



Guided and self-guided tours in Bulgaria and the Balkans – hiking, ski touring, mountain biking and snowshoeing trips

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Hiking Bulgaria & Greece: Rila, Pirin & Mount Olympus

Hike the Balkans! From Bulgaria's Alpine Peaks to Mount Olympus, here is an opportunity to reach three iconic summits, visit two countries in a nine-days unforgettable mountain adventure.

This is a journey through the spectacular landscapes of the Rila and Pirin mountains in Bulgaria and Mount Olympus in Greece. Climb Musala (2925 m) in Rila mountain, the highest peak in the Balkans. Take in the lakes of Rila (2100 m - 2500 m). Reach Vihren (2914 m) in Pirin mountain. Challenge yourself on the rocky ascent to Mount Mytikas (2918 m) Olympus Mountains, and finish beside the Mediterranean Sea.

Led by an experienced mountain guide, this small-group adventure combines rewarding high-altitude hiking with mountain-hut stays, traditional mountain towns and cultural discoveries, including the UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery.

The Journey at a Glance

Day 1: Welcome to Bulgaria! Govedartsi and the Rila Mountains

Your journey begins in Sofia, where you will be met at your hotel or the airport and transferred to Govedartsi, a mountain village at the foot of the Rila range. Settle in, meet your guide and prepare for the days ahead in one of Bulgaria's most beautiful mountain regions.

Day 2: Mount Musala – the highest peak in the Balkans

The mountain adventure begins with an ascent of Mount Musala (2 925 m), the highest summit in the Balkan Peninsula. From Borovets, a gondola lift takes you to approximately 2 400 m, where the hike begins. We follow the classic mountain trail past Musala Hut and Ledeno Ezero Hut, crossing the two terraces of the glacial valley, near 5 lakes. The final ascent rewards you with expansive views across the Rila Mountains and beyond.

Day 3: The Seven Rila Lakes – a landscape shaped by ice

We explore one of Bulgaria's most celebrated mountain landscapes: the Seven Rila Lakes. After a transfer to the Panichishte area, a chairlift takes you to the starting point of a scenic loop through the high mountain basin.

Climb up the Dry Ridge and discover the lakes by name and character, from the Bottom Lake, The Fish Lake, The Trefoil, The Twins lakes and the highest lake, the Teardrop. On the way down we pass by the shores of the biggest of the Rila

Lakes – The Kidney Lake. The combination of alpine scenery, open ridgelines and glacial formations makes this one of the most memorable walks in Rila National Park.

In the afternoon, travel to Bansko, your base for the next two nights.

Day 4: Mount Vihren – the rocky heart of Pirin

This day brings a more demanding ascent to Mount Vihren (2 914 m), the highest peak in the Pirin Mountains. From Vihren Hut (1 950 m), the route climbs steeply through a dramatic landscape of limestone rock, glacial cirques and rugged ridges.

The proposed loop approaches the summit from the north via Premkata Col, with a rocky, exposed section requiring some scrambling and concentration. 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.

A metal chain assists on part of the route. For hikers uncomfortable with exposed terrain, the guide may recommend the southern approach and return along the same path, subject to conditions.

Day 5: From Bulgaria to Greece – entering the world of Olympus

Travel south into Greece, passing through the Thessaloniki region towards Litochoro, the gateway to Mount Olympus National Park. From Prionia, begin the climb through forested mountain terrain towards Agapitos Hut, high above the foothills. As the forest gives way to increasingly rugged alpine scenery, you enter the landscape of Greece's most famous mountain. We spend the night in a mountain hut, sharing the atmosphere of a traditional high-altitude refuge.

Day 6: Mount Mytikas – reach the summit of Mount Olympus

This is the defining challenge of the trip. Ascend towards the Skala summit area before continuing to Mount Mytikas (2 918 m), the highest peak in Greece. We leave the main luggage at the trail fork and continue with a light daypack. The final approach follows exposed rocky terrain known as Kakoskala, or the “Evil Stairs”.

Although the route does not generally require advanced climbing techniques, the exposure demands concentration, sure-footed movement and comfort with heights. The summit section takes 1.5–2 hours for the ascent and return. The mass practice is to complete it unroped, but the guide provides assistance and belaying where needed. The route is not technically difficult but hikers unwilling to tackle exposed scrambling should not engage on it.

After returning to the main trail, continue along the panoramic Zonaria traverse to the Muses Plateau, where you spend another night in a mountain hut beneath the dramatic cliffs of Olympus.

Day 7: From the Muses Plateau to the Mediterranean Sea

Wake up high in the Olympus Mountains, with views of the striking Stefani peak and the sea far below. Begin the descent along the scenic Lemos Ridge, passing Petrostrouga Hut and moving from exposed alpine terrain into coniferous and broadleaf forests.

As the mountain gives way to the coast, the landscape and atmosphere change completely. By the afternoon, you can leave your hiking boots behind and enjoy the beach of the Mediterranean Sea.

Day 8: Rila Monastery – a cultural finale in Bulgaria

After a final morning by the sea, we travel back to Bulgaria and visit Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site nestled in a forested mountain valley. We discover the monastery's remarkable architecture and historic atmosphere, with time to explore after the main visitor crowds have subsided.

We spend the final night in a local family-run hotel near the monastery and the Rilska River valley.

Day 9: Return to Sofia and departure

After breakfast, we transfer to Sofia for your departure. If time allows, enjoy a short sightseeing stop in the city centre before heading to the airport.

Your nine-day journey ends with three major summits, two countries, a collection of unforgettable mountain landscapes and a glimpse into the cultural heritage of the Balkans.

Brief Overview

	Difficulty / Technicality	What to expect...	Daily Ascent (1) Moving time (2) *	NOTES!	Accommodation
 Arrival — Day 1	-	Transfer from Sofia to Govedarts, at the foot of the Rila Mountains. A relaxed arrival in the mountains and a chance to prepare for your first summit.	-	~ 1h 45min driving	Govedarts (Guesthouse)
 Mount Musala — Day 2	Moderate	The top of the Balkans - Mount Musala (2925 m) via Borovets (1300 m) and the upper Rila lakes, classic route along Musala Hut (2389 m) and Ledeno Ezero Hut (2750 m). Start the mountain adventure with a landmark summit, glacial lakes and panoramic mountain scenery.	+650 m / -650 m ~ 6h	> Govedarts to Borovetz +20 min drive; > Gondola lift to Vastrebets hut (2400 m) + Option for more experienced hikers to follow the airy ridges east and west of Musala.	Govedarts (Guesthouse)
 The Seven Rila Lakes — Day 3	Moderate	Climb up the Dry Ridge and pass near the Seven Rila Lakes, followed by a transfer to Bansko. Emblematic glacial lakes, panoramic ridgelines and the mountain town of Bansko.	+500 m / -500 m ~ 5h	> Govedarts to Parichishte +1h drive; > Chair lift takes us up to 2100 m + Option to extend.	Bansko (Hotel)
 Mount Vihren — Day 4	Challenging	Hike to Mount Vihren (2914 m), the highest summit of the Pirin Mountains. A challenging summit, dramatic limestone scenery and the chance to spot Balkan chamois and mountain flora.	+1000 m / -1000 m ~ 7h		Bansko (Hotel)
 Entering the world of Olympus — Day 5	Challenging	Crossing an international border, entering Olympus National Park and your first night in the high mountains of Greece. We travel to Greece and hike from Prionia to Agapitos Hut (2000 m) on Mount Olympus.	+1190 m / -230 m ~ 3.5h	> Bansko (BG) to Litochoro (GR) ~ 3h 30min drive > No shower and dormitory rooms/common facilities in the hut.	Agapitos Hut (Mountain hut)
 Summit Mount Mytikas — Day 6	Advanced	Reach Greece's highest summit, exposed alpine scrambling and a night high on the legendary Mount Olympus. Summit Mount Mytikas (2918 m) and continue to the Muses Plateau (2700 m).	+1360 m / -730 m ~ 8h	> No shower and dormitory rooms/common facilities in the shelter.	Mouson Plateau (Mountain hut)
 Lemos Ridge — Day 7	Challenging	Sunrise in the high mountains at 2700m, a scenic ridge descent via the Lemos Ridge and Petrostruga Refuge (1920 m), and a well-earned afternoon beside the sea.	+190 m / -1500 m ~ 5h	> Time to enjoy the beach in the afternoon	Hotel by the Mediterranean coast
 Rila Monastery — Day 8	Easy	Return to Bulgaria and visit Rila Monastery. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bulgarian cultural heritage and a peaceful final evening in the mountains.	- +/- 1.5 h	~ 6 h driving	Hotel near Rila Monastery
 Departure — Day 9	-	After breakfast, transfer to Sofia for your departure. If time allows, enjoy a short sightseeing stop in the city centre before heading to the airport for final departure.		~ 2 h driving	-

* Walking times and elevation figures are approximate and depend on the route options, weather and group condition. The itinerary may be adjusted by the guide for safety reasons.

Equipment Needed:

- ✓ hiking boots,
 - ✓ pair of gaiters,
 - ✓ trekking poles,
 - ✓ rain cover,
 - ✓ water and windproof jacket,
 - ✓ sun protection - glasses, sun block cream, sun hat,
- ✓ water bottle or flask (1L),
 - ✓ sandwich & snacks,
 - ✓ personal aid kit - any medicines you take, blister kit,
 - ✓ torch,
 - ✓ travel liner for the huts.
 - ✓ rucksack 35-45L