



## **Bulgaria & Romania Discovery**

*Two fascinating Balkan countries, one uncommon, and exceptional, small group journey. We discover Bulgaria, with its mix of East and West, rugged mountains and Black Sea coast, and treasured UNESCO sites. Then on to historic Romania, home of medieval walled towns, crenellated castles, and fabled Transylvania.*

### **Itinerary**

Created on Feb 29, 2024

# **Bulgaria & Romania Discovery**

## **Day-by-Day Itinerary**

### **DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Sofia, Bulgaria**

### **DAY 2: Arrive Sofia**

We arrive in Bulgaria's capital and largest city today and transfer to our hotel. As guests' arrival times may vary greatly, we have no group activities or meals planned. Dinner tonight is on our own.

*Accommodations:* Grand Hotel Sofia

### **DAY 3: Sofia**

We meet our fellow travelers and Odysseys Unlimited Tour Director at this morning's briefing about the journey ahead. Then we set out on a tour of this historic city, beginning with visits to the huge neo-Byzantine Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the medieval Bulgarian Orthodox Boyana Church, a UNESCO site. After lunch at a local restaurant, we return to our hotel, where a historian will discuss the impact of Thracian-Roman culture on the region. Tonight, we enjoy a welcome dinner.

*Accommodations:* Grand Hotel Sofia

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 4: Sofia/Rila**

Today's excursion features the Rila Monastery, founded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt in the mid-19th century after a fire. A symbol of Slavic cultural identity, the monastery is now a UNESCO site. We return to Sofia late this afternoon. Tonight's dinner at a local restaurant features traditional folkloric music and dancing.

*Accommodations:* Grand Hotel Sofia

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 5: Sofia/Plovdiv**

En route today to Plovdiv, we stop along the way for a cooking demonstration and lunch of Bulgarian specialties, including the local pastry-like bread *banitsa*. Then we continue on to Plovdiv, Bulgaria's cultural capital in the historical region of Thrace. Late afternoon, we reach our hotel and dine together tonight.

*Accommodations:* Grand Hotel Plovdiv

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Plovdiv**

We set out this morning on a walking tour of Plovdiv's charming Old Town, with its cobbled streets and beautifully restored houses. Set on three of the city's seven hills, the Old Town features remnants of its Roman past, including the well-preserved theater (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> century CE), which can hold as many as 7,000 spectators and is still in use today. Following our tour and lunch in the Old Town, the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration and dinner on our own.

*Accommodations:* Grand Hotel Plovdiv

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 7: Plovdiv/Nessebar/Varna (Black Sea)**

Today we travel to the Black Sea resort of Varna, stopping en route in Nessebar, "Pearl of the Black Sea," whose ancient city is a UNESCO site. While the site retains traces of its occupation by a variety of civilizations over the millennia, most of the ruins that we explore today date from the Hellenistic period. After time for lunch on our own here, we continue on to Varna and our hotel. We dine together tonight.

*Accommodations:* Rosslyn Dimyat Hotel Varna

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Varna/Black Sea**

At the same time modern and historic, Varna offers visitors a laid-back respite, as we see on this morning's tour. Highlights include a visit to the Archaeological Museum, with more than 100,000 artifacts from Northern Bulgaria's multicultural past. Then the remainder of the day is at leisure in this seaside resort, perhaps to stroll the landscaped grounds of the waterfront Sea Garden; visit Varna Cathedral, modeled after grand Peterhof Palace in St. Petersburg; or simply to relax on the beach.

*Accommodations:* Rosslyn Dimyat Hotel Varna

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 9: Varna/Bucharest, Romania**

Along the way to Romania today, we visit two Bulgarian UNESCO sites: the late 7<sup>th</sup>-century rock relief carving of a horseman on the Madara Plateau; and the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century BCE architectural marvel with its painted murals and carved female figures – the only example of this type of decoration found in the Thracian lands. We continue on to Bucharest, arriving late afternoon and dining together at a local restaurant tonight.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 10: Bucharest**

We see the highlights of the Romanian capital on our city tour that features a visit to the Soviet-era, 1,100-room Palace of Parliament, the world's most expensive government building and the heaviest building in the world, weighing in at roughly nine *billion* pounds. We also tour the National Village Museum, with Romanian monuments, buildings, and artifacts dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dinner tonight is on our own in this lively city.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 11: Bucharest**

Today we encounter two vibrant vestiges of Bucharest's once-thriving Jewish community: the Choral Temple, a copy of Vienna's Great Synagogue; and Bucharest's Great (or Polish) Synagogue, built in 1847 and now the city's oldest remaining temple after most were destroyed during the communist era. Following an afternoon free for independent exploration, tonight we enjoy dinner and a wine tasting at a local restaurant.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 12: Bucharest/Sighisoara**

This morning we journey to the medieval walled town of Sighisoara in Romania's forested – and storied – Transylvania region. Upon arrival we take a walking tour of the Historic Centre, the best preserved in eastern Europe and a UNESCO site. Then we check in at our hotel, where we dine together tonight.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Sighisoara

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 13: Sighisoara/Malancrav**

In nearby Biertan today, we visit the elaborate fortified church (ca. 15<sup>th</sup> century) then continue on to the early 14<sup>th</sup>-century storybook village of Malancrav, where we enjoy a traditional lunch cooked over an open fire. Back in Sighisoara, we have free time to enjoy this lovely town as we wish before tonight's private organ concert. Dinner is on our own.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Sighisoara

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 14: Sighisoara/Brasov**

We depart this morning for the stunning medieval town of Brasov, ringed by mountain peaks and dense forests. Our city tour here includes the First Romanian School, a museum housing rare books and Romania's first printing press; and the famed Black Church, southeastern Europe's largest Gothic church. We check in at our hotel mid-afternoon and dine together tonight

*Accommodations:* Aro Palace Hotel

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 15: Brasov**

Legend comes to life today as we visit towered and turreted Bran Castle, built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century atop a 200-foot-high rock and once believed to be the lair of Bram Stoker's fictional Count Dracula. We tour the castle, now a museum, then continue on to the fortified church of Prejmer. Along with the church and village we saw on Day 13, Prejmer is part of UNESCO's Transylvania historic site. After returning to Brasov late this afternoon, we're free for dinner on our own.

*Accommodations:* Aro Palace Hotel

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

### **DAY 16: Brasov/Sinaia/Snagov/Bucharest**

Returning to Bucharest today, we stop in the mountain resort of Sinaia, "Pearl of the Carpathians," where we visit exquisite Peles Castle, former summer home of Romanian royalty. Then we head to Snagov Monastery, perched on a tiny island on a lake near Bucharest and, legend has it, burial site of infamous Vlad the Impaler, said to be the inspiration for fictional Count Dracula. We continue on to Bucharest, where tonight we toast our Balkans adventure at a farewell dinner.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 17: Depart for U.S.**

We transfer to the Bucharest airport for our return flights to the U.S.

*Meals:* Breakfast

This tour itinerary was generated for Bulgaria & Romania Discovery on Feb 29, 2024. Please visit the Bulgaria & Romania Discovery page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/europe/bulgaria-romania-discovery/> for the latest and most accurate information.