

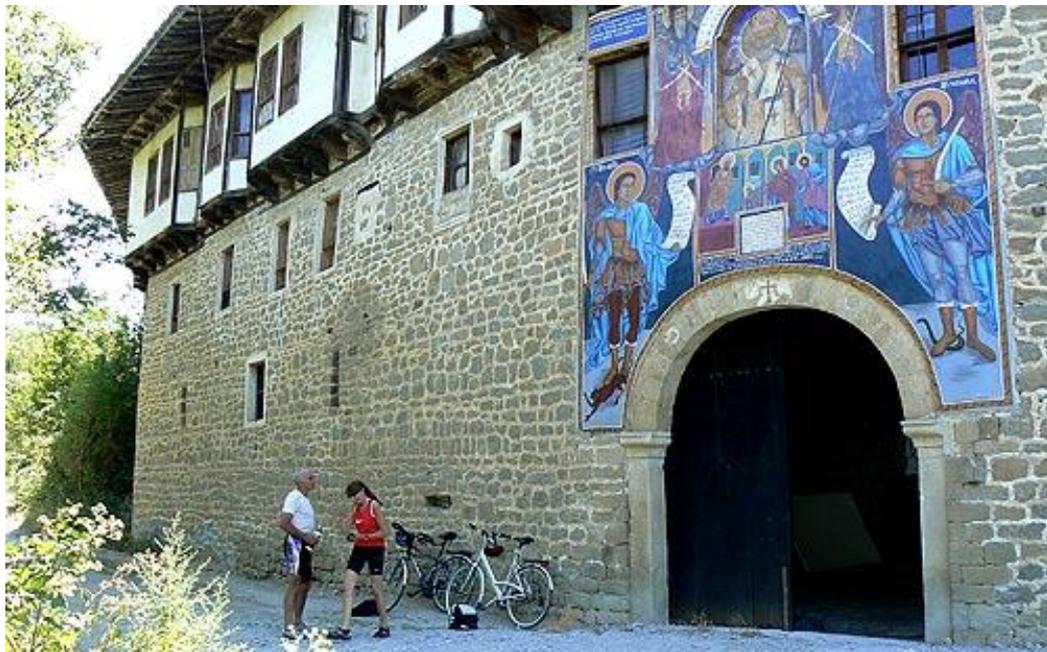
Cycling Europe

BULGARIA 2020

THE MONASTERY CIRCUIT CYCLE TOUR

Semi-Guided - 8 Days/7 Nights

Experience the hospitality of the Bulgarian Monasteries and its fascinating history on a bike, escorted by an English speaking guide/driver with a support vehicle throughout. This tour is not just a circuit of some of the most interesting Bulgarian monasteries, it is also a journey through Bulgaria's history. All of the featured religious buildings are monuments to what has happened in Bulgaria over the last 700 years or so. Along with the rich history you will enjoy the greenness of the mountains ("Balkana") and admire its outstanding nature - beautiful waterfalls, caves, rock cliffs, forests, vast meadows, rivers and valleys combined with crop and potato fields. Bike along the central Balkan Mountains exploring many villages nestled among quiet valleys and beautiful green landscapes. It seems that time has stopped here and life is quiet and peaceful - people still use the horse driven cart, look after their small herds of sheep, goats and cattle, cut the grass in the old fashion way, take care of their small vegetable gardens or just sit in front of their houses and have a chat.



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Arbanasi village is famous for its massive houses that resemble minor fortresses, several monasteries and old churches
- ◆ Dryanovo Monastery "St Archangel Michael" - located in the gorge of Dryanovska River where limestone rocks rise high on all sides
- ◆ Tryavna has preserved its old town square, the only one left in the country, which has been proclaimed as a Monument of Architecture.
- ◆ Etura Open-air Ethnographic Museum - Master craftsmen fashion beautiful gold, silver, copper, leather and wooden articles right before your eyes from early morning until late at the night.

♦ Shipka monastery - built in the traditional style of 17th-century Russian cathedrals the monastery stands to the living memory of Russian soldiers and Bulgarian revolutionaries who died during the Russian-Turkish Liberation War.

ITINERARY

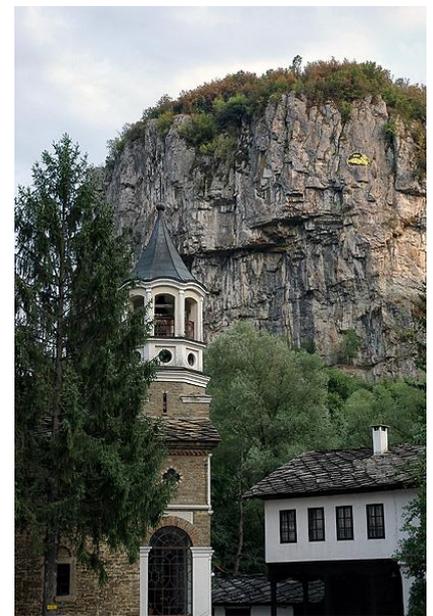
Day 1. Arbanasi

Arrival at Sofia Airport and transfer to Arbanasi Village, St. Virgin Mary Monastery where you stay the next two nights. Enjoy dinner in a traditional Bulgarian restaurant (mehana).

Day 2. Transfiguration Monastery - Hotnitsa waterfall - Veliko Tarnovo

Today cycle to the picturesque Transfiguration Monastery near Veliko Tarnovo. Continue on to the beautiful Hotnitsa waterfall and eco trail. Transfer a short way by vehicle and then cycle to Buria (Storm) village, among beautiful hilly landscapes with views to Dryanovo rock cliffs. You finish cycling near Dryanovo. Transfer to Veliko Tarnovo for some sightseeing with your guide and then return to the St. Virgin Mary Monastery in Arbanasi.

Cycling distance: 34 km



Day 3. Merdanski Monastery - Kapinovo Monastery

Transfer to Dragizhevo village where you start the days cycling. Enroute you pass by Merdanski Monastery and continue in the direction of Plakovo and Kapinovo Monastery. Stay overnight in the peaceful Kapinovo Monastery and enjoy dinner in the lovely Monastery courtyard.

Cycling distance: 33 km (or 53km with possible extension)

Day 4. Kilifarevo Monastery - Dryanovo Monastery

After a short transfer cycle through the villages of Plakovo, Golemanite and Natsovtsi to Kilifarevo Monastery. After lunch and a visit to the Monastery you continue with a short but challenging ascent to Lalovo village. Then you cycle along Dryanovska River to Dryanovo town. From there you are transferred to Dryanovo Monastery where you stay overnight. Optional visit of the nearby Bacho Kiro cave.

Cycling distance: 34 km

Day 5. Bojentsi architectural reserve - Tryavna

In the morning transfer a short way and then cycle to Bojentsi Village and spend some time sightseeing. After another short transfer start cycling before Tsareva livada village on isolated roads to the National revival architectural town of Tryavna, where you overnight.

Cycling distance: 35 km



Day 6. Gabrovo - Etura open air museum - Sokolski Monastery

Cycle from Tryavna up a mountain pass and then downhill to Gabrovo. The next stop is the open-air ethnographic museum of Etura. Its 18th-19th century water driven machinery, crafts and lifestyle come alive before your eyes. From here just a short cycle to the picturesque Sokolski Monastery then back to Etura for overnight.

Cycling distance: 28 km

Day 7. Shipka monument - Shipka Monastery - Sofia

After breakfast in Gabrovo town transfer to the historic Shipka pass and memorial. Get on your bikes for a 10 km up/down ride through beautiful beech forest to the historic Buzludza area. A supreme downhill ride on the Southern slopes of the mountains awaits you. You continue biking to Shipka town for a visit to the richly decorated Shipka Monastery and church. Transfer to Sofia, where you overnight.

Cycling distance: 30 km

Day 8. Departure

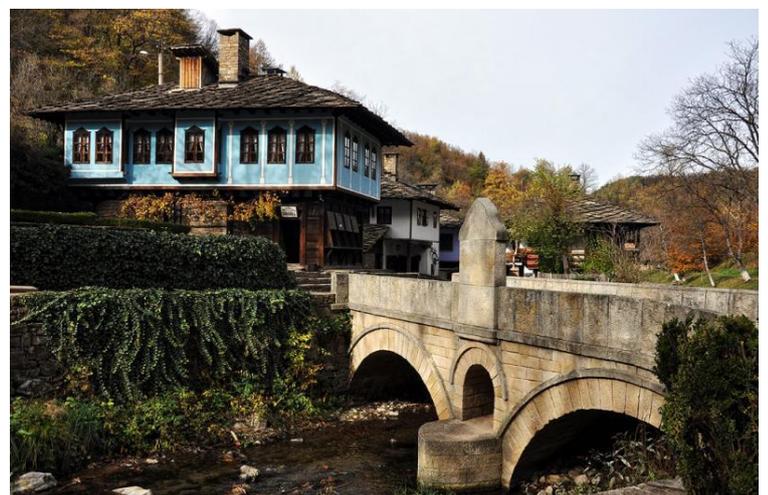
After breakfast transfer to Sofia or Plovdiv Airport for departure.

GRADE

Easy to Moderate. Short distances with some hilly sections. Cycling is mostly on well-surfaced quiet country roads but with the odd bumpy section, potholes and rough asphalt. Traffic can be encountered entering the towns.

2020 SCHEDULE

Can start any day 01 April – 31 October



2020 COST PER PERSON IN EURO

Share twin	€610 based on 4 people travelling together
Share twin	€710 based on 2 people travelling together
Single room supplement	€120
Hybrid bike	€ 70
Electric Bike	€140
Helmet	€ 5
Pannier	€ 5

2020 COST INCLUDES

- ▶ Accommodation in Monasteries (Days 3, 4 and 6), and family run hotels and guest-houses with en-suite facilities
- ▶ Breakfast daily, 5 dinners
- ▶ **English-speaking guide/driver with a supporting vehicle (does not cycle)**
- ▶ Map and road book
- ▶ Group transfers from/to Sofia or Plovdiv airport (09.00 - 19.00)
- ▶ All local transfers
- ▶ Technical support for the bikes

2020 COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

- ▶ Bike rental
- ▶ Lunches
- ▶ Tips and entrance fees

Transfers – additional

Private transfers: Sofia Airport - Sofia Centre: 17 EUR (per vehicle 1-3 passengers); Plovdiv Airport - Plovdiv Centre: 15 EUR (per vehicle); Sofia-Plovdiv or vv. 60 EUR (per vehicle 1-3 passengers)

Guide/driver:

The guide with the supporting vehicle and the luggage checks several times a day if everything is OK with the group, waiting by crossroads, accompanying guests for breakfast, lunch and dinner and giving information to interesting sites en-route

Dress code

In monasteries and churches - men are not allowed to enter in shorts and women should not expose their legs and shoulders.





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