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# PACKAGE TOUR OFFER

## Rila and Pirin Mountains Tour

### PROGRAM

#### **Day #1 Sofia – Borovets**

Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer to Borovets resort at the Rila mountain. Dinner and overnight in Borovets (4 nights).  
(70 km, 1 ½ hrs)

#### **Day #2 Malyovitsa - the cradle of Bulgarian mountaineering**

Today is our first immersion in the alpine world of Rila Mountain. Starting from Yavorova meadow, through marvelous coniferous woods we are reaching the Valley of Malyovitsa River – the symbol of Bulgarian alpinism. At noon, picnic on a beautiful meadow, with a stunning view to the 2729 m high summit of Malyovitsa.

(+ 400 m, 2 ½ hrs).

In the afternoon - bus escort to Samokov. Situated 950 m a. s. l., the town was important metallurgic center in the 14th century and still represents its vast cultural-historical heritage to the guests. Interesting places to visit are: the History Museum, the Bayrakli Mosque and the Shroud of Holy Mary monastery.

Dinner and overnight at Borovets.

#### **Day #3 The Seven Rila lakes**

Early transfer to 'Pionerska' hut (1520 m), from where the whole-day hike through the most famous and largest glacier lake group in Rila mountain begins. Depending on their locality or characteristic form, the stunning beauty of these 7 'windows to the soul' of the mountain will leave you breathless.

Option 1: reaching hut 'The 7 lakes' (2196 m) on foot, situated on the north-eastern shore of the Fish lake. The walk goes further, passing by the Trefoil, the Sibling, the Kidney lakes and eventually reaching the Eye (2440 m) (depending on weather conditions and snow amount). Reaching hut 'Rila lakes' (2150 m) and descend back to "Pionerska" hut on foot (+/-900m, 7-8 hrs)

Option 2: Taking the chair lift to hut "Rila Lakes" from where the hike starts in direction hut "The 7 Lakes" and passing by Trefoil, the Sibling, The Kidney lakes and eventually reaching the Eye (2440 m) and the Tear (2535 m) (depending on weather conditions and snow amount). Reaching hut 'Rila lakes' on foot and descend back to 'Pionerska' hut with the lift. (+/- 385 m, 5 ½ hrs)

Return to Borovets for dinner and overnight.

#### **Day #4 Musala – the highest peak in Southeastern Europe**

Musala – the name of the giant, dominating over Southeastern Europe should be translated as 'near God' or 'place for prayer'. A magnificent view awaits those, who are allowed to approach this granite colossus. We will take the cable car to mt. Yastrebets (2370 m) and then on foot we pass by another seven lakes, including the highest in Rila mountain – the Ice lake (2709 m). (+/- 650 m, 6 hrs)

Return to Borovets in the afternoon. Spare time for relax. Dinner and overnight.

#### **Day #5 In the heart of Rila – the world-famous Rila monastery**

Transfer to the Rila monastery area. We will visit the cave, where the founder of the monastery, St. John of Rila lived and then follows a short hike through an old deciduous forest to the monastery itself (+ 100 m/- 250 m, 2 hrs).

Rila Monastery (founded in the 10th century) is the largest and most famous Eastern Orthodox monastery in Bulgaria. The monastery complex houses a rich collection of icons, wall paintings, old-printed books – some 15 000 volumes, etc. The monastery became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983. You will take a guided tour of the monastery complex. You will see the gold-plated iconostasis in the main church; the monastery museum, famous for housing Rafail's Cross; the tower of Hrelyu and the residential part of the complex that consists of chambers, four chapels, an abbot's room and a kitchen (noted for its uncommonly large vessels).

Transfer to Sandanski spa resort in Southwestern Bulgaria. Dinner and overnight in Sandanski.

(210 km, 1 night)

#### **Day #6 the Rozhen monastery – the biggest in Pirin region**

Transfer to Rozhen monastery, founded in the 13th century. We will visit the katholikon with its remarkable frescoes, some of which date back from the end of the 16th century, the dining-room and the 100-year old grape vine. Then comes a short hike through sand formations, until Melnik – the smallest town in Bulgaria is reached. (- 150 m, 2 hrs).

A guided tour through the architectural reserve is planned for the afternoon. We will visit Kordopulov's house - built in 1754, especially for production and export of the famous Melnik wine. Wine-tasting at one of the local cellars will rescue us from the typical hot climate for the region. Transfer at the afternoon to one of the most famous winter and ski resorts in Bulgaria - Bansko. Dinner and overnight. (140 km, 3 nights)

#### **Day #7 Popovo lake – the biggest in Pirin mountain**

Transfer to 'Gotse Delchev' hut (1458 m). The chair lift allows us to win 778 m elevation for half an hour to Bezbog hut (2236 m). Then we start a short hike to the biggest glacial lake in Pirin mountain – Popovo lake (1,23 km<sup>2</sup>). Interesting legends, narrated among the old locals are binded with this gorgeous landscape. Lunch picnic by the lake is foreseen. (+/- 300 m, 3 hrs)

Return to Bansko for a city tour. Dinner and overnight.

#### **Day #8 Mount Vihren – the marble challenge**

Prepare for a fairly difficult ascent to Vihren peak – the highest in Pirin mountain. Early transfer to 'Vihren' hut (1950 m) – starting point for the tour, en route you will enjoy most of the Pirin's peaks and pass through "Kazanite" region, known for the incredible variety of plants (including Edelweiss). Return to the starting point (+/- 964 m, 6,3-7 hrs). Next on the agenda is visit to Baykushev's pine – the oldest coniferous tree in Bulgaria, with an approximate age of about 1 300 years.

Dinner and overnight in Bansko.

**Day #9 Bansko – Sofia**

Following breakfast, we will head up to the capital city of Bulgaria. Arrival in Sofia for a walking city tour. Visit the most interesting places like 'Alexander Nevsky' cathedral; the 'St. Sofia' church, built in the 6th century; the former Royal palace, which houses the National Art Gallery; 'St. George's' rotunda, the ruins of Serdica and many more.

Dinner and overnight in Sofia.

(160 km, 1 night)

**Day #10 Sofia**

Free time until departure. Transfer to Sofia International Airport.

\*\*\*Optional (at additional cost):

You can extend the tour with one more day by adding a cultural experience in Bansko area after Day 08. Our recommendation for you is to have a full day of emotions, including a ride on the narrow gauge line from Bansko to Guliyna banya. Then visit Dobarsko village, with the unique church 'St. Theodor Tyrone and Theodor Stratilates' and its remarkable frescoes, get acquainted with the Dobarsko's Grannies, learn to knit and taste local cuisine.

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**PRICES**

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