

Bulgaria's Mountains And Monasteries

Sofia, Bulgaria

July 12 - 20, 2008 (Saturday-Sunday)

Tucked away and lying almost forgotten behind the Iron Curtain in the far southeastern corner of Europe, Bulgaria remains one of the continent's best-kept secrets. Although only a small country in terms of size, it has been richly endowed with a unique natural and cultural heritage and some of the most scenic mountains to be found anywhere. During our nine-day trip we will be introduced to the delights of Bulgaria's remote Rhodope, Pirin and Rila Mountains, with plenty of opportunity to interact with local people and learn about their way-of-life. In particular our trip offers a unique insight into the local Pomak (Bulgarian Muslim) community. Much of our time will be spent staying in and walking amongst traditional Muslim villages. By way of contrast, we will also visit four of Bulgaria's most striking Orthodox Christian monasteries. The natural history is equally fascinating and we will see a fascinating variety of rare flora and fauna during our walks.

Most international air arrivals are early afternoon so we will plan to meet at the Sofia airport on July 12. After everyone is through customs we will board our private bus for the transfer to Gornovodenski Monastery - a quaint hotel converted from a medieval monastery, located on the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. On Sunday we transfer to Yagodina village, a very remote and friendly mountain settlement inhabited by Pomatsi. Making several stops along the way, we will visit Bachkovo Monastery, a botanic reserve, and the small town of Shiroka Luka. For the next two days we will travel on foot from our hotel in Yagodina into the heart of the Rhodope Mountains, hiking across beautiful meadows and woodlands to visit scenic caves and remote villages. On Wednesday, we transfer by bus again, through the beautiful Pirin Mountains where we spend the morning in the village of Breznitsa as guests of some local Pomak women. They will demonstrate their rich tradition of weaving and handicraft making and also prepare us a homemade lunch. We then continue on to the Greek-influenced town of Melnik where we spend two nights. Thursday we will travel on foot to the Rozhen Monastery, one of the few Bulgarian monasteries from the Middle Ages. On Friday we transfer to the heart of the Rila Mountains, lodging for two nights in Borovets, the Rila's most famous resort. We will visit the Rila Monastery, walk the pilgrimage path of St. John of Rila, and climb Mt. Musala - the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula. That night we'll share a farewell dinner at the home of a Bulgarian "granny." Our final morning (Sunday) will be spent in Sofia, with a guided tour and free time to enjoy the sights. In the afternoon we will be transferred to the airport and you can fly out after 3 pm.

This trip is designed for women in moderate physical condition who want to learn about the history and culture of Bulgaria, and also enjoy hiking in beautiful countryside. Following traditional shepherds' paths, forest tracks, and ancient Roman roads, we walk at a leisurely pace for between 2-5 hours per day. Although for the most part moderately gentle, there will be an occasional steep ascent and descent as well as some rough and rocky terrain.

We will be staying at comfortable tourist-class hotels that are classified two to three star by the Bulgarian classification system. These hotels offer twin rooms with private facilities. Where possible, we try to use smaller more atmospheric hotels, and this means that because they usually have limited rooms available, it is not possible to request single rooms.

The trip fee is \$1475, with an early bird discount of \$100 for registration by January 12. The fee includes a Bulgarian English-speaking woman guide, an Adventures in Good Company guide, twin/double rooms with private toilet and shower, all meals from supper on July 12 to breakfast on July 20, all transport within Bulgaria including a private bus and lifts, entrance fees to sites that are included in the itinerary, and tips for the bus driver and restaurant staff. The trip fee doesn't include your airline ticket, insurance, drinks, or guide gratuities.

To reserve a place on this trip, please send your \$400 deposit to the Adventures in Good Company office, register on our web site, or call to register by phone. Four months before the trip we will send you pre-trip information, including a packing list. Final details and the names of other participants will be sent out several weeks in advance for pre-trip networking. If you have any questions, please call or e-mail us- we'd love to discuss whether this is the right trip for you.

A d v e n t u r e s i n G o o d C o m p a n y

5913 Brackenridge Ave, Baltimore, MD 21212

toll-free: 877/439-4042 • fax: 410/435-3084

web site: www.adventuresingoodcompany.com • e-mail: trips@goodadventure.com