

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

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Walking in Bulgaria and Greece - Rila, Pirin and Olympus mountains, 9 days

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival day

On the first day of your trip you`ll be collected from your hotel in Sofia or the Sofia airport and driven to the first location of your walking trip in Bulgaria – the village of Govedartsi in the foot of the Rila mountain range, where we will spend the next two nights.

Drive time: 1.45 hours

Day 2: Mount Musala in Rila Mountains

We start with the first of our 3 peaks in the plan - it is the highest one, but not

the most difficult. We will climb the top of the Balkan Peninsula today - Mount Musala.

Morning transfer from Govedartsi to Borovetz - 20 min. 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.

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

Day 3: The Seven Rila Lakes and Pirin Mountains

We start the day with a 1.15h transfer to the famous area of the Seven Rila Lakes in Rila National Park. The chair lift will take us up to 2100 m from where we start our loop around this part of the mountain.

We will 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.

1.45h transfer to the town of Bansko and accommodation for 2 nights.

Total walking for the day: +500/-500 m, 5 hours, option to extend

Day 4: Mount Vihren (2914 m) - the top of Pirin

Exciting day is in front of us – the ascent of the highest peak of the Pirin Mountains – Vihren Peak, the stone kingdom of the Balkan Chamois and the Edelweiss flower. Transfer back to Vihren Hut, which is the start point of the route today. The route is short in km but with steady inclination and rocky terrain, so be well prepared with walking sticks and good boots.

Note: in case you have fear of heights and rocky passages, we would recommend you to follow the south trail only – up and down the same way. Otherwise the loop we suggest initially traverses the slopes of Vihren and we ascend from the north, where the last passage is a bit more technical (please read below), then we descend from the south back to Vihren Hut.

The ascending trail traverses the east slopes of Vihren until we enter the so-called Big Pot – a glacially formed cirque which divides Vihren from the Marble Ridge, with impressive views towards the north face of Vihren. We ascend up to Premkata Col (possible detour to the Foal Ridge and back) and finally follow the markers up along the rocky slope of Vihren. This part of the trail requires little scrambling and although it is not risky (secured by a metal chain) nor requires any special skills, it is not suitable for people with strong fear of heights. The descent from the top is on the other (south) side, until we reach Vihren Hut and get our transport back to Bansko.

Total walking for the day: 8km, +1000/-1000 m, 7 hours

Day 5: Olympus National Park in Greece

We are leaving the area of Pirin National Park today and are heading south. We will enter Greece and drive down to the sea coast, passing by the city of Thessaloniki, in order to reach the small village of Litochoro. From Litochoro we will drive up the winding road towards the trailhead for the Olympus mountains climb - Prionia.

Ascend up to the hut of Agapitos at above 2000 m and overnight accommodation.

Total walking for the day: 6.5 km, +1190/-230 m, 3.5 hours.

Day 6: Mount Mytikas (2917 m)

A challenging day ahead of us - we will climb the respectful top of Olympus Mountains today and stay overnight at 2700 m, at the Mouson Plateau. Firstly we ascend to the Zonaria trail fork, where we will leave our main luggage and continue up with light rucksacks. Ascend of the peak of Skala - the second highest of Olympus with its 2911 m, with great panoramas towards Mytikas. From here starts the technical part of the Mytikas climb. The next section will take us 1.5 to 2 hours total to the peak and back, and it is not suitable if you are unwilling to challenge your fear of heights and mental stamina. The route is not technically difficult, but is exposed and requires focus and concentration, while moving on the rocks and passing by the Kakoscala - the Evil Stairs on the way to the top.

The mass practice is to complete it unroped, but we are ready to assist if additional help and belaying is in need in order to guarantee your safety and mental comfort.

Descend back to our trail fork, from where we follow the panoramic trail of Zonaria, until we reach the Mouson Plateau (The Muses Plateau) and our next hut for the night.

Total walking for the day: 7.5 km, +1360/-730m, 8 hours

Day 7: The Mouson Plateau and The Sea

We are descending the mountain today, after enjoying a beautiful sunset and sunrise from our location at 2700 m, from where both the magnificent peak of Stefani and the sea far below us are visible.

We will pass the panoramic Lemos ridge and the hut of Petrostrouga on the way day, passing by the alpine ridges, the coniferous and lower down the broadleaf forests. Short drive and we are by the beach.

Accommodation by the sea coast for a night and time to enjoy the beach in the afternoon.

Total walking for the day: 8.5 km, +190/-1500 m, 5 hours.

Day 8: The Rila Monastery

We have some early morning time to say “Goodbye” to the sea and the mountain, before leaving for our next aim - the UNESCO site of the Rila Monastery.

A long transfer back to Bulgaria, which will take us to the world famous UNESCO heritage site in Bulgaria – the Rila Monastery, for a visit and overnight stay. We will enjoy the monastery during its quiet late afternoon hours, away from visitors, and spend the night in the beautiful valley of Rilska River, in a local family hotel.

Day 9: Departure

Morning transfer to Sofia - 2.15h. Time permitting, a sightseeing tour around the city center. Departure from the Sofia airport.

