

Guided and selfguided trips in Bulgaria and the Balkans - ski touring, snowshoeing, walking and mountain biking tours

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Walking in Bulgaria - The Rila Traverse, 5 days

Itinerary:

Day 1: Morning transfer from Sofia to Borovetz - 1.15h. From the ski area of Borovets we will take the gondola lift up to 2400 m, the start of the Musala tour. We will ascend to the highest peak of the Balkans by following the classic route along Musala Hut and Ledeno Ezero Hut. The trail passes the two terraces of the glacial valley, near 5 lakes. The highest of them - Ledenoto Ezero (The Icy Lake) is located at 2750 meters of elevation, near Ledeno Ezero Hut.

There is an option for more experienced hikers to follow the airy ridges east and west of Musala, instead of the main path. Contact us for details.

We return the same way back in order to get the gondola on time and descend back to the start point.

Transfer to the village of Sapareva Banya, located in the foot of the Rila Lakes area, and accommodation. 1h transfer in total. Sapareva Banya is famous for its mineral spring (103 degrees C) and numerous outdoor pools.

Total walking for the day: +650/-650 m, 6 hours

Day 2: 25 min transfer will take us to Zeleni Preslop area (Gorna Zemya) - the start point of today's tour. About an hour walk through the coniferous forests of Skakavitsa Reserve will take us to Skakavitsa Hut. The trail follows the river of Skakavitsa.

From here we have an option for a 30 min detour up to the magnificent Skakavitsa Waterfall - the biggest formation of that sort in the Rila Mountains. The waterfall is located at the bottom of the valley and we cross a couple of large meadows, full of flowers, in order to reach it. Return to Skakavitsa Hut from where we will follow the main trail via the Rila Lakes and up to Vazov Hut.

We climb up the Dry Ridge which offers great views towards the lower of the Rila Lakes - The Bottom Lake, The Fish Lake, The Trefoil and The Twins lakes. We pass by the shores of the biggest of the Rila Lakes - The Kidney Lake. Further we ascend by the Eye Lake and up to the highest one - The Teardrop.

We will cross the Razdela Pass and descend down to Vazov Hut. Optional climb of Otovitsa Peak.

Accommodation in the hut - dormitory rooms, no shower/hot water, common facilities and no power sockets.

Note: option to shorten the tour by taking the Rila Lakes lift, this way we skip the Skakavitsa Waterfall.

Total walking for the day: 17km, +1430/-720 m – 8,30 hours

Day 3: Today we will walk along the main ridge of Malyovitsa area in Northwestern Rila. Firstly we will ascend the valley of Pazardere and cross the foot of Vazov Peak, until we reach the main ridge with panoramic views towards the valley of Urdini Lakes with its glacial lakes and waterfalls. We follow the ridge and climb the peak of Dodov Vruh (2661 m), further the Mermerite ridge before the final ascend of Malyovitsa - the Beauty of Rila - 2729 m.

The descent of Malyovitsa is not easy, although it is not airy or exposed, we are following a rocky trail that requires focus in each step. We pass by the Dear's Lake, by Second Terrace and First Terrace all the way down to Malyovitsa Hut.

Accommodation in the hut - dorm rooms (option for 2-3-4 person rooms), common facilities, shower and hot water are available. Option to reach 3-star accommodation for an additional 50 min descent.

Total walking for the day: 11.5 km, +650/-950 m, 7 hours

Day 4: We start ascending towards the Scary Lake, located at the foot of the highest peaks of the area of Malyovitsa - Kупenite peaks. The solitude of the area and the views of the sharp rocky formations of Kупenite and Popova Kapa form a magnificent landscape. A stone shelter house - Zaslou Strashoto Ezero is located by the lake, but it is not managed by hosts.

After passing by the lake we reach the pass of Popova Kapa, from where we traverse the long valley of Kobilino Branishte. After reaching the location of the shelter of Kobilino Branishte, we will continue by descending down towards the Kirilova Polyana Locality.

The trail follows a deep valley by the river stream. We pass by the Dry Lake and further enter the forests, until we reach our next accommodation at Kirilova Polyana.

Total walking for the day: 16.2 km, +900/-1135 m, 8 hours

Day 5: We only have a shorter walk today - down to the Rila Monastery, by some of the sights of the area. We will see the Grave of St.Ivan Rilski - the founder of the monastery, and also pass by the first cell school of Revival Bulgaria. The route crosses the mixed - broadleaf and coniferous forests of the Rila Monastery Nature Park - one of the unique treasures of Rila. Descent down to the monastery and visit.

Total walking for the day: 2.5 hours

Options for an afternoon transfer or transfer by public transport to Sofia or Bansko.