

Proposed itinerary page 1

Day 1: - Included transfer to Heathrow for a direct flight to Sofia. On arrival you will be met at the airport & escorted to a centrally located hotel, where a late dinner is included.

Day 2: This morning begins with a **guided walking tour** of Sofia taking in the city's most interesting sites in the historical centre. The Rotunda of St George, remains of the Serdika Ancient Fortress, Banya Bashi Mosque, Central baths, Cathedral of St Nedelya, National Bank, the St Nikolay Russian Church. **Coffee break** included near the Cathedral of Alexander Nevski. **Continue the city tour:** The Patriarchal Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevski (entrance included), the National Assembly, University of Sofia, Basilica of St Sophia (Entrance + visit to the Archaeological level). Free time for lunch along the main Vitosha Street.

This afternoon included visit of **Boyana church** (UNESCO Site), a remarkable monument with Bulgarian Medieval Art. Return to the centre to visit the **Archaeological Museum + a glass of wine or beer** afterwards.

Included **Folklore dinner** in an atmospheric Bulgarian restaurant with traditional meals, folklore songs and dance. Fire-dancing (subject to weather conditions). Return to the hotel mid-evening.

Total walking today is approx. 2km, mostly on the flat but with some stairs during visits.

Day 3:

Breakfast included before departing for the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **Rila Monastery**. Included is a **coffee / comfort stop** during the journey (coffee/tea, glass of lemonade). Included **visit with guide** to the 10th-century complex and museum. This impressive 10th-century complex, located high in the Rila Mountains, is known for its imposing architecture, arcade entrances, numerous staircases, bay-windows, beautiful frescoes, mural paintings and wood-carvings. The museum's icon gallery houses 80 icons from the 18th - 19th centuries selected from the museum's collection in addition to 28 portraits of the abbots of the monastery from 1860 to 2005. **Lunch** is included in a nearby restaurant in an area famous for freshwater trout. Returning to Sofia, dinner is at the hotel.

Walking: Cobblestones & uneven surfaces – unsuitable for walking aids

Day 4:

Breakfast included before checking out of the hotel for the journey towards the Western Rhodopi mountains, making an **included coffee / comfort break** en route (coffee/tea + small cake).

A visit will be made in Kostandovo to the **Bulgarian Persian carpet craft workshop** where every day, up to 30 women are busy tying hundreds of thousands of knots, in order to produce carpets of extremely high quality from organic materials and dyes, using the largest loom in Europe, for palaces and private homes around the world.

Lunch is included in Velinograd before driving along the Batak reservoir with stunning views to Peshtera for an included visit the **Museum of Socialist Cars**, housed in an authentically preserved cinema. Here you can see numerous retro cars and many lifestyle objects from this period including toys, radios, & numerous signs with slogans. A **glass of wine** is included before continuing on to **Plovdiv**, one of the oldest cities in Europe and a former European capital of culture (2019). Hotel dinner included.

Day 5:

Breakfast included. Today is dedicated to the vibrant and rich-in-history city of **Plovdiv**.

You will be escorted on a **guided tour** around the **Old Town** with its stunning sights. Plovdiv is one of the most ancient towns in Europe and is similar to Troy, as it is built upon many layers of previous occupations and hence its varied culture. Visits today start with the **Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis**, built mid-4th century where Roman mosaic heritage (a genuine masterpiece of late antiquity), continues to inspire today. A **coffee / comfort break is included** before continuing the **walking tour** of Old Plovdiv, along narrow streets with architecturally unique merchant's houses built in the 19th century. Visits are included to the fascinating **Ethnographic Museum, Roman theatre**, the **Hindlyan house** (the most beautifully decorated authentic building) + the church of St **Constine and Helena**. **Lunch** is included in a local restaurant before the last stretch of this tour finishing close to the **Kapana creative district**, which is both vibrant and colourful. Hotel dinner included.

Total walking approx. 3km - Many uneven surfaces, cobbles + steps. Unsuitable for walking aids

Continued on page 2