Fly to Sofia with Easyjet, BA or with Bulgaria Air

WHEN TO GO: The recommended period is from Mid-May to the end of October but this independent holiday is available all year round and can commence on any day of the week.

WHAT TO TAKE: Walking boots and walking socks (with a change of socks in rucksack), rucksack/day pack, water bottle, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun hat, sun block/cream, compass, torch, mobile phone, container for sandwiches and a first-aid kit.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

ACCOMMODATION:

Orehovo = pension/HB (breakfast and dinner) for 4-nights. Private WC/shower next to bedroom. The host family cooks traditional food. Dinner is a 3-course menu – ie salad, main meal and desert with organic food.

Shiroka Laka = family hotel/HB (breakfast and dinner) for 2-nights in a small family hotel with 6 double rooms all with ensuite WC/shower. The house is built in the traditional Rodopi style - with stone and wood.

Sofia = 3-star hotel, central location/BB for 1-night close to all major sights.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Sofia and transfer to Orehovo village

Day 2: Orehovo - Persenk hut - Roman road – Orehovo

We start the hike with a moderate ascent to Persenk, walking through impressive pinewoods. From Persenk we follow the old Roman road. The descent takes you past two Orthodox chapels before returning to Orehovo.

6 hours walking @ 16km + 750m; - 750m

Day 3: Orehovo - Kabata - Wonder Bridges

Cross the Oreshitsa River and follow the path ascending to the meadows at Kabata. From Kabata we have little more than an hour to the Wonder Bridges, 2 natural bridges from solid rock rising up to 45 m, peacefully set among the pinewoods. Continue on the road to village of Ziburdo or direct transfer back to Orehovo.

4 hours walking @ 13km + 650m; - 250m

Day 4: Orehovo village - Sitovo village – Orehovo

Through forest and meadows before descending to the village of Sitovo. It has a rich history and fantastic setting beside a river - perfect for a lunch break. In the afternoon return with an ascent to the ridge before descending to Orehovo.

6 hours walking @ 15km + 600m; - 600m

Day 5: Ziburdo village - Izgrev hut - Shiroka Laka village

Transfer to Ziburdo village, the starting point of the walk. Follow the ascending path to Izgrev, passing springs on the way. Pass through meadows to Shiroka Laka and accommodation in a small family hotel. Shiroka Laka is an architectural and folklore reserve. The houses are built of stone and wood, the roofs covered in stone tiles. Old bridges span the river. Revival period architecture is also found at the church with its marvellous frescoes.

6 hours walking @ 15 km + 550m; - 650m

Day 6: Orpheus Lands, Stikal and Gela villages Transfer to the trailhead. Then walk the 'panorama road' with fantastic views over the rolling landscape. After some 2 hours we leave this road and descend to Saint Pantaleimon chapel, and on to tiny Stikal village - the highest in Bulgaria (1560 m). From there take a mountain road to nearby Gela village - birthplace of the mythical hero Orpheus. In the afternoon descend back to Shiroka Laka.

6 hours walking @ 16 km + 100m; - 650m

Day 7: Bachkovo Monastery, Plovdiv's Old Town

Transfer to Bachkovo Monastery founded in the 11th century. Visit the medieval church and the refectory with its unique frescos and perhaps walk to a holy spring and chapel 45-minutes from the monastery. Travel to Plovdiv to visit a town with a great historical heritage – including the well-preserved Roman Theatre from the 2nd century, the Ethnographical Museum, and many 19th century houses with colourfully painted walls, representing the building traditions of the Revival Period. In the late afternoon transfer to Plovdiv bus station for the bus to Sofia, where you are collected and transferred to a small 3-star hotel with central location.

Day 8: Transfer to Sofia airport.

This itinerary is subject to change due to local conditions or changes necessary for operational reasons. You will be given full details when you collect your final documents & maps on arrival.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** or your travel agent for more details, travel brochures and reservations on this or a host of self-guided or guided walking holidays across Europe:

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